

Alaska State Legislature

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Sponsor Statement – SB 170

“An Act extending the Alaska senior benefits payment program.”

SB 170 would extend the Alaska Senior Benefits Program to June 20, 2023. If the program is not extended, it will sunset on June 30, 2018.

The current Senior Benefits Program was established in August 2007 and provides three-tiered payment levels based on the senior's gross annual income. Income limits are tied to the Federal Poverty Guidelines for Alaska and change as the federal government adjusts the poverty level. There is no asset test for this program.

The Senior Benefits Program is an important safety net for honoring our Alaska pioneers. For many, it is the difference between choosing to pay for medications or filling a heating fuel tank in the cold winter months. This modest cash benefits allows many of our seniors to retain their independence and live at home longer.

SB 170 extends the current program, but still leaves it up to yearly appropriation by the Legislature. The monthly payment for the highest income level was reduced due to the state's budget situation. The tiers are paid at \$76, \$175 and \$250 per month. By leaving the program intact in statute, the state can return to paying a full senior benefit at all three program levels when our fiscal situation stabilizes.

Please join me in supporting our 11,400 valued senior citizens who rely on this program by supporting SB 170.