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29th LEGISLATURE CONVENES

The Alaska State Legislature began its annual session on January 19, 2016 in Juneau, Alaska. My staff and I are back in the Alaska State Capitol and working hard to represent the communities in Southeast Alaska.

Currently, the biggest issue we are facing is the state budget and the associated fiscal issues. This session, and probably the next three to four sessions, will be very important for the future of the state as we decide the scale of government Alaskans want.

Alaska is facing such a large deficit, currently estimated at \$3.5 to \$4.2 billion, mainly because of the global decline in the price of oil and decreasing oil production. Oil revenue previously covered 90% of state expenditures whereas at current prices oil revenues are estimated to cover only 30% or less of state expenditures. The Alaska State Legislature is currently discussing how to stabilize the fiscal system and make payroll.

There is no doubt that Alaska is in a state of transition. I urge you to stay informed and if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas please feel free to contact my office through email as it is the best option and please remember to include in



your message what community you live in. I value the opinions of fellow Southeast Alaskans.

While the budget issue is the elephant in the room and foremost on our minds, it does not mean my other priorities are pushed to the side. I will continue to focus on jobs, energy and transportation infrastructure, and maintaining our unique quality of life in Southeast. I will continue to monitor the well-being of those industries important to the economy in Southeast Alaska: fishing, timber, tourism, mining, the maritime sector, and healthcare. Finally, as always, providing a quality public education system is a major priority of mine.

STATE OF THE STATE

On January 21, Governor Bill Walker delivered his annual State of the State address to a joint session of the Alaska State Legislature. During his speech, the governor summarized the framework of his plan to address the fiscal difficulties facing Alaska. His speech clearly lays out the situation and therefore I encourage you to listen to or read his State of the State address.

Click [here](#) to watch and read his annual address.

STATE ANNOUNCES CONTEST TO NAME NEW FERRIES

Governor Walker recently announced that Alaska students in 6th through 12th grade can participate in a contest to name the two new ferries currently being built at the Ketchikan Shipyard. Vessels in the Alaska Marine Highway System are required by law to be named after one of the 745 named glaciers within the state's borders. The deadline to submit your choice with a brief essay is March 15. Click [here](#) for official contest details.

COAST GUARD CITIES

On January 30, 2016 I was able to attend a banquet hosted by the Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce where the City of Ketchikan was formally recognized as a “Coast Guard City”. For more information click [here](#).

In 2011, Sitka was also named a “Coast Guard City” and I am very proud to have two communities in Senate District R that have been given this honor. Congratulations to City of Ketchikan and thank you to the United States Coast Guard for all they do.

ENERGY COUNCIL

In December I attended the Energy Council’s annual meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi. The conference focused on the global energy outlook and worldwide trends in price and production for 2016. A major point of discussion was the oil price decline and related financial effects on the industry and banking system. The impact of the current low price environment is leading to the banks calling their collateral and putting a financial bind on energy producing states.

ALASKA 2-1-1

Alaska 2-1-1 connects people to social services. If you need assistance finding help just dial 2-1-1 to connect to services and resources.

Alaska 2-1-1 is your one-stop resource for connecting with a wide variety of programs in your community including emergency food and shelter, disability services, counseling, senior services, healthcare, child care, drug and alcohol programs, legal assistance, transportation needs, educational opportunities, and much more.

Check out www.alaska211.org for more information.

CONSTITUENT VISITS

While much of my time in Juneau is occupied with committee meetings as well as other meetings with state agency officials and industry representatives, I value the time I get to spend meeting with the constituents from my district.

Here are some of the folks from Southeast that I have met with so far this session:

- City of Kake
- Inside Passage Electric Cooperative
- Vigor Industrial
- Young Fisherman of Alaska
- Southeast Guides
- City & Borough of Sitka
- SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium
- Ketchikan Fire Department
- University of Alaska Southeast
- Alaska Close-Up students
 - Grace Mikkelsen, Wrangell
 - Emma Axelson, Ketchikan



Alaska Close Up students with Senator Stedman: Grace Mikkelsen, Emma Axelson, Elizabeth Ramseth, Isadora Mattfeld, and Grace Lee.

If you are in Juneau and have the time, please stop by the office. We are easy to find on the ground floor of the Capitol.

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