

Duration of Alaska's Legislative Sessions

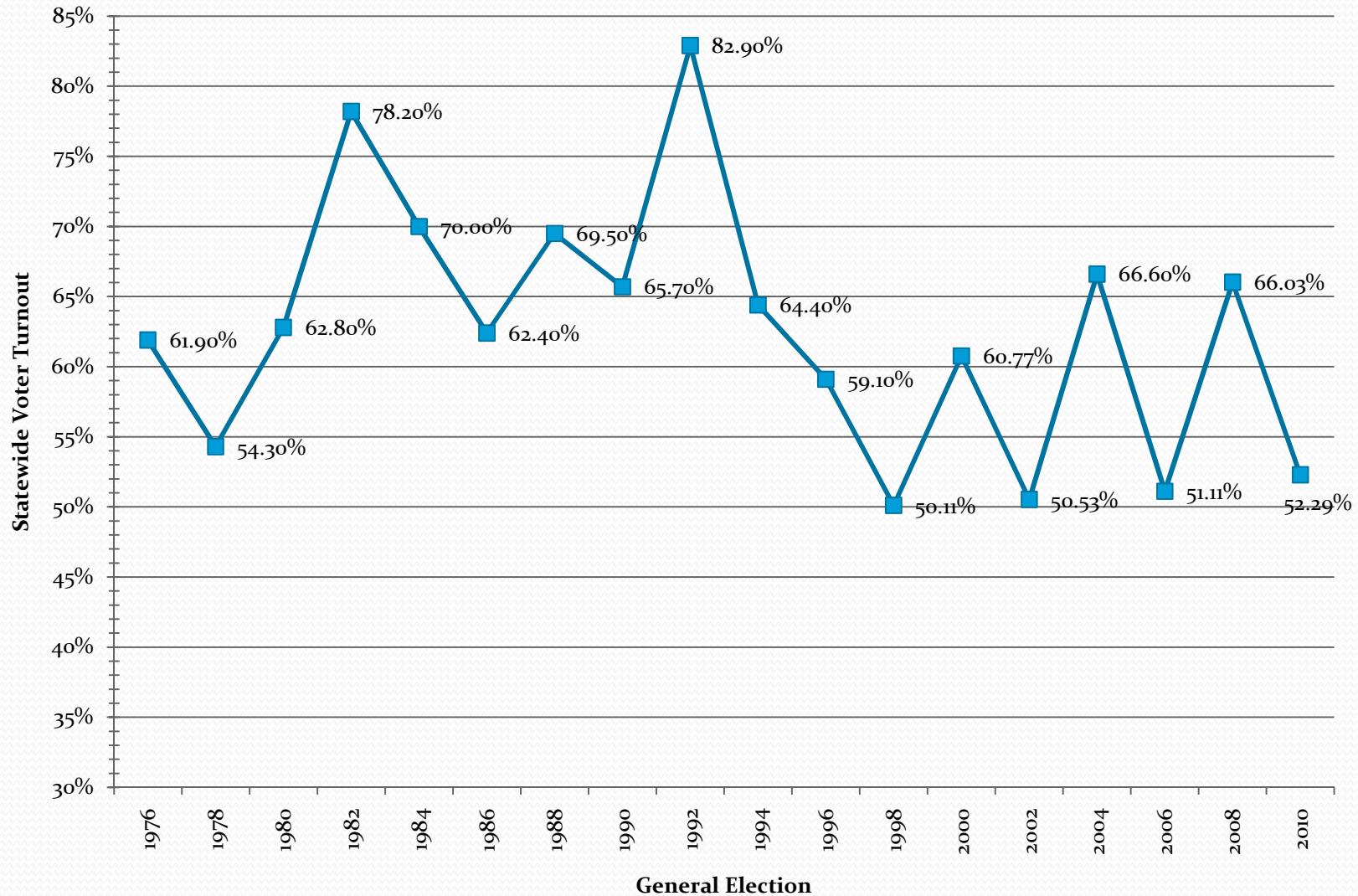
Senate Bill 18
Senator Gary Stevens



SB 18 Strikes A Compromise

- 90-day first session, 120-day second session
- In 2006 voters passed Ballot Measure #1, reducing the legislative sessions to 90 days.
- BM#1 passed by a margin of 50.8% in favor, in what was a notable low voter turnout.

Alaska Voter Turnout 1976-2010





The 90-Day Session vote passed by
3,843 votes.

There were 238,307 total cards cast
(voters) statewide during the 2006
general election.

There were 231,507 total cards cast
(voters) statewide on BM#1

There were 6,800 people who took a
ballot, but didn't vote on BM#1.



Nonetheless, a vote is a vote, and majority rules.
So, we've tried it.

This year will be the 4th session the Legislature has worked under a 90-day limit since that vote took place.

However, the best interests of Alaskans are not being served, nor are the arguments made to support passing BM#1 in the first place being proven valid.



Arguments Made In Favor of Shortening the Session

- 1) Reduce the cost of government.
- 2) 27 other states had shorter sessions than Alaska.
- 3) Legislation to shorten the session had been introduced 24 times since 1990 with no action taken.
- 4) Less time in Juneau would reduce time away from home, family, private sector work, etc, and thus incentivize more quality individuals to run for office.



