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# Alaska Legislative Digest

*Alaska's only comprehensive issues and policy review —since 1974*

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## Trump may pause Alaska projects

Alaska organizations are getting “stop work” orders from President Trump’s White House on certain projects funded under the federal Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Acts. The immediate effect is for a 90-day hold so this could be lifted, but in the meantime it’s causing a lot of confusion and disruptions of planning and schedules. The Alaska Municipal League, which is helping municipalities coordinate dozens of grants, said it received its first stop work order last Thursday. State Transportation Commissioner Ryan Anderson also told the Senate Transportation Committee on Thursday that his agency had been ordered to stop work on one federally-funded project but that the order was subsequently lifted. The stop orders on IJIA and IRA projects stem from the President’s Executive Order issued the day he assumed office, Jan. 21, but it has since been clarified that the stop applies only to “green” projects referenced in the “Terminating the Green New Deal” section of the order. However, the effect of this is still unclear. Most IJIA and IRA grants reference climate impact policies as justifications.

A separate order from the president pausing “equity and environmental justice” project awards will also affect Alaska directly because many grants linked to these policies are being made to Alaska tribes and municipalities. The large Alaska Native population in Alaska and the geographic spread has put Alaska at a competitive advantage for these grants, which has led to Alaska getting more federal grants per capita than any other state. The confusion this creates is over procurement and hiring that is already underway based on funding from grants that have been awarded.

This affects contractors and businesses that are gearing up to handle the contracts. *Watch for Alaska Native 8(a) contracting with federal agencies to be in the new president’s cross-hairs. This could have big effects in Alaska.*

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## Speed bumps for new President’s Alaska plans?

Gov. Mike Dunleavy and many Alaskans are happy about new President Donald Trump’s plans for an aggressive buildup for Alaska oil development. But there will be bumps in Trump’s plans. Many of the new proposals will require new environmental reviews and permits, which will take time. There will also be lawsuits, which will add delays. Some may be substantial.

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## **. . . Energy/ Infrastructure . . .**

### **Cook Inlet gas royalty relief may slide down priority list**

Pending declines in Cook Inlet natural gas, and energy supply risks for Southcentral communities continue at the forefront of concerns for legislators. State royalty reductions for Cook Inlet gas production, a big issue in the 2024 session when the legislation did not pass, is likely to have a lower priority this year, however. HEX/Furie, a small Cook Inlet producer, told the Senate Resources Committee Jan. 22 it expects to get final approval of a temporary administrative reduction (from 12.5% to 3%) from the Department of Natural Resources soon, so no legislative action will be needed. Hilcorp Energy, the Inlet's major gas producer, said it will not seek a reduction, saying it wouldn't help the economics of its wells.

### **Modest success in new Cook Inlet gas drilling highlights risk**

What was troubling was Hilcorp's discussion of its success rate with new drilling. Of 21 new development wells in producing fields, (i.e. not risky exploration wells), only 13 found gas that could be produced, Hilcorp told the committee. Hilcorp's success rate is modest because it is drilling into older, less productive reservoirs, the company said. This contrasts with HEX/Furie's drilling into a newer gas deposit with a recently completed well. But HEX/Furie acknowledged risks in Cook Inlet, saying that last year one of two well "workovers" (or repairs) was unsuccessful.

### **Rural airports: Runway lighting problems, weather reporting**

The state maintains 235 rural airports used by multiple air carriers. Updated runway lighting has emerged as an issue, with lighting being out at 50 to 60 airports not uncommon. DOTPF is acquiring emergency light kits but has only 8 so far. Maintaining automated weather reporting at rural airports is also a problem. Having as many as a third of the airport weather systems off-line is not uncommon.

### **Coastal communities should move to tap new federal funds for harbors, ports**

DOTPF also hopes to see expanded use of federal maritime funds for rural harbors and ports along the state's western and northern coasts now designated as the M-11 Arctic Gateway route, a federally-designated corridor that is designated for improvements to aid freight delivery. Rural seasonal ice roads and snow trails have also been designated as eligible for federal funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). These are particularly important in the Bethel region of Southwest Alaska.

### **DOTPF continues to struggle with workforce recruiting, retention**

The agency continues to struggle with workforce recruiting and retention in several parts of the state, with 15% positions vacant in the northern region and 20% to 40% at certain maintenance locations. Staffing camps for Thompson Pass and Valdez, on the Richardson Highway as well as the Dalton Highway has been challenging. Getting electricians is a particularly difficult problem, the agency said. One of the problems in recruiting in rural areas is the Commercial Driver's License requirement. DOTPF has a special "off road" CDL training program in the pilot stage, the agency told the Senate committee.

