

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
February 26, 2026
1:31 p.m.

[1:31:16 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Senator Cronk called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Donny Olson, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Mike Cronk
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Kelly Merrick

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senator James Kaufman

ALSO PRESENT

Eileen Arnold, Executive Director, Tundra Women's Coalition, Juneau; Leila Johnson, Tribal Director, Day Haven OV/SA Shelter, Juneau; Jenny Shryock, Director, Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education; Kasie Luke, Superintendent, Lake and Peninsula Borough School District, Juneau; Finn Hill, Self, Juneau; Analise Kosbruk, Self, Juneau; Bertha Koweluk, Executive Director, Bering Sea Women's Group, Juneau; Cheryl Humme, Arctic Women In Crisis, Juneau.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Carol Piscoya, Kawerak Inc., Nome; Grace Singh, Maniilaq Association, Alaska Regional Coalition, Anchorage; Skye Michael Chayalkun, Mayor, City of Chevak, Chevak; Matt Atkinson, Self, Fairbanks.

SUMMARY

SB 213 APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET;AMEND;SUPP

SB 213 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 214 APPROP: CAPITAL/FUNDS/SUPP/REAPPROP

SB 214 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 215 APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

SB 215 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CSHB 289(FIN)(brf sup maj fld)
APPROP: SUPPLEMENTAL

CSHB 289(FIN)(brf sup maj fld) was SCHEDULED but not HEARD.

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

#sb213

#sb214

#sb215

SENATE BILL NO. 213

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; amending appropriations; making supplemental appropriations; 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. 214

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

SENATE BILL NO. 215

"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."

[1:32:29 PM](#)

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

[1:32:37 PM](#)

EILEEN ARNOLD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TUNDRA WOMEN'S COALITION, JUNEAU, spoke in support of funding for domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programs. She specifically testified in support of an increase to the programs. She stressed that there had been flat funding since 2017, and inflation had had a significant impact on the funding for the necessary services. She spoke to the intense increases in costs for programs and services.

[1:36:18 PM](#)

LEILA JOHNSON, TRIBAL DIRECTOR, DAY HAVEN OV/SA SHELTER, JUNEAU, spoke in support of funding for the additional \$2.5 million for the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA). She shared that the shelter that she directs is a last resort fleeing violence with nowhere to turn. She stressed that there is no other agency to call when experiencing violence and traumas. She stressed that reduced funding results in less safety. She remarked that inflation had increased costs and not reduced the need.

[1:39:04 PM](#)

CAROL PISCOYA, KAWERAK INC., NOME (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for two areas: public safety and education. She specifically spoke to funding for the Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO). She stressed that a VPSO was funded by requiring all aspects of the coordination to incorporate, train, and house the VPSO. She stressed and reducing funding for any aspect of the program would reduce the effectiveness of the VPSO. She remarked that small increases have not resulted in necessary enhancements and needs in the schools, especially rural schools in smaller communities. She remarked that the

recent increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) was nice, it did not fulfill the needs of all students.

[1:42:15 PM](#)

GRACE SINGH, MANIILAQ ASSOCIATION, ALASKA REGIONAL COALITION, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the VPSO program, and also thanked the committee for past funding for the program. She also spoke in support of funding for K-12 education, and thanked the committee for the recent increase to the BSA. She spoke in support of funding for behavioral health programs. She felt that basing the state's funding for the behavioral health programs on revenue from tobacco and alcohol sales was going in the wrong direction.

[1:46:21 PM](#)

SKYE MICHAEL CHAYALKUN, MAYOR, CITY OF CHEVAK, CHEVAK (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for VPSOs and maintenance for roads. He remarked on the positive impact on capital projects on the infrastructure and public facilities in smaller communities. He spoke in support of funding for behavioral health services. He felt that the mental health services were a shared responsibility between the state and local municipalities. He urged the committee to consider funding the quality services across the state, and protect voter approved local projects.

[1:50:03 PM](#)

MATT ATKINSON, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of \$10 million funding for tourism marketing. He stated that tourism was one of the highest private sector economies in the state. He remarked that many other states invested in their much smaller tourism markets. He spoke to the appeal of Alaska for visitors, including the jobs and revenue for the state. He remarked that it was a growing economy, and there was a risk of losing the market share in the global market of tourism.

[1:52:55 PM](#)

JENNY SHRYOCK, DIRECTOR, BRISTOL BAY REGIONAL CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION, testified in support of funding for the residential school program. She remarked that funding

for the residential school program increases the value of education for the students in the program.

[1:54:33 PM](#)

KASIE LUKE, SUPERINTENDENT, LAKE AND PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, JUNEAU, echoed the remarks of Ms. Shryock. She remarked that the use of funds for the program was guided by all students in the partnership.

Ms. Shryock urged the committee to keep the Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education funding.

[1:56:26 PM](#)

FINN HILL, SELF, JUNEAU, spoke in support of funding for the Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education program. She stated that she had completed the program and was currently a pilot. She stated that the program was beneficial to students.

[1:57:47 PM](#)

ANALISE KOSBRUK, SELF, JUNEAU, spoke in support of funding for the Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education program. She stated that the program gave her access to cultural programs, and found that she wanted to go into the health profession. She felt that the program provided enriching opportunities for students across the state.

[1:59:15 PM](#)

BERTHA KOWELUK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BERING SEA WOMEN'S GROUP, JUNEAU, spoke in support of funding the ANDVSA. She stated that she was a survivor of domestic violence. She remarked that she had every opportunity, which was different than conventional survivors. She stressed that she needed the funding in order to keep staff. She stressed that funding and urgency were necessary to build partnerships and retain staff. She remarked that she was also one of the lowest paid employers in Nome.

[2:02:46 PM](#)

CHERYL HUMME, ARCTIC WOMEN IN CRISIS, JUNEAU, spoke in support of funding for the ANDVSA services. She remarked that her shelter was the only shelter on the North Slope

Borough, with only 28 beds. She stressed that they went into schools for education and also community outreach. She stressed the shelter's vital role in the community, and the funding was necessary for the shelter to remain open.

Senator Cronk thanked those in person, especially the young people, who came to testify.

[2:05:19 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:05:37 PM](#)

RECONVINED

Senator Cronk that the committee would reconvene at 2:30PM.

[2:05:46 PM](#)

RECESSED

[2:29:22 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Senator Cronk stated that the committee would reconvene at 2:45PM.

[2:29:40 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:45:25 PM](#)

RECONVENED

SB 213 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 214 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 215 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#hb289

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 289(FIN) (brf sup maj fld)

"An Act making appropriations, including supplemental appropriations, capital appropriations, reappropriations, and other appropriations; amending

appropriations; capitalizing funds; and providing for an effective date."

CSHB 289(FIN)(brf sup maj fld) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#

ADJOURNMENT

2:46:10 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 2:46 p.m.