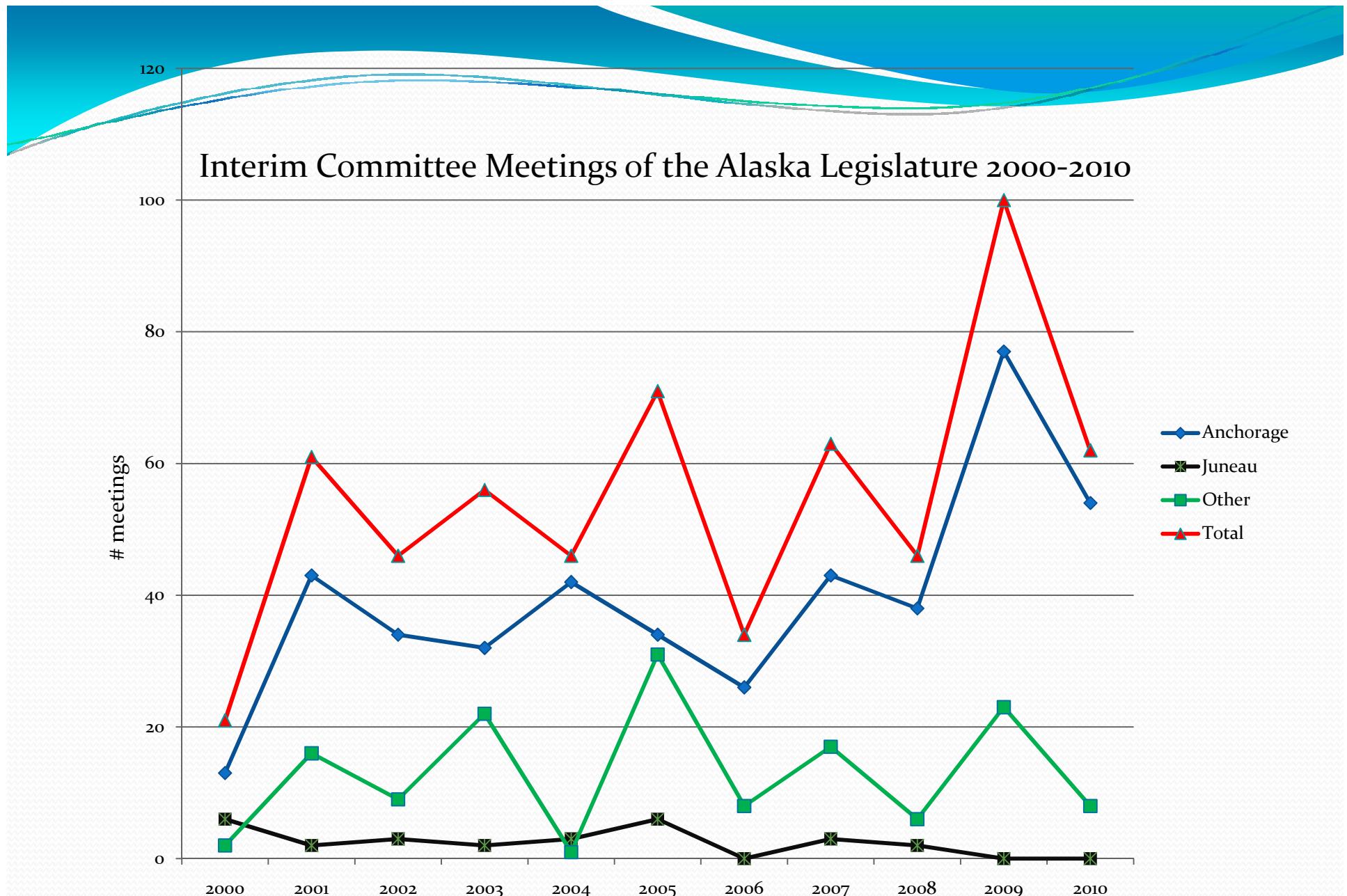
Reducing the Cost of Government

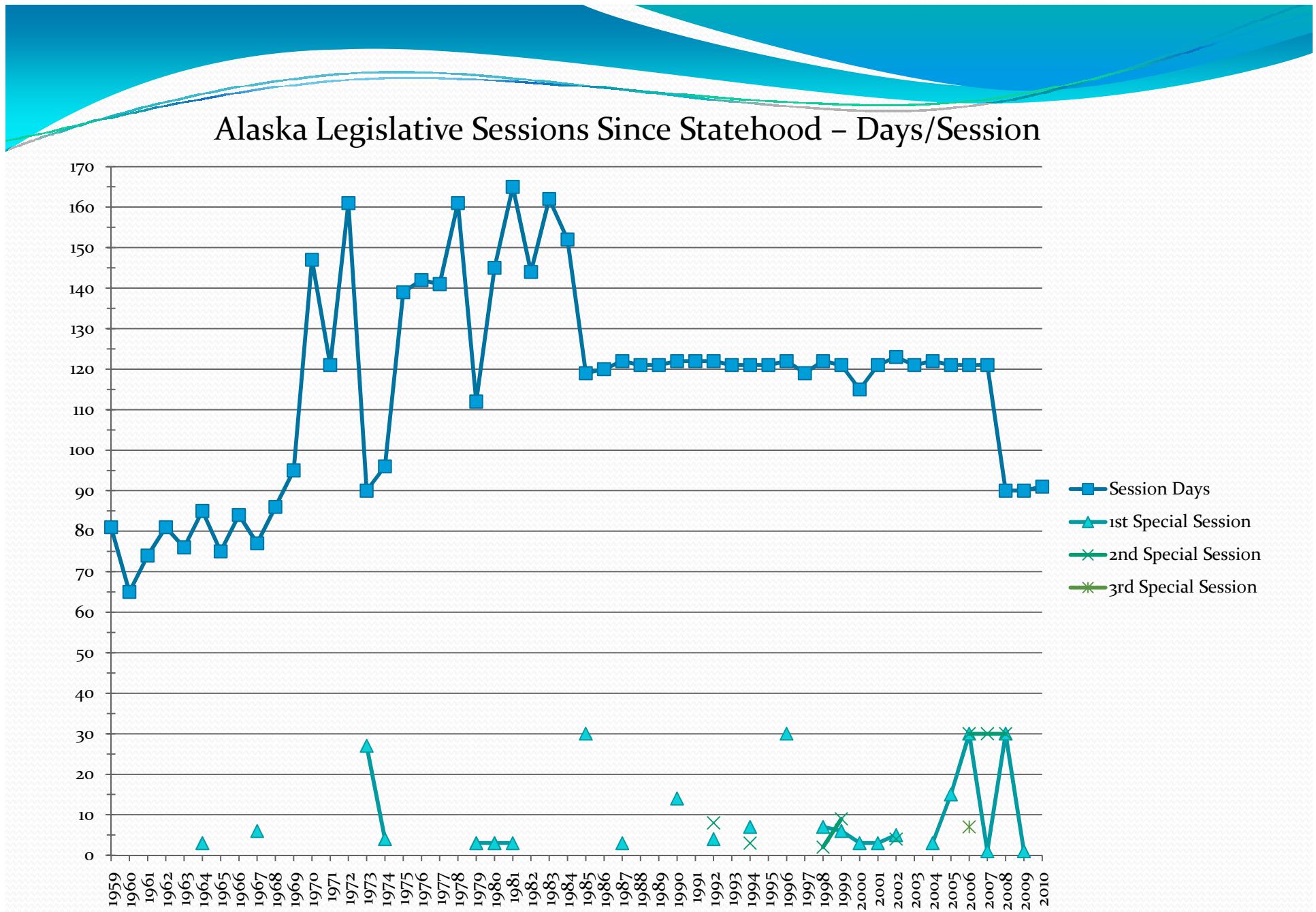
Specifically in the election pamphlet it was stated that “we save 30 days of per diem and expenses of operation of the legislature - paper, copy costs, transportation, etc.”

Actual session costs have been reduced, but the overall operating budget of the Legislature has increased.

Legislative salaries, session per diem, and travel expenses have increased, and much of it accrues throughout the year, not just during session.

Following our first 90-day regular session, there were two 30-day special sessions in 2008. There has also been an increase in traveling roadshow-style interim committee hearings.





FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number
Bill Version
() Publish Date

SB 18

Identifier (file name)	SB18-LEG-SES-01-25-11	Dept. Affected	Legislature
Title	""An Act relating to the duration of regular sessions of the Legislature and providing for an effective date."	Appropriation	Leg Council, Operating Budget
Sponsor	Senator Stevens	Allocation	Salaries and Allowances, Session, Legislative Operating Budget
Requester	Senate State Affairs	OMB Component Number	776-782-796

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

	Appropriation Required	Information					
		FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
OPERATING EXPENDITURES							
Personal Services							
Travel							
Contractual							
Supplies							
Equipment							
Land & Structures							
Grants & Claims							
Miscellaneous							
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Analysis

SB 18 increases the number of days of the second session of a Legislature from 90 days to 120 days, beginning with the 28th Legislature which convenes in January 2013. The second session would convene in 2014.

When the session was reduced from 120 to 90 days, the cost savings were redesignated into the special session contingency account in the event that reducing the number of session days resulted in more or longer special sessions. It is the intent of Senate Leadership that funding in the special session contingency account be used to absorb the cost of the additional 30 days of regular session.

This will reduce the funding available for special sessions after a second session of a Legislature and would result in a supplemental request for additional funds to cover a special session if one were called.

Basically, the money expected to be “saved” was put aside in anticipation of increased special sessions and interim costs.

The fiscal note didn’t say it won’t cost anything. Rather that the costs will be absorbed by the existing budget. It has been built into the base. No new appropriation is necessary.



The “savings” represent about 2% of the Legislature’s total operating budget.

The roughly \$50 million spent to operate the Legislative (“People’s”) Branch of government is a drop in the bucket compared to the approx. \$10 *billion* spent by the executive branch agencies.

Point #1

There is not a significant, if any, cost “savings” (reduction in the cost of government) by maintaining a 90-day legislative session.

Point #2

What about there being so many other states limiting the duration of their legislative sessions?

