



Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor's Office

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March 31, 2015

The Honorable Pete Kelly
Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 516
Juneau, AK 99801

The Honorable Anna MacKinnon
Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 516
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: FY16 State of Alaska Operating Budget Comments

Senators Kelly and MacKinnon:

As you are well aware, budgets are not merely a collection of numbers and percentages. Rather, budgets are a moral document – a reflection of values. The decisions made by this committee will not occur in a vacuum. Thousands of families across Alaska will feel the pain of these cuts – either in lost jobs, reduced access to critical services or in a reduction in their quality of life. As Senator Dunleavy noted earlier this week, the most distressing fact of these cuts is that they pit good programs against other good programs – and our citizenry will be left to face the consequences of these fiscal actions.

I write today to advocate for some specific programs important to the life, safety and educational opportunities of the 100,000 Alaskans who call the Fairbanks North Star Borough home:

University of Alaska – Fairbanks Organized Research Unmanned Aircraft Program

The Fairbanks North Star Borough continues to support the development of an unmanned vehicle industry in Alaska. The University of Alaska is uniquely suited to this task, building upon solid working relationships with the military, federal agencies and other educational institutions. Thank you for your support of this exciting new industry in Alaska.

Department of Public Safety – Alaska Wildlife Troopers Aircraft Section

The elimination of the Fairbanks based helicopter services will once again leave Interior Alaskans without access to a centrally-located helicopter for search and rescue operations. Too often in recent years, injured or otherwise incapacitated Alaskans have been forced to wait in adverse conditions (subzero temperatures, exposed terrain, etc) for the dispatch of a helicopter from Anchorage.

Department of Education and Development – Online with Libraries and Live Homework

The Fairbanks North Star Borough is one of the largest users statewide of the Online with Libraries (OWL) program. Across the state, local libraries have increased their broadband speeds due to this program and the nearly \$2 million leveraged in federal E-Rate funds every year. Access to these services are critical to improving the educational opportunities for children across the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Senate Finance Committee version of the FY16 Operating Budget. We at the Fairbanks North Star Borough fully understand the difficult financial straits our state is currently navigating, and we appreciate the herculean task you face in crafting a sustainable budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luke Hopkins".

Luke Hopkins, Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor