



Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

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Status Quo Budget Puts Alaskans in Jeopardy

Republicans say public safety is too expensive

JUNEAU – House Democrats voiced concern today as Republicans on the House Finance Committee systematically voted down amendments to the 2002 Operating Budget that would make much-needed investments in public safety. Republicans touted the budget as “status quo,” ignoring the fact that again Alaskans will have to do without troopers and village public safety officers.

“We have immediate needs in the area of public safety that are going unmet,” said Ethan Berkowitz (D-Anchorage), House Democratic Leader. “At some point, campaign rhetoric should translate to an appropriation.”

Statewide, police standards recommend trooper levels fifty percent higher than current staffing and 88 rural communities villages are entirely without a VPSO presence. Despite violating those direct measures of public safety, Republicans rebuffed efforts to increase trooper and VPSO protection, effectively saying the state could not afford additional law enforcement.

Republican lawmakers indicated that Democratic proposals to increase public safety funding were all meritorious, but because there was no long-range fiscal plan they were unwilling to pay for admittedly needed public safety proposals.

“Many proposals for long-range fiscal plans exist and as the legislature waits before adopting one, Alaskans are left without adequate public safety,” said Rep. Eric Croft (D-Anchorage), who sits on the Finance Committee. “Wally Hickel had it right when he said, ‘There is no vision, no hope, no future, no agenda for Alaska, if your only cause is to cut the budget.’”

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Sen. Bettye Davis, Sen. Johnny Ellis, Sen. Kim Elton, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Georgianna Lincoln, Sen. Donny Olson, Rep. Ethan Berkowitz, Rep. Sharon Cissna, Rep. Harry Crawford, Rep. Eric Croft, Rep. John Davies, Rep. Gretchen Guess, Rep. Joe Hayes, Rep. Reggie Joule, Rep. Mary Kapsner, Rep. Beth Kerttula, Rep. Al Kookesh, Rep. Carl Moses