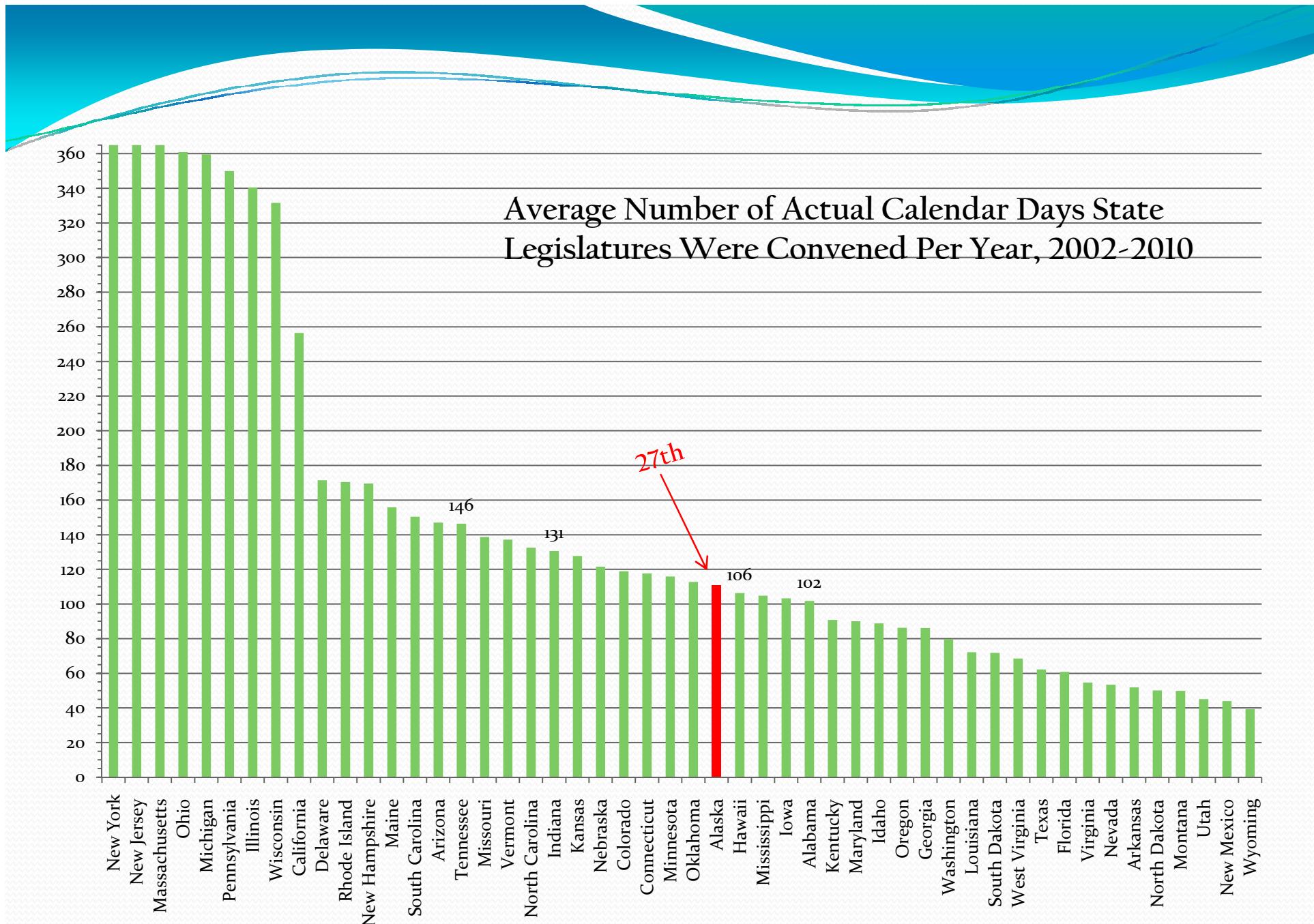
Very common question.

“27 OTHER STATES HAVE SESSIONS SHORTER THAN ALASKA’S

STATE	 DAYS OF SESSION	POPULATION
1. ALABAMA	30/105	4,400,000 people
2. ALASKA	121	660,000 PEOPLE
3. ARKANSAS	60	(every other year) 2,800,000 people
4. FLORIDA	60	(annually) 17,400,000 people
5. GEORGIA	40	(annually) 8,800,000 people
6. HAWAII	60	(annually) 1,300,000 people
7. INDIANA	60/30	(odd/even years) 6,200,000 people
8. IOWA	100/110	(odd/even years) 3,000,000 people
9. KANSAS	0/90	(odd/even years) 2,700,000 people
10. KENTUCKY	30/60	(odd/even years) 4,100,000 people
11. LOUISIANA	60/85	(odd/even years) 4,500,000 people
12. MARYLAND	90	(annually) 5,600,000 people
13. MASSACHUSETTS	Jan. to Nov. 15	(every other year) 6.1 million people
14. MONTANA	90	(every other year) 930,000 people
15. NEBRASKA	90/60	(odd/even years) 1,700,000 people
16. NEVADA	120	(every other year) 2,300,000 people
17. NEW HAMPSHIRE	45	(annually) 1,300,000 people
18. NEW MEXICO	60/30	(odd/even years) 1,900,000 people
19. NORTH DAKOTA	80	(every other year) 635,000 people
20. OREGON	no time limit	(every other year) 3,600,000 people
21. SOUTH DAKOTA	40/35	(odd/even years) 770,000 people
22. TENNESSEE	90	(annually) 5,900,000 people
23. TEXAS	140	(every other year) 22,000,000 people
24. UTAH	45	(annually) 2,400,000 people
25. VIRGINIA	30/60	(odd/even years) 7,500,000 people
26. WASHINGTON	105/60	(odd/even years) 6,200,000 people
27. WEST VIRGINIA	60	(annually) 1,800,000 people
28. WYOMING	40/20	(odd/even years) 506,000 people

