

February 25, 2021

To: Senate State Affairs Committee
Re: Senate Bill 25

The Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AKPIRG), established in 1974, advocates on behalf of public and consumer interests. To our knowledge, we are the only non-governmental, non-profit organization focused on addressing Alaska-specific consumer interest issues.

Transparency is a cornerstone of a democracy. It's also essential for good government. Most Alaskans want to know what government is up to with their public dollars. These Alaskans, including legislators, want this information to be easy to find.

AKPIRG supports SB 25 – The Alaska Online Checkbook Act. The implementation of the Department of Administration's Alaska Online Checkbook is critical because it enables the public to better understand what their government officials are up to and how they spend our public dollars.

Public access to state financial information accomplishes many things: it empowers Alaskans, including legislators, is an important element of government accountability, and provides a more functional system of checks and balances.

While the current Online checkbook suffices for now, the enhancements contained within SB 25 facilitates a more seamless process when members of the public review state spending. These improvements include searchable features, addition of procurement documents and agencies who do not use the state accounting system, and embedded links to primary financial documents, among other things.

We believe it is important to make this Online Checkbook so that expenses can be reviewed with the most ease possible. All accounting system codes should be specific to the associated transaction and identified with explanations. Accounting terms should be defined, ie. roll up. A chart of accounts guide would be a helpful tool for the public.

We also believe that credits like tax credits, subsidies, and other costs need to be included in the Alaska Online Checkbook in order to reflect the true cost of certain policies like senior credits, tax credits, education subsidies, etc. These figures would greatly aid in the public's understanding of where the money goes--or doesn't go, in these instances.

Lastly, interagency receipts should also be included. Especially if they deal with personnel, travel, and relocation costs.

The Online Checkbook system should be simple so that everyone can understand it--and in order to do that, it must have all the information, so Alaskans can see the true costs to run our State.

Sincerely,



Veri di Suvero
AKPIRG
Executive Director