

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
February 22, 2024  
9:34 a.m.

9:34:56 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Olson called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair  
Senator Donny Olson, Co-Chair  
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair  
Senator Click Bishop  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Senator Kelly Merrick  
Senator David Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Steve Carriere, City Council, City of Dillingham; Layton Lockett, City Manager, City of Adak.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Eileen Arnold, Executive Director, Tundra Women's Coalition, Bethel; Jill Keene, Tundra Women's Coalition, Bethel; Kurt Buchholz, Board Member, Blood Bank of Alaska, Dillingham; Anthony Cravalho, Director of Planning and Development, Maniilaq Association, Kotzebue; Roseanne Evan, Self, Bethel.

SUMMARY

SB 186      APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET; CAP; SUPP; AM

SB 186 was heard and HELD in Committee for further consideration.

SB 187      APPROP: CAP; REAPPROP

SB 187 was heard and HELD in Committee for further consideration.

SB 188 APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

SB 188 was heard and HELD in Committee for further consideration.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY: NOME, BETHEL, KOTZEBUE, UTQIAGVIK, UNALASKA, DILLINGHAM, and OFFNETS

#sb186

#sb187

#sb188

SENATE BILL NO. 186

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; amending appropriations; making capital appropriations; making supplemental appropriations; making reappropriations; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

SENATE BILL NO. 187

"An Act making appropriations, including capital appropriations and other appropriations; making reappropriations; making appropriations to capitalize funds; and providing for an effective date."

SENATE BILL NO. 188

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; and providing for an effective date."

[9:35:24 AM](#)

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: NOME, BETHEL, KOTZEBUE, UTQIAGVIK, UNALASKA, DILLINGHAM, and OFFNETS

[9:36:10 AM](#)

STEVE CARRIERE, CITY COUNCIL, CITY OF DILLINGHAM, testified in support of funding to address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). He noted that the city had identified 17 wells that had alarming rates of PFAS contamination. He mentioned that He had worked with Peter Pan Seafoods. He noted that Dillingham had a plan in place for mitigation that included a municipal water line extension from the boat harbor to the airport. The line would address the problem and would revitalize the airport area. He mentioned this issue of erosion at Stag Point, which was the location of the water treatment facility. He referenced an Army Corps of Engineers report that indicated loss of 12 feet of ground per year. He mentioned the need for a fire hall and indicated that the tribe had provided some funding. He discussed insufficient clearance of emergency vehicles in the bays of the fire hall.

[9:39:30 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:39:36 AM](#)

RECONVENED

LAYTON LOCKETT, CITY MANAGER, CITY OF ADAK, spoke in favor of recapitalization of the Community Assistance Program. He mentioned a major loss of industry in Adak. He mentioned a major issue with the high cost of energy and cited that there was an upcoming increase to \$2 per kilowatt hour. He mentioned aged transmission lines. He asked for support with the Power Cost Equalization (PCE) Program and funding to leverage federal grants. He mentioned the Village Safe Water program and water and sewer needs.

[9:41:09 AM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman referenced a military build-up in the North Pacific and a former substantial facility at Adak. He asked if the community was looking for infrastructure improvements to help support the activity of the United States Navy or Coast Guard in the area.

Mr. Lockett affirmed that the City of Adak continued to have outreach with the military regarding possibilities. He noted that the city worked through state agencies to have the ability to maintain infrastructure. He mentioned the

importance of maintaining facilities to support possible expansion without great expense.

[9:42:24 AM](#)

EILEEN ARNOLD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TUNDRA WOMEN'S COALITION, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in support of increased funding for Alaska's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) budget for victim's services. She noted that the budget currently had a \$4 million deficit that could result in the loss of programs and was the equivalent of three full-time staff. She discussed reductions in daily capacity shelters, which disproportionately affected Alaska Natives. She discussed the effect of shorter shelter stays on vulnerable populations. She discussed the justice response in her area and noted that troopers were not always available. She mentioned a newspaper headline that mentioned a criminal case and highlighted the coalition's work in connecting victims with the justice process.

[9:44:34 AM](#)

JILL KEENE, TUNDRA WOMEN'S COALITION, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the CDVSA Victim's Services budget within DPS. She was a 39-year resident of Bethel. She discussed the criminal justice system and its processes. She discussed programs designed to reduce recidivism. She noted that historically the Yukon-Kuskokwim region of the state had the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault in the state. She discussed the work of the Tundra Women's Coalition (TWC) and noted that a decline in services would leave victims vulnerable. She was a survivor of domestic violence and attested to the need for shelters, legal assistance, housing assistance, and support.

[9:46:31 AM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman asked about the Tundra Women's Coalition and if there was more demand for services and if there was headway being made.

Ms. Keene thought the question would be better addressed by the TWC director.

Co-Chair Olson noted that the director was not present.

Ms. Keene agreed to provide the information at a later time.

9:47:06 AM

KURT BUCHHOLZ, BOARD MEMBER, BLOOD BANK OF ALASKA, DILLINGHAM (via teleconference), spoke in favor of funding for blood testing in the state. He relayed that he was a pathologist and had practiced in the state for 28 years. He served five rural hospitals through the blood bank and mentioned hospitals in Nome and Wrangell. He spoke to the need for blood in rural communities and decreasing the turnaround time for patience. He detailed that currently blood testing was done in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which caused delays and shortages of blood in the state. He asked for funding to complete the testing facility for the Blood Bank of Alaska.

Co-Chair Olson asked how much additional funds were requested.

Mr. Buckholz thought the request was for an additional \$2 million for equipment. He thought the project total was \$3 million. He noted that once the program was set up it would be self-sufficient and would not require further funding.

9:49:39 AM

ANTHONY CRAVALHO, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, MANIILAQ ASSOCIATION, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), testified in favor of increased behavioral health grant funding. He noted that he was also representing the Alaska Regional Coalition, which was a small tribal coalition representing 109 different tribes in the state. He discussed the Medicaid 1115 waiver and Medicaid behavioral health grant funding, which was the primary way that his association was able to bill for services. He stressed the need to eliminate gaps in the behavioral health continuum of care. He wanted to ensure that the Department of Health had the resources to ensure Medicaid applications and redeterminations were reviewed and completed in a timely manner. He thanked the legislature for its work. He stressed the importance of doing what was possible to make community-based services possible, specifically in rural Alaska.

[9:52:06 AM](#)

ROSEANNE EVAN, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for victim's services programs such as TWC. She was originally from Napakiak. She was a domestic violence survivor and had used the shelter in Bethel and recounted having help from TWC. She discussed the need for housing. She attributed her survival to the availability of services at TWC. She emphasized the need for victim's services.

Senator Merrick thanked Ms. Evan for her brave and powerful testimony.

[9:55:20 AM](#)

RECESSED

[10:16:39 AM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Olson discussed the agenda for the following meeting.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[10:17:07 AM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.