Methods By Which Legislative Sessions Are Limited

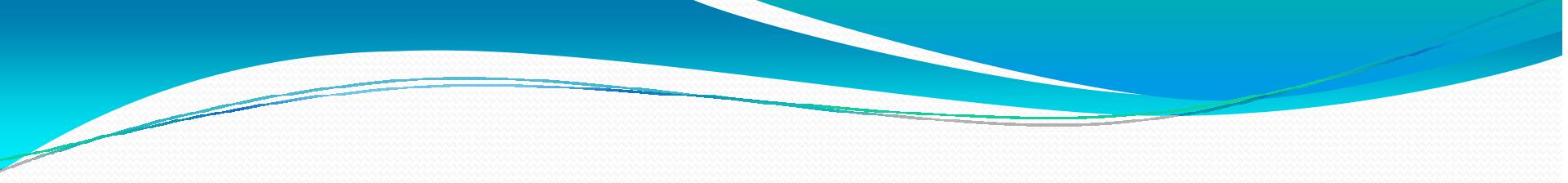
Constitution (28 states)	Statute (5 states)	Chamber Rule (3 states)	Indirect Method (3 states)	No Limit (11 states)
Arkansas	Alabama	Arizona	Iowa	Idaho
Colorado	Alaska	California	New Hampshire	Illinois
Connecticut	Indiana	Massachusetts	Tennessee	Michigan
Delaware	Maine			New Jersey
Florida	South Carolina			New York
Georgia				North Carolina
Hawaii				Ohio
Kansas				Pennsylvania
Kentucky				Rhode Island
Louisiana				Vermont
Maryland				Wisconsin
Minnesota				
Mississippi				
Missouri				
Montana				
Nebraska				
Nevada				
New Mexico				
North Dakota				
Oklahoma				
Oregon				
South Dakota				
Texas				
Utah				
Virginia				
Washington				
West Virginia				
Wyoming				





Every state is different, unique and has its own reasons for choosing to operate its legislature the way it does.

Similarly, Alaska is known as a do-it-yourself type state, so in this case why not say..



Point #2

Who cares what the other states are doing?

We're in the middle of the road on this issue,
and SB 18 moves us even closer to the
middle.

Point #3

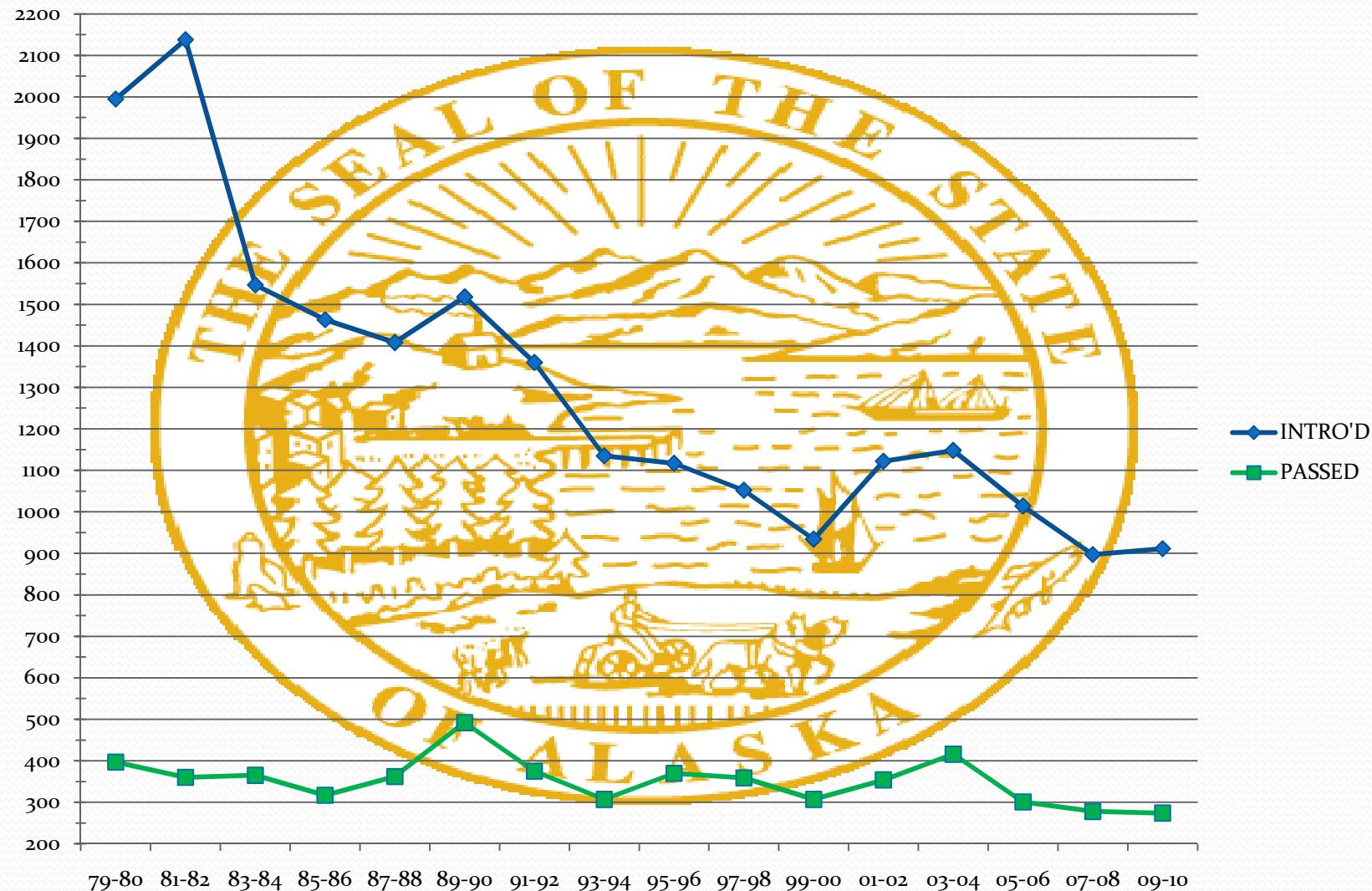
But legislation was introduced 24 times since 1990 in an effort to shorten the session, and each attempt failed.



