

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
February 27, 2026
9:02 a.m.

9:02:46 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Senator Cronk called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senator James Kaufman

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Carrie Nash, Board President, Alaska Center for Children and Adults, Fairbanks; Erin Morotti, Executive Director, Interior Alaska Center for Non-Violent Living, Fairbanks; Heidi Haas, Executive Director, Alaska Center for Children and Adults, Fairbanks; Jordan Sanford, President, Doyon Tourism, Fairbanks; Erika Burr, Self, Fairbanks; Angela Blandov, Self, Ketchikan; Debra Foster, Self, Fairbanks; Kari Rogers, Self, Glennallen; Wade Binkley, President, Riverboat Discovery, 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: FAIRBANKS, COPPER RIVER VALLEY, OFFNETS

Senator Cronk discussed the agenda. He asked testifiers to confine remarks to the topic of the budgets.

#sb213
#sb214
#sb215
#hb289

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."

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."

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: FAIRBANKS, COPPER RIVER VALLEY, OFFNETS

9:04:06 AM

CARRIE NASH, BOARD PRESIDENT, ALASKA CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of \$5.72 million in funding for the Infant Learning Program (ILP) and to increase eligibility guidelines to broader guidelines. She was the mom of two kids with special needs and was the board president for the Alaska Center for Children and Adults (ACCA). She relayed that ACCA provided early intervention and family support. She asserted that every child served by ACCA that avoided special education in public schools saved the state up to \$229,000. She stressed that supportive families made the state great.

9:05:45 AM

ERIN MOROTTI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTERIOR ALASKA CENTER FOR NON-VIOLENT LIVING, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of \$2.5 million for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). She was responsible for fiscal stewardship and ensuring that state investment translated into measurable public safety outcomes. She cited that in FY 2025, her organizations provided thousands of crisis hotline calls and nights in a shelter. She discussed a consumer that received immediate shelter, legal assistance housing assistance, and other services. She mentioned the outcome preventing additional law enforcement response, medical costs, and deeper involvement by the Office of Children's Services (OCS). She cited that the economic burden of sexual assault and domestic violence estimated to be \$7 billion statewide. She discussed funding cuts resulting in her organization's ability to provide legal services.

9:08:20 AM

HEIDI HAAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of \$5.72 million in funding for ILP as well as expanding eligibility. She relayed that she was the parent of a young adult that had received early intervention services. She supported aligning eligibility of ILP with school-based special education services would decrease the number of children that needed special education services and would result in savings.

[9:09:45 AM](#)

JORDAN SANFORD, PRESIDENT, DOYON TOURISM, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of tourism marketing funds. She noted that Doyon Tourism owned tourism businesses across the state and supported hundreds of seasonal and year-round jobs. She cited that tourism generated \$5.6 billion in economic impact and supported 48,000 jobs statewide. In 2024, tourism contributed \$181.7 million in state revenue. She cited that Alaska was outspent by competing destinations. She argued that in a competitive marketplace, visibility drove visitation and therefore revenue.

[9:11:39 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:25:51 AM](#)

RECONVENED

ERIKA BURR, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of increased K-12 education funding. She relayed that she was a parent and a high school teacher. She discussed the need for smaller class sizes at the high school level, where many classes had more than 30 students. She mentioned that larger class sizes signified less engagement and less connection with the teacher. She discussed the need for teachers to have time for planning. She discussed the importance of sports, music, and art. She was concerned about wages leaving the state.

[9:29:15 AM](#)

ANGELA BLANDOV, SELF, KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), spoke in support of education funding. She was a mother of three older adult children. She had an adopted child that had a variety of challenges including fetal alcohol syndrome and

cerebral palsy. She was a survivor of domestic violence. She thought there were serious problems in the Ketchikan School District, including a shortage of para educators. She mentioned that her child had been assaulted in school. She discussed impending funding cuts to school activities. She supported ILP. She discussed the importance of early intervention.

Ms. Blandov discussed necessary accommodations that schools were not equipped to handle. She stressed the need for more help and support in school. She was concerned teachers were not receiving needed support. She discussed school closures in the state.

[9:34:05 AM](#)

DEBRA FOSTER, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of increased funding and expanded eligibility for ILP. She was the parent and guardian of two children with special needs. She had seen the impact of early intervention. She thought eligibility expansion would save the state money.

[9:35:18 AM](#)

KARI ROGERS, SELF, GLENNALLEN (via teleconference), testified in support of increased funding for public education, including funding for teachers. She supported the hiring of quality teachers that could be retained. She mentioned the lack of a defined benefit program for teachers, which she thought led to teachers looking for employment elsewhere. She promoted maintenance of school infrastructure. She mentioned support for legal aid for groups such as seniors, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and others.

[9:38:07 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:52:19 AM](#)

RECONVENED

WADE BINKLEY, PRESIDENT, RIVERBOAT DISCOVERY, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), supported \$10 million in funding in the capital budget for the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA). He recounted that his grandparents had founded the family business and were instrumental in

forming the Alaska Visitors Association. The association had been started with a \$25,000 grant from the territorial legislature. He mentioned that the previous year's appropriation being vetoed down to \$2.5 million. He noted that his business employed about 20 full-time year-round staff and about 180 seasonal employees. He thought it was important to provide young people with meaningful jobs that taught foundational life skills. He thought tourism created opportunities for young people and kept young Alaskans connected to their homes. He cited that in 2024, tourism contributed \$180 million directly to the General Fund. He thought tourism was the state's most sustainable and renewable resource.

9:55:31 AM

AT EASE

10:05:02 AM

RECONVENED

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

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

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

Senator Cronk discussed the agenda for the afternoon meeting.

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ADJOURNMENT

10:05:39 AM

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.