

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

January 27, 2026

8:04 a.m.

DRAFT

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Rebecca Himschoot, Co-Chair
Representative Donna Mears, Co-Chair
Representative Carolyn Hall
Representative Ky Holland
Representative Mike Prax
Representative Steve St. Clair
Representative Garret Nelson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 255

"An Act relating to permanent fund dividend raffles; creating the senior citizen grants endowment fund and the senior citizen grants dividend raffle fund; authorizing donations from permanent fund dividends for grants to organizations that provide support for senior citizens and for entry into the senior citizen grants dividend raffle; relating to transfers from the senior citizen grants endowment fund and the senior citizen grants dividend raffle fund; relating to the duties of the Department of Revenue; and relating to the definition of 'gambling.'"

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 255

SHORT TITLE: SENIOR CITIZEN GRANTS DIVIDEND RAFFLE

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) STAPP

01/20/26	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/16/26
01/20/26	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/20/26	(H)	CRA, FIN
01/27/26	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 255

ELIZABETH REXFORD, Staff
Representative Will Stapp
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the sectional analysis for HB 255 on behalf of Representative Stapp, prime sponsor.

VIVIAN STIVER, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of HB 255.

TONY NEWMAN, Director
Division of Senior and Disabilities Services
Department of Health
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 255.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Hall, Holland, Prax, St. Clair, Nelson, Himschoot, and Mears.

HB 255-SENIOR CITIZEN GRANTS DIVIDEND RAFFLE

[8:05:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 255, "An Act relating to permanent fund dividend raffles; creating the senior citizen grants endowment fund and the senior citizen grants dividend raffle fund; authorizing donations from permanent fund dividends for grants to organizations that provide support for senior citizens and for entry into the senior citizen grants dividend raffle;

relating to transfers from the senior citizen grants endowment fund and the senior citizen grants dividend raffle fund; relating to the duties of the Department of Revenue; and relating to the definition of 'gambling.'"

[8:06:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE G. NELSON introduced himself as a new member of the committee, highlighting his seven years of service on the Sutton Community Council. He said he's honored to be part of the committee.

[8:06:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ST. CLAIR introduced himself as a new member of the committee, highlighting his 20 years of military service, as well as his experience as a legislative staffer for then Representative Cathy Tilton and former Representative Thomas Baker.

[8:07:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 255. He paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in the committee file], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 255 creates a new, voluntary way for Alaskans to support senior services across the state by establishing the Senior Citizen Grants Endowment Fund and the Senior Citizen Grants Dividend Raffle Fund.

HB 255 allows Alaskans to donate a portion of their Permanent Fund Dividend, on a voluntary basis, to support grants for nonprofit organizations that serve Alaska's senior citizens. To encourage participation, the bill also establishes a dividend raffle, providing contributors with an opportunity to win prizes while supporting a meaningful public purpose.

The bill is designed to be self-funding and voluntary. It does not require new general fund appropriations and instead relies on individual choice and private contributions. Funds collected would be administered by the Department of Revenue and used to support organizations that provide critical services to

seniors, including assistance that helps older Alaskans remain independent, healthy, and connected to their communities.

As Alaska's population continues to age, many senior service providers are facing increased demand and rising costs. HB 255 offers a creative, Alaska-specific solution that builds on an existing system Alaskans are familiar with - the Permanent Fund Dividend - to strengthen long-term support for seniors without increasing taxes or mandatory fees.

This legislation gives Alaskans a new opportunity to invest directly in the wellbeing of our seniors and the organizations that serve them, while ensuring transparency, accountability, and voluntary participation.

[8:10:46 AM](#)

ELIZABETH REXFORD, Staff, Representative Will Stapp, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Stapp, prime sponsor, presented the sectional analysis for HB 255 [included in the committee file], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1

Amends the statutory definition of "gambling" in AS 11.66.280(3) to explicitly exclude permanent fund dividend raffles authorized under AS 43.23.230 and AS 43.23.238.

Section 2

Updates the duties of the Department of Revenue outlined in AS 43.23.055 to reflect administration of multiple PFD donation and raffle options, including prioritization of contributions when a donor's elections exceed the amount of the dividend.

Sections 3-4-5-6: (Technical Conforming Changes)

Section 3

Updates existing statute AS 43.23.230(a) governing the education dividend raffle fund to conform with terminology and structure used throughout the bill.

Section 4

Reaffirms language in AS 43.23.230(b) governing voluntary PFD donations for education purposes and entry into the education dividend raffle.

Section 5

Reaffirms in AS 43.23.230(c) the allocation of education-related PFD donations between the education endowment fund, the education dividend raffle fund, and supplemental grants to school districts.

Section 6

Reaffirms provisions in AS 43.23.230(d), which governs the annual raffle drawing and prize structure for the education dividend raffle.

Section 7

Establishes the statutory authority in AS 43.23.235 and AS 43.23.238 for the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) Senior Citizen Grants Endowment Fund. It also creates the donation structure, raffle entry mechanism, grant allocation percentages and annual public drawing requirements for the Senior Citizen Grants Dividend Raffle Fund.

Section 8

Specifies when the Act becomes effective if enacted: January 1, 2027.

[8:14:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS announced that the committee would hear invited testimony on HB 255.