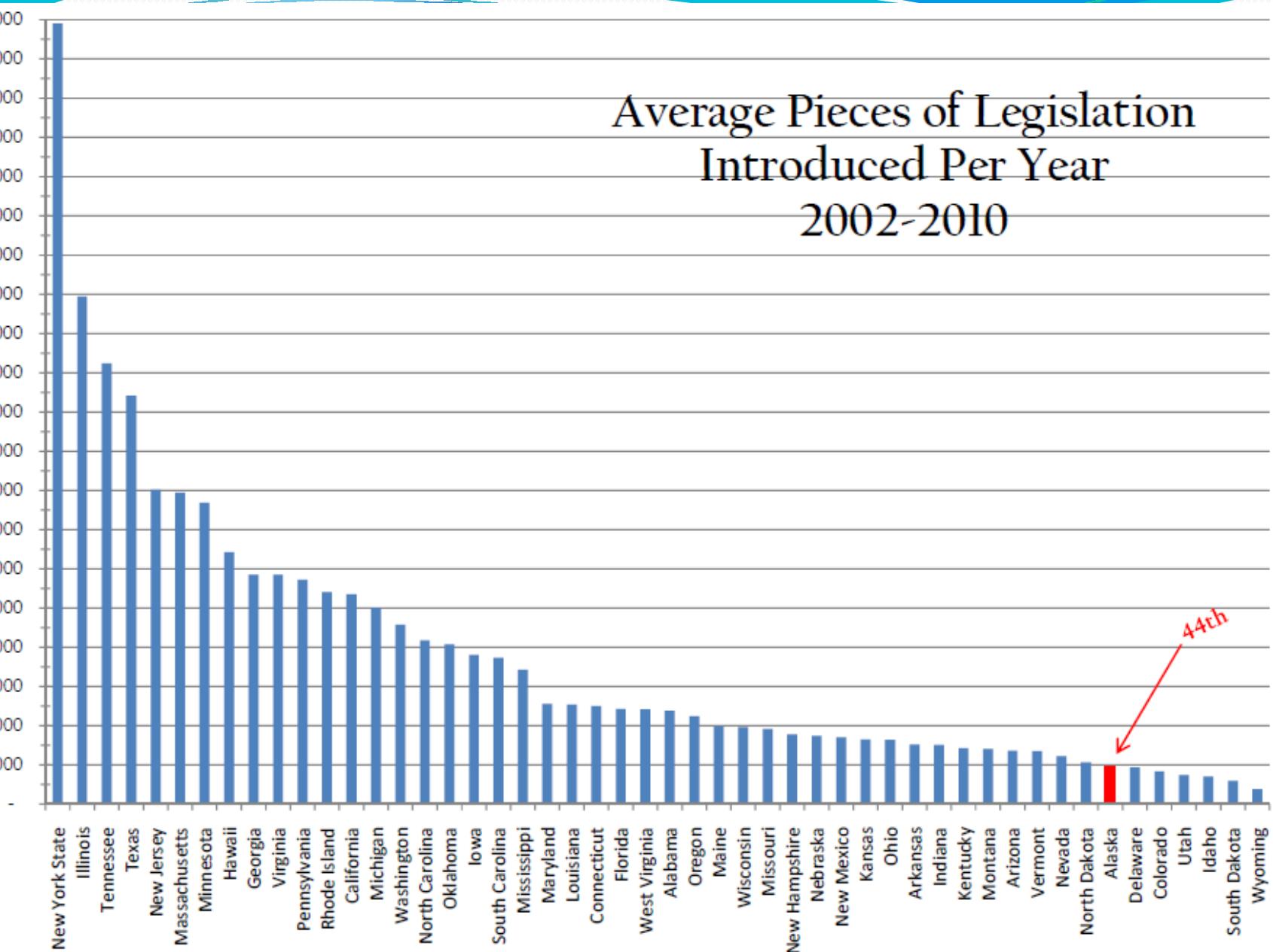
Legislation that has no likelihood of passing is introduced almost every day of session.

