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Legislative Leaders to Alaskans: Help is on the way

JUNEAU – Today, **Senate President Cathy Giessel**, R-Anchorage, **Senator Bert Stedman**, R-Sitka, co-chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and **Senator Natasha von Imhof**, co-chairwoman of the Senate Finance Committee, issued the following statement on the ongoing legislative efforts to help Alaskans dealing with the impacts of the new coronavirus.

Fellow Alaskans,

The hard-working men and women of this state will not weather this storm alone.

With a singular focus, the Legislature is exploring every avenue and will dedicate vast resources to support Alaskans during this difficult time.

This support features enhanced unemployment benefits, mortgage assistance, food aid, interest free loans, expanded child and healthcare services, direct aid to communities, and more.

No Alaskan in need will be left behind.

As our nation mobilizes against the coronavirus pandemic, and our leaders enact stringent, life-saving measures, we know that everyday Alaskans are suffering from the economic fallout.

We see this global conflict being fought daily by dedicated nurses, doctors and scientist, as well as Americans engaged in best practices, such as hand washing and social distancing. But a second front exists, one involving paychecks and jobs.

This virus has wreaked havoc on the price of oil, the stock market is in retreat, and now countless workers will go without paychecks as business owners are forced to close-up shop. The uncertainty of the next weeks and months will only compound the harm to the private sector of our economy. Without a swift response, this virus could cause long-term damage beyond the health impacts.

Lawmakers are keenly aware of these realities, and Alaskans should rest assured that we are taking action. A bipartisan group of legislators will, in the coming days, provide critical aid to Alaskan workers and business owners. Hard-working men and women – who through no fault of their own are struggling to pay bills and put food on the table – will have a helping hand.

These are extraordinary times, and extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures.

If we act decisively – and with the help and support of the Alaskan people – we can achieve success on both fronts by ensuring our healthcare professionals are not overwhelmed by the spread of this virus and by alleviating the impacts on everyday Alaskans' pocketbooks.

During these present difficulties, it's important we remain calm, listen to the advice of our medical professionals, and do what we can to help our fellow Alaskans.

Help is on the way.

On March 11, the Legislature [appropriated \\$13.1 million](#) in emergency funding to prepare for the health impacts of the coronavirus outbreak. On March 18, the Senate [also passed additional funding](#) to assist communities dealing with the new costs.

[Legislation](#) to ensure Alaskans receive unemployment insurance as quickly as possible is being expedited through the process.

For more information, contact Senate Majority Communications Director [Daniel McDonald](#) at (907) 465-4066.

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