[8:14:59 AM](#)

VIVIAN STIVER, representing self, gave invited testimony in support of HB 255. She reported that Alaska's elder residents consistently identify (indisc.), transportation, and housing among their top concerns, and the legislation would address this by establishing stable, ongoing funding to meet these needs. She said the bill is intended as an additional revenue source, not a replacement for existing funds to help meet the increasing demand for service and the rising cost. She shared relevant statistics and said currently, there are two sources of income for senior services: flat federal funding and constrained state funding depending on the year. A third option is needed to address increases in cost of food, labor, transportation, and

the expansion of services. She urged the legislature to prepare for seniors' needs to allow for dignity in the aging process.

[8:19:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS sought questions from members of the committee.

[8:19:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND asked where the senior citizen grants dividend raffle fund sits in the "fabric" and ethos of supporting senior citizen programs, as opposed to Pick.Click.Give, which puts the money directly into the beneficiaries' hands.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP explained that the raffle concept is an incentive structure to encourage more participants in the program.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND shared his understanding that as proposed, the fund would need to reach \$1 billion before distribution. He asked by this number was chosen.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP said the figure is more of a benchmark; however, it's probably unrealistic to think that the fund would capitalize at \$1 billion. He added that he would be open to adjusting the threshold.

[8:23:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND asked whether a parallel program like the Permanent Fund Dividend Education Raffle Fund could offer insight into anticipated costs for the fiscal note.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP said he could not answer the question without consulting with the Department of Revenue (DOR) to figure out their methodology. He reported an initial startup cost of \$4,400.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND requested real numbers rather than estimates.

[8:26:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated his support for the bill's intent. He sought clarity on how the bill would work in terms of the statutory split.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP explained that 25 percent would go to the senior citizen grants endowment fund, 25 percent would go to the senior citizen grants dividend raffle fund, and the remaining 50 percent would be distributed through grant facilitation by the Department of Health (DOH). He reiterated that he would be open to changing the formula.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked what would happen [if someone were to donate more than the declared dividend amount.]

MS. REXFORD referenced Section 2 of the bill, and explained that prioritization would be given to Pick.Click.Give, followed by the existing Permanent Fund Dividend Education Raffle Fund, and finally, the senior citizen grants dividend raffle fund.

[8:30:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT questioned how the funds would be distributed geographically.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP clarified that DOH distributes the funds to third parties via grants. He deferred questions about the selection of programs to the department.

[8:32:02 AM](#)

TONY NEWMAN, Director, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, Department of Health (DOH), reported that the division distributes approximately \$18 million in grants for seniors and other populations with disabilities. One of the largest grant programs is the Nutrition Transportation and Support Services (NTS) Grant, which is a combination of federal and state funding totaling around \$7 million. He added that the division follows a funding formula to ensure statewide distribution.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT shared her understanding that without a specific entity making meals in a certain community, that community would not benefit from home delivered meals.

MR. NEWMAN clarified that there are a variety of agencies that receive these funds. Some meals are distributed in congregate settings while other services are offered by local agencies.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT sought to confirm that there are a variety of programs and a wider range of services than those

listed on the funding flow chart [included in the committee file].

MR. NEWMAN offered to follow up with the requested information.

[8:34:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HALL asked what qualified as supportive housing services for seniors.

MR. NEWMAN offered to follow up after further discussion with the bill sponsor.

[8:35:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE G. NELSON asked why the meal delivery service is being prioritized.

MR. NEWMAN deferred to the bill sponsor.

[8:36:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND asked where Mr. Newman would distribute this funding first if it were up to him, and whether the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) money is used for senior services.

MR. NEWMAN opined that the bill sponsor and Ms. Stiver have done a good job at prioritizing the services that are needed.

[8:38:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether the selection of programs has already been predetermined.

MR. NEWMAN confirmed that the division would need to determine whether to supplement existing programs or create a new type of grant.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether the decision would be formulaic.

MR. NEWMAN acknowledged that a formula would be needed to ensure a consistent and transparent process.

[8:39:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP, in response to Representative G. Nelson, stated that changing the distribution formula would not affect the mechanics of the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE G. NELSON asked whether home-delivered meals are the highest priority and greatest need.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP deferred to Ms. Stiver.

[8:40:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND referred to Section 7, subsection (c) of the bill, which clarifies the formulaic structure of distribution: 50 to the home delivery of meals, 25 percent to transportation services, and 25 to housing services.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP agreed, reiterating that he's not "married" to this formula, but he and Ms. Stiver determined that it's the best way to meet the need.

[8:41:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether the bill sponsor would be amenable to directing the funds to the Senior Benefits Program.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP stated that the Senior Benefits Program has more stringent financial requirements compared to other grant programs. He expressed a desire to empower private sector organizations as opposed to government agencies.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked why eligibility for the raffle starts at age 18.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP did not know the answer.

[8:45:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS asked how much the education raffle raises each year.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP deferred the question to DOR.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND reported approximately \$1 million per year.

CO-CHAIR MEARS discussed the capitalization of the endowment fund and opined that the bill would grow the state's wealth

without benefitting anyone until the fund gets large enough. She asked for the bill sponsor's philosophy on it.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP shared his philosophy on endowments, which usually includes target capitalization and a healthy corpus. He stated that the goal is to augment existing services, not replace them, so he would be open to amending it.

CO-CHAIR MEARS asked for the bill sponsor's opinion on removing the endowment portion of HB 255 entirely.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP said he would follow up after further consideration.

CO-CHAIR MEARS commented on the philosophy of holding money in state coffers rather than distributing it to services or recipients directly. Ultimately, she said it's a math problem, and something to consider further.

[8:49:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS announced that HB 255 would be held over.

[8:50:49 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.