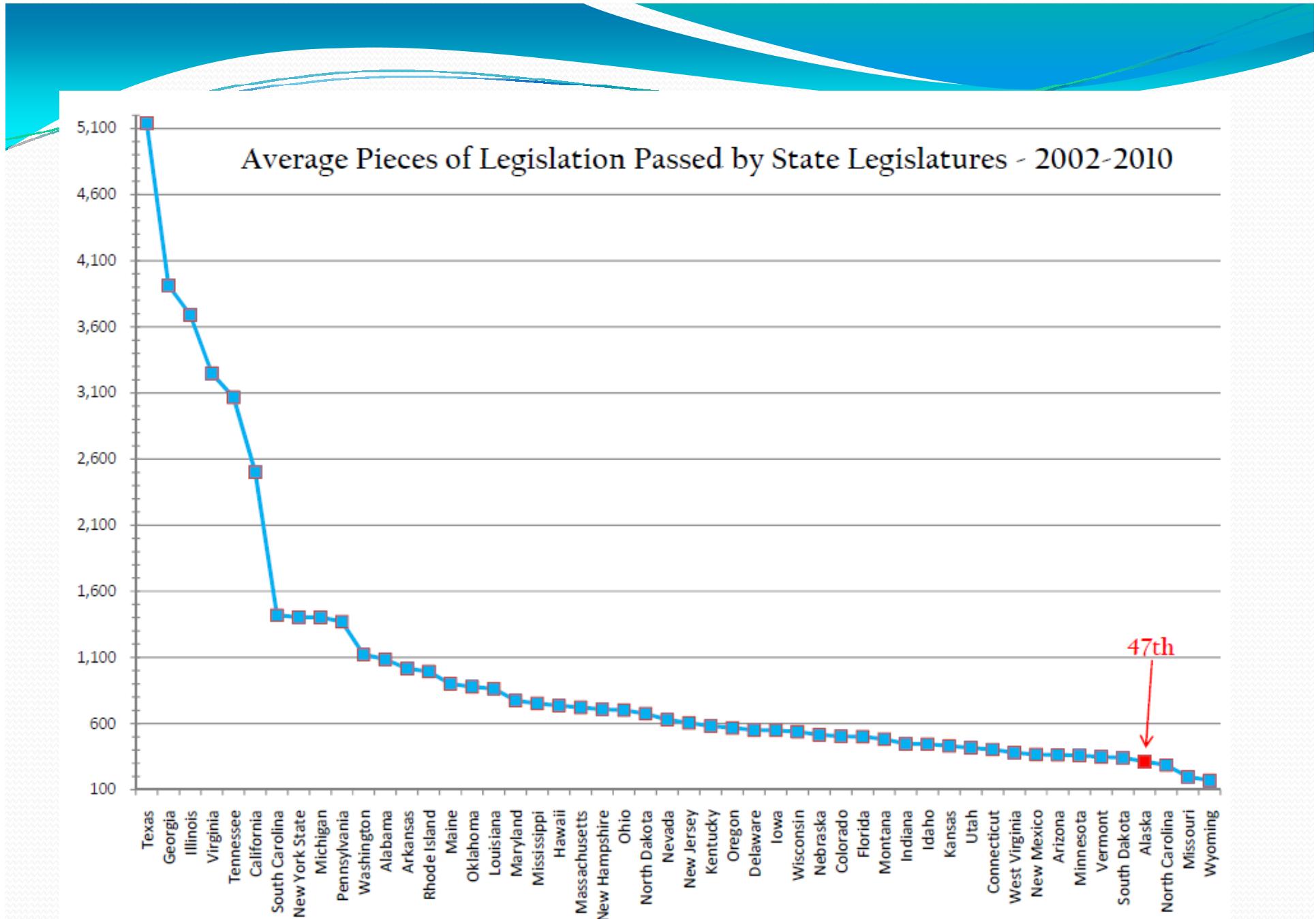
The Legislature has the prerogative to act or not act on any issue, and there are always more issues than there are actions.

Alaska Legislation Introduced & Passed 1979-2010

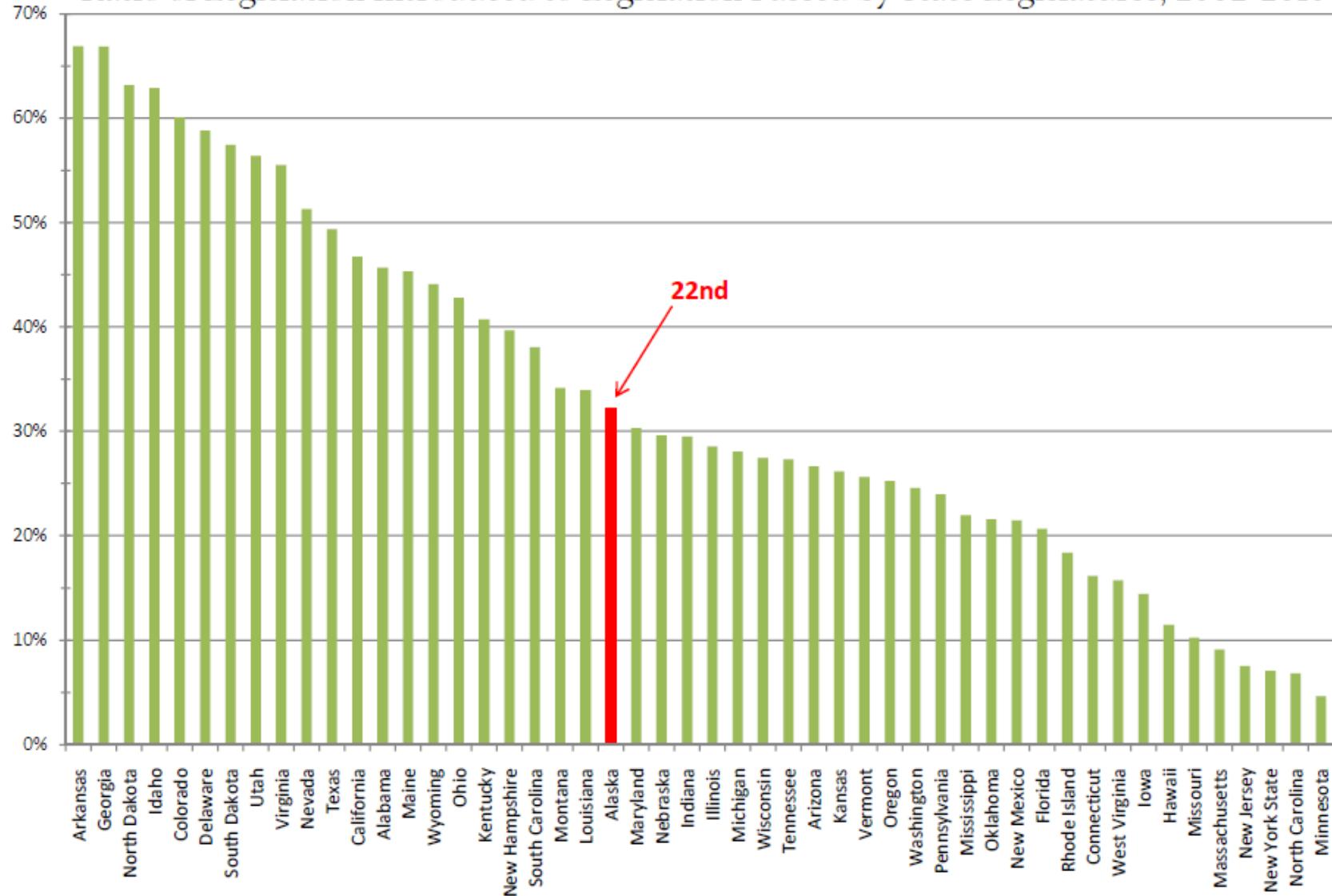


Average Pieces of Legislation Introduced Per Year 2002-2010





Ratio of Legislation Introduced to Legislation Passed by State Legislatures, 2002-2010





Legislation that has no likelihood of passing is introduced almost every day of session.

