



Sponsor Statement

HB 242 An Act Extending the Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program

"An Act extending the Alaska senior benefits payment program; and providing for an effective date."

House Bill 242 proposes the extension of the Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program until June 2034. Alaska has a robust history of supporting its senior population, dating back to 1915. The territorial legislature's approval of the old-age bonus program marked the beginning of decades of evolution in assisting Alaska's elderly residents.

The inaugural initiative in 1915 offered seniors who had lived in the territory for a decade a monthly payment of \$12.50. This early endeavor laid the foundation for future programs, recognizing and aiding the pioneers who contributed significantly to building the state.

In 1972, amid burgeoning oil wealth, Alaska introduced the "Longevity Bonus" program. Initially encouraging older Alaskans to remain in the state, the program commenced with a \$100 monthly payment for seniors residing in Alaska for at least 25 years. Over the years, the program underwent various modifications, including a court-mandated adjustment allowing seniors with just one year of residency to qualify.

Transitioning to a needs-based approach in 2003 as the Senior Assistance Program and evolving into the SeniorCare Program in 2004, these initiatives built upon the foundation laid by the Senior Assistance Program.

With the conclusion of SeniorCare in 2007, the Alaska Senior Benefits Program emerged. Operating with income-based eligibility, it provides three payment levels tied to the Federal Poverty Guidelines for Alaska. Despite facing budget challenges and caseload increases, the program has demonstrated resilience, adapting to ensure financial assistance reaches seniors in need.

Alaska's commitment to supporting its senior population has taken various forms over the years, from the early 20th-century old-age bonus to the recent Alaska Senior Benefits Program. The state continues to evolve its approach to meet the changing needs of its aging residents—individuals who have played a pivotal role in building and shaping Alaska. Continuing this program is a testament to our dedication to assisting those who have contributed significantly to Alaska's rich history.