

Rep. Dan Saddler Community Council Update

Thursday, March 17, 2011

To the residents of District 18:

Thanks for the chance to give you an update on activities here at the Capitol in Juneau. As it is now Day 59 of the 90-day session, it has been busy, and will certainly get busier. Here's some of what we've been busy with:

Operating budget - The House passed the operating budget bills, HB 108 and 109, on 3/11, calling for \$8.9 billion in spending including about (\$3 billion in federal money). The budget is about \$16 million less than the governor's proposal, and I supported it. As a member of the Military and Veterans Affairs budget subcommittee, I am pleased to have secured \$104,000 for two new veterans service officers at University of Alaska campuses, to help veterans take full advantage of their educational benefits. I also supported \$6 million for the Department of Natural Resources, to help address a backlog of thousands of resource development permits.

Capital budget – In cooperation with other members of the Eagle River delegation, I have submitted my requests for capital projects, including \$450,000 for a new tender truck for the Chugiak Volunteer Fire Department; \$90,000 for a replacement intercom system at Fire Lake Elementary School; \$15,000 for a kiln at Mt. Iliamna Elementary School; and \$8,000 to support expansion of a Birchwood Community Patrol. The Senate traditionally passes its version of the capital budget first, and I look forward to spirited negotiations over the final size and details of this important measure.

Redistricting – The U.S. Census numbers released Tuesday show District 18 now has 1,500 more voters than it should, if the entire state population were divided equally into 40 districts. The Redistricting Board has 30 days to redraw district lines to even out district boundaries. Given the complexity of the task and the many variables, it is difficult to know what the new district lines will be. We are sure to see more attention to this matter in the press.

Legislation of Note:

- **HB 180, Veterans Drivers License** – My bill to allow state drivers licenses and ID cards to designate if the bearer is a veteran, seeks to make it easier for veterans to take advantage of discounts, and to help them connect with federal veterans benefits. It passed the Military and Veterans Affairs Committee today, and will likely next go to the Finance Committee.
- **HB 103, Power Project, Alaska Energy Authority** – This bill would authorize AEA to spend up to \$65 million to study and design a hydroelectric dam at Watana Creek, near the Susitna River in Southcentral Alaska. The \$4.5 billion, 11-year project could develop

600 megawatts, about half the Railbelt's electrical needs for decades. It passed the House Special Committee on Energy on March 10 with my vote, and goes next to the House Finance Committee.

- HB 16 Senior Benefits – This bill extends the needs-based system of state support for senior citizens. It passed the full House unanimously on Feb. 4; has passed the Senate Health and Social Services Committee; and is in the Finance Committee.
- SB 33, Disposition of Service Members' Remains – This bill conforms state law to federal law, to clarify who may decide the final resting place of soldiers, airmen, Marines or Guardsmen who die in service. It passed the House unanimously, and it has been signed into law.
- House Bill 110 – Production Tax on Oil and Gas – This high-profile bill from the governor would lower state oil tax rates at higher prices, and sweeten tax credits and incentives for North Slope production from existing and pioneer areas. I strongly support resource industry, and am considering the bill carefully in hopes it will help increase exploration and development to fill the TAPS pipeline and keep our economy healthy.

CALENDER NOTES

- Members of the Anchorage Caucus will hold a community town meeting on Saturday, March 19, from 10 a.m.-noon at the Anchorage Assembly Chambers at the Z. J. Loussac Library.
- Members of the Eagle River delegation will hold a special Eagle River constituent town hall, on Saturday from 4-6 p.m. at Town Center, Room 170, by the Chugiak/Eagle River Library. I hope to see you at either meeting – or both!

CONTACT ME

- Thank you to everyone who has taken time to email, call or write, and the special few who have visited the Capitol. I am always glad to hear from you, and do my best to answer your questions. Contact me at 465-3783, or at Rep.Dan.Saddler@legis.state.ak.us

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,

Representative Dan Saddler