



Senator Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

Senate District P

SB 170 (FIN)

Sponsor Statement

"An Act extending the Alaska senior benefits payment program."

Senate Bill 170 would extend the senior Benefits program to 2032, ensuring another eight years of support for low-income seniors across Alaska. The successor to the Longevity Bonus created in 1972, the Senior Benefits Program would end in June 2024 without legislative action.

The Senior Benefits Program protects low-income seniors by providing them with modest monthly cash assistance to pay for expenses like food, heating, electricity, transportation and prescription medication. The program was established in 2007 and currently aids nearly 9,000 Alaskans aged 65 and older with incomes at 75, 100 and 175 percent of federal poverty level. Subject to appropriation from the Alaska State Legislature, assistance can range from \$76 to \$250 a month for eligible seniors.

In September 2017, the House Health and Social Services Committee held a statewide listening session for Senior Benefit recipients and their advocates. Hundreds of Alaskans spoke of the need to preserve this program to enhance their way of life. This program protects seniors who have spent a lifetime building our great state. It lends a hand to low-income seniors who need assistance to help make ends meet.

Terminating this program would put thousands of seniors at risk of losing their means for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. I respectfully request your support to continue this vital program.