



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

House Labor and Commerce Committee

Rep. Ivy Spohnholz

Chair

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 308

“An Act Relating to unemployment benefits during a period of state or national emergency resulting from a novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak; and providing for an effective date.”

This legislation ensures Alaska employees can receive Unemployment Insurance whether they are furloughed, laid off, lose work hours, or are forced to stay home to care for children as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is imperative we cut red tape to ensure Alaskans who have been paying into Unemployment Insurance can receive benefits they have earned during this time of unprecedented economic and public health crisis.

The traditional Unemployment Insurance system was not designed for a global pandemic that shuts down schools, businesses, and childcare simultaneously. This legislation provides emergency relief during the COVID crisis so that workers facing an array of economic challenges—whether it’s a layoff or lost work hours—can recoup some lost wages and avoid compounding impacts of income loss.

This legislation:

- 1) waives the standard one week waiting requirement to begin receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits.
- 2) Increases the weekly per-dependent benefit from \$25 to \$75, providing some relief for families who have lost childcare and income simultaneously.

Many families and small businesses face economic devastation as a result of a collapsing economy, and relief cannot wait.

This legislation is designed to provide emergency relief for up to one year.