

HOUSE FINANCE

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET
AND AUDIT

ETHICS (ALTERNATE)

FINANCE
SUBCOMMITTEES:

Courts and Department of
Law

Health, Family and
Community Services

University

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



CAMPBELL PARK

DIMOND BUSINESS
DISTRICT

EAST SAND LAKE

MIDTOWN

TAKU-CAMPBELL

REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Date: April 6, 2023

To: Midtown Community Council

From: Representative Andy Josephson

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "AJ", written over the printed name.

Re: Update on Session

Hello Neighbors,

Throughout March, the operating (HB 39) and mental health (HB 41) budgets occupied the majority of my time. Progress on my bills has been slow but will hopefully move forward after the passage of the budget.

The Budget

Following the subcommittee closeout process, HB 39 and HB 41 as amended were taken up in House Finance. I offered 24 amendments to the budget. 6 were passed. The 6 that passed House Finance and survived the House Floor were the following:

1. Centralized accommodation fund for State hiring (Co-Chair Johnson also offered and it passed)
2. IDD waitlist study (Rep. Stapp also offered and it passed)
3. \$50,000 for dementia awareness material
4. Eliminating election fraud investigator while preserving sexual assault position
5. Eliminating parental rights attorney (a position the Governor tried to create)

January-May: State Capitol, Juneau, Alaska 99801 • (907) 465-4939 • (800) 465-4939

June-December: 1500 W Benson Blvd, Room 432, Anchorage, Alaska 99503 • (907) 269-0265

Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov

6. \$10,000 for Campbell Lake signage and markings for easements

All other amendments of mine failed to pass. Most of my caucus's amendments failed as well. These amendments included necessary funding for early learning, childcare, senior and disability services, services for those who have experienced sexual assault/domestic violence, and University operations.

On the House Floor, all attempts to appropriate money for the services listed above were voted down by the majority. Co-Chair Johnson did offer a substantial increase for public education (over \$174 million one-time increment), but then moved to change the funding source from the General Fund to the Constitutional Budget Reserve. My caucus found the majority caucus playing games with crucial funding for education was a step too far, and, well, we tried to fight against the fund source change. Ultimately, the majority caucus prevailed and any increase in funding, if passed, for public education would have to come from the Constitutional Budget Reserve. This was the only substantial budget increase to be approved by the majority. They voted down all other increases, arguing that we are in a fiscal crisis and these increases would bloat government. Note: they have not offered a fiscal plan or any other new sources of revenue to cover the budget deficit that they approved.

Bills

None of my bills have moved forward since the last Midtown Community Council meeting. The subcommittee for House State Affairs where HB 22: *Peace Officer/Firefighter Benefits* is being held had a hearing, but it was preliminary and there was hardly any discussion on the bill itself.

Below are my bills waiting for committee hearings in case you have any interest and want to do further research:

HB 11: *Crime: Assault in the Presence of a Child*

A bill which makes it an additional crime when someone commits domestic violence and they do so in the presence of a child. Currently in House Judiciary.

HB 13: *Applicability of Human Rights Commission*

A bill which allows the Human Rights Commission to investigate discrimination claims filed against non-profit employers. Currently in House Judiciary.

HB 15: *Peer Support Counseling Program*

A bill which clearly allows police departments to create and develop a peer support counseling program where police officers can talk to a qualified counselor in confidence. Currently in House State Affairs.

HB 22: *Peace Officers/Firefighters Benefits*

A bill which creates a new defined benefits retirement system for peace officers and firefighters. Currently in House State Affairs.

HB 80: *Incompetency; Civil Commitment*

A bill which refines the competency to stand trial process and create a seamless transition to civil commitment. Currently in House Health and Social Services.