# In Juneau: “No money blues”

## Oil revenues dive with industry investment tax deductions

Legislators are settling down to budget work this week, and reduced revenues are a disappointment particularly for newly-elected legislators who want to show accomplishments. The House Finance Committee will set up budget subcommittees today (Monday), said cochair Rep. Andy Josephson, D-Anch. Also, the Senate Finance Committee begins its overview of the budget today with the Office of Management and Budget. Money is tight. Revenues are down, mainly from oil. Unrestricted oil income dropped from \$2.46 billion in FY 2024, which ended last June, to \$1.85 billion in the current FY 2025, the Department of Revenue told the Senate Finance Committee last Friday. FY 2026 oil income is estimated at \$1.72 billion. Non-petroleum income is steady, at about \$580 million. Total Undesignated General Fund income, the amount available to fund the general budget, dropped from \$6.63 billion in FY 2024 to \$6.228 billion in FY 2025, and to \$6.198 billion estimated to be available for FY 2026, which begins July 1.

### **Why the decline? Structure of state production tax a factor**

Why the decline? Oil prices are down a bit and production is somewhat lower than had been expected, but one new factor is that higher capital spending by oil companies on new projects on the North Slope is reducing what they pay in production taxes. That happens because the state’s net-profits type production tax allows for deductions of capital investment. The several billion dollars being spent on the new Pikka and Willow projects are a boost for economy but it’s a hit to the treasury that may last for several years because some of the deductions can carry forward. This will likely prompt a review of state oil tax policy by the finance committees. Sen. Bert Stedman, R-Sitka, a member of Senate Finance, said he’d like a review of production tax credits. A move to overhaul the net profits structure is unlikely because of its complexity but legislators may zero in on certain issues like the tax status of limited partnership companies that do not pay state corporate income tax. With coalition Majorities in both House and Senate this may have a better chance this year than in previous years.

### **Good news: Permanent Fund’s budget contribution sees steady increases**

Some good news for the budget is that the annual Percent-of-Market-Value, or POMV, payment from the Permanent Fund is increasing steadily. The POMV will rise by \$200 million in FY 2026 to \$3.8 billion and is forecasted to reach \$4 billion per year by FY 2028 and \$5 billion by FY 2035.

### **Governor’s budget has a high Permanent Fund Dividend. That will be reduced**

Gov. Mike Dunleavy’s budget as introduced in mid-December shows a billion-dollar plus deficit because the governor proposed a big Permanent Fund Dividend, or PFD, in his spending plan. That will be reduced as legislative committees continue work on the budget. Typically the House and Senate Finance committees approve an amount for a PFD that is affordable given financial constraints in any year. House Majority Leader Rep. Chuck Kopp, R-Anch., has already proposed a \$1,000 PFD, compared with last year’s \$1,700 payment.

# ... Status of Bills ...

## House Bills Introduced

- HB 1: Specie as legal tender in state; borough and city sales and use taxes on specie (By McCabe) .....To SA, FIN
- HB 2: Driving while under the influence diversion program: (By Prax) .....To SA, JUD
- HB 3: Legislature convene in Anchorage (By Raucher) .....  
.....To C&RA, SA, FIN
- HB 4: Write-in candidates for U.S. President and Vice-President (By Saddler) .....To SA, JUD
- HB 5: Prohibit certain insurance decisions bases on a person’s status as an elected official (By McCabe) .....To SA, L&C
- HB 6: Stare funds fiduciary duty: social and political, or ideological interests (By McCabe) .....To JUD, FIN
- HB 7: Establish Port of Southcentral Alaska Authority (By McCabe).....To TRAN, FIN
- HB 8: Legal holidays (By Saddler) .....To C&RA, SA
- HB 9: Funding for charter schools, services for children with disabilities (By Carrick) .....To EDU, FIN
- HB 10: Board of Regents of UA (By Carrick) .....To SA, FIN
- HB 11: Contributions and donations from PFD (By Prax) .....  
.....To SA, FIN
- HB 12: Free breakfast and lunch in public schools (By Dibert) ...  
.....To EDU, FIN
- HB 13: Municipal property tax exemptions (By Gray) .....  
.....To CRA, FIN
- HB 14: Repeal catastrophic illness, medical assistance for chronic/acute medical conditions (By Stapp) .....To HSS, FIN
- HB 15: Oil and gas royalty rates and payments (By Rauscher) .....  
.....To RES, FIN
- HB 16: Campaign finance, contribution limits (By Schrage).....  
.....To SA, FIN
- HB 17: Retirement benefits and military service (By Rauscher) .....  
.....To MLV, FIN
- HB 18: Transfer of title on the death of the owner (By Rauscher) .....  
.....To TRA, SA
- HB 19: Elections (By Rauscher) .....To SA, JUD
- HB 20: Fees for paper documents (By Saddler) ....To L&C, JUD
- HB 21: Voter preregistration for minors (By Story)..To SA, JUD
- HB 22: General relief and burial assistance (By Stapp) .....  
.....To HSS, FIN
- HB 23: Definition of “employer” for purposes of State Commission on Human Rights (By Josephson) .....To L&C, FIN
- HB 24: Aggravating factors considered at sentencing (By Josephson) .....To SA, JUD
- HB 25: Disposable food service ware (By Josephson) .....  
.....To SA, L&C
- HB 26: Statewide public and community transit plan (By Mina) .....  
.....To CRA, TRA
- HB 27: Medical care for major emergencies (By Mina) .....  
.....To HSS, FIN
- HB 28: Student loan repayment pilot program (By Story) .....  
.....To EDU, FIN

