



For Immediate Release: March 18, 2020

**Legislature Provides Relief Funding for Coronavirus**  
***Bill also pays for last year's firefighting and healthcare costs***

JUNEAU – The Alaska Senate today unanimously approved funding to communities dealing with the economic impacts of the new coronavirus (COVID-19). The supplemental budget also pays for last summer's wildfire and healthcare bills.

“The Legislature stands united with the governor in directing the necessary resources to mitigate the effects of this virus,” said **Senator Bert Stedman**, R-Sitka, co-chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. “This bill will provide our public health professionals with the tools they need to protect Alaskans.”

“It's been one heck of a year for Alaska and Alaskans,” said **Senator Natasha von Imhof**, R-Anchorage, co-chairwoman of the Senate Finance Committee. “With the earthquake, wildfires and now Coronavirus, it is important that funds be available to provide timely aid. In the supplemental budget, capital funds for Alaska Land Mobile Radio will support Troopers and the Department of Transportation so they may communicate across our vast geography.”

The supplemental budget totals \$612 million, including \$360 million in state unrestricted general funds and \$225 million in federal funds, with the remaining coming from designated and other state funds.

To assist communities dealing with new costs of COVID-19, the bill boosts Community Assistance funding by \$10 million, and provides \$23.5 million in additional relief, including:

- \$8.5 million in grants to municipalities for COVID-19-related commercial passenger vessel operations;
- \$5.5 million for medical and protective equipment, including testing supplies;
- \$3.5 million for transportation to housing for medical assistance;
- \$2.5 million for housing individuals under quarantine;
- \$1.5 million for the state epidemiology lab for IT systems related to testing;
- \$1.5 million for personnel including lab, support, emergency operations, and 24-hour facility staff; and
- \$500,000 for public distribution of vital health recommendations and information.

The bill also provides funding for last year's unpaid wildfire and healthcare costs:

- \$142 million in state funds and \$160 million in federal funds for Medicaid services, including \$8.3 million to restore the Adult Preventive Dental Program;
- \$110.5 million for wildland firefighting costs incurred last summer and fall;
- \$8.6 million to restore Adult Public Assistance to ensure payments for low-income Alaskans;
- \$7.1 million for the Alaska Marine Highway System to ensure a stable schedule for the spring and summer of this year;
- \$6.7 million for the Department of Public Safety to address a shortfall within the Alaska State Troopers and Alaska Wildlife Troopers due to a lower than expected vacancy rate;
- \$6 million to help the Alaska Psychiatric Institute increase its capacity; and
- \$3 million to address the severe damage caused in Anchorage, Kenai, and Mat-Su by the December 2018 earthquake.

Today's funding comes on top of a [\\$13.1 million appropriation made by the Legislature](#) on March 11 to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

House Bill 234 passed the Senate by a vote of 16-0 and is now on its way back to the Alaska House of Representatives for a concurrence vote.

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

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