

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE TOM MCKAY

Session: January – April

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Official Business

As you may know, we started the Legislative Session on Tuesday, January 16, 2024. Our focus so far in the House has been Energy/Gas Supply in Cook Inlet, Education Funding, the PFD, and the State Budget.

As Chairman of the House Resources Committee, we will be hearing two (2) gas tax and royalty bills relating to Cook Inlet, this Wednesday (Jan 31st) at 1 pm. We'll compare the two plans and evaluate them in the House Resources Committee in an attempt to advance the strongest piece of legislation which will most likely be some combination of the two.

We are having numerous conversations in Caucus to address education funding in Alaska for K-12 programs. The looming question for the Base Student Allocation (BSA) increase is that the funding source will need to be identified. There are two (2) ways to accomplish a BSA increase: a one-time increase for one year, or a permanent perpetual increase. Both require reductions in other programs such as the PFD, and/or borrowing from Savings Accounts such as the Constitutional Budget Reserve (requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote). Many constituents, caucus members, and the Governor want to add accountability and performance measures to any increase in BSA funding. This step would be a paradigm change in Juneau since in the past, the Legislature appropriated funds in the billions of dollars to education, with no accountability or ability to enforce where the funds were spent or directed to. I understand and appreciate the "local control" argument, however Alaska education results are so poor that many feel as if it would be irresponsible to increase funding from the state without also addressing other issues within our education system.

It should be noted that when state, federal, and local contributions are all added in, education in Alaska receives approximately \$2.8 billion per year all in. Also, a BSA increase of \$300, which is already in the House Majority's version of SB140, would be the largest increase of the BSA in nearly two decades.

Regards and stay safe out there,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom W. McKay".

Representative Tom McKay
Alaska State House District 15