## House Bills Introduced

- HB 29: Health insurance for school, university, and state government employees (By Vance) .....To EDU, L&C
- HB 30: Office of entrepreneurship (By Holland) .....To SA, L&C
- HB 31: Registration of commercial vessels (By Stutes) .....  
.....To FISH, FIN
- HB 33: Conflict of interest: Board of Fisheries and Board of Game (By Stutes) .....To FISH, RES
- HB 34: Alaska Innovation Council (By Holland) ...To L&C, FIN
- HB 35: Use and possession of electronic devices by prisoners (By Himschoot) .....To CRA, SA
- HB 36: Foster children psychiatric treatment (By Gray).....  
.....To HSS, FIN
- HB 37: Warning signs for alcoholic beverages (By Gray).....  
.....To L&C, FIN
- HB 38: Teachers, supplemental employee benefits (By Saddler) .....  
.....To L&C, FIN
- HB 39: Education for deaf and hearing impaired (By Allard) .....  
.....To EDU, FIN
- HB 40: School athletics, athletic teams (By Allard) To JUD, FIN
- HB 41: Daylight saving time (By Allard).....To SA, FIN
- HB 42: School construction and maintenance funding; grants; and bond debt reimbursement (By Allard) .....To EDU, FIN
- HB 43: Elections, voting, ballots (By Schrage).....To SA, FIN
- HB 44: Workers’ compensation death benefits (By Josephson) .....  
.....To L&C, FIN
- HB 45: Display of flags by governmental entities (By Allard) .....  
.....To CRA, JUD
- HB 46: Minors; distribution and use of electronic apps (By Vance) .....  
.....To L&C, JUD
- HB 47: Generated obscene child sex abuse material (By Vance) .....  
.....To RA, JUD
- HB 48: Appropriations to civil legal services fund (By Hannan) .....  
.....To JUD, FIN
- HB 49: Raise minimum age for tobacco, nicotine, electronic smoking products (By Hannan) .....To L&C, FIN
- HB 50: Snow classics (By Hannan) .....To CRA, L&C
- HB 51: Appropriation limit; governor’s budget (By Stapp) .....  
.....To JUD, FIN
- HB 52: Minors and psychiatric hospitals (By Dibert) To HSS, ....  
.....L&C
- HB 53: Appropriations for operating budget (By GOV) ...To FIN
- HB 54: Appropriations for capital budget (By GOV) .....To FIN
- HB 55: Mental health operating budget (By GOV) .....To FIN
- HB 56: Supplemental appropriations (By GOV) .....To FIN
- HB 57: Communication devices in public schools (By Fields) .....  
.....To L&C, EDU
- HB 58: Office of public advocacy (By Fields)..... To CRA, SA
- HB 59: State-tribal education compacts (By GOV) .....To TRB
- HB 60: Procurement preference for agricultural products har-

– Continued on bottom, page 6

# ... Status of Bills ...

## Senate Bills Introduced

- SB 1: Appropriations to civil legal services fund (By Dunbar) .....To JUD, FIN
- SB 2: Disclosure of election-related deepfakes; AI; cybersecurity (By Hughes) .....To SA, JUD
- SB 3: Authorize handguns for school employees and volunteers (By Hughes) .....To EDU, JUD
- SB 4: Health care insurance policy incentive program (By Hughes) .....To L&C, HSS
- SB 5: School district and university employees' health insurance (By Hughes) .....To EDU, L&C
- SB 6: Education in history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (By Gray-Jackson) .....To EDU, FIN
- SB 7: Chokehold ban, use of force by peace officers (By Gray-Jackson) .....To SA, JUD
- SB 8: Education for deaf and hearing impaired (By Gray-Jackson) .....To EDU, FIN
- SB 9: Surrender of infants (By Myers) .....To HSS, JUD
- SB 10: Family leave wage replacement coverage (By Dunbar) .....To L&C, FIN
- SB 11: Alaska Flood Authority and Alaska flood insurance fund (By Stedman) .....To L&C, FIN
- SB 12: PFD and child support (By Dunbar) .....To JUD, FIN
- SB 13: Summer electronic benefits transfer program for children (By Dunbar) .....To EDU, FIN
- SB 14: AIDEA: workforce housing development projects (By Dunbar) .....To L&C, FIN
- SB15: Posting of warning signs for alcoholic beverages (By Merrick) .....To L&C
- SB 16: Refuse utilities' regulations (By