Perennial Issues:

- Abortion
- Move the Capitol
- Oil & Gas Taxation
- Subsistence
- Coastal Zone Management
- School Truancy
- Mining Taxes
- Etc etc

Point #3

By the reasoning of this argument supporting BM#1,
should any bill that fails to pass the Legislature after X
number of attempts be automatically forwarded to
the ballot box for a vote?

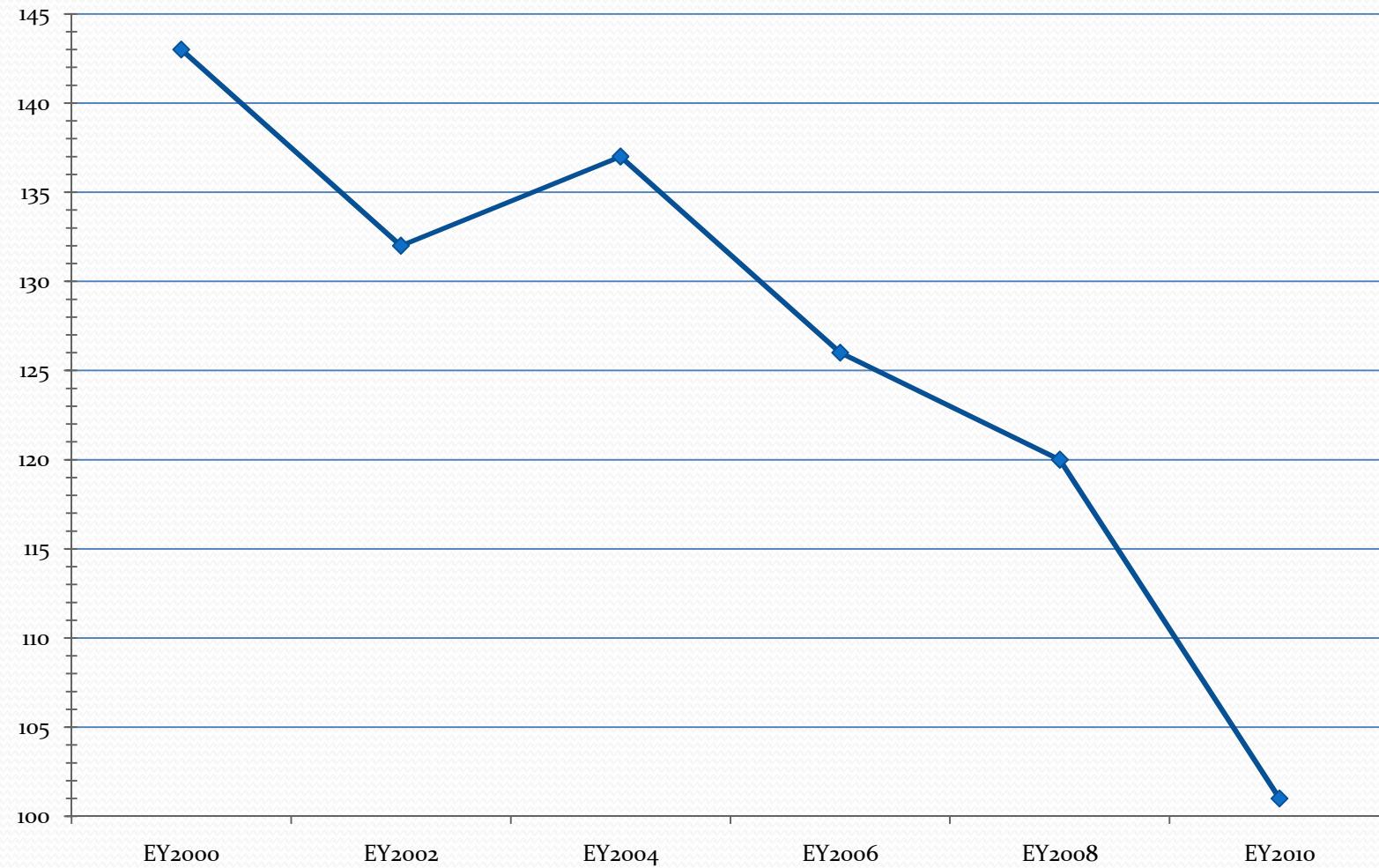
Point #3

It is not a valid argument to say something should become law simply because the Legislature has consistently chosen not to make it a law on its own.

Point #4

A shorter session means less time away from home, away from family, away from work in the private sector, etc, and thus will incent more “competition” between quality individuals to run for office.

Total Candidates Filed For Alaska State House & Senate 2000-2010



Point #4

Since the 2006 vote to shorten the legislative sessions, the candidate pool has shrunken 20%; the opposite of what was argued in favor of passing BM#1 .



Other considerations to restore a 120-day session:

1. Public testimony & the deliberative process
2. Staff workloads
3. House Subcommittee Evaluation Survey
4. Balance of Power – Executive Branch

SB 18 Strikes A Compromise

90-Day First Session

120-Day Second Session

Senator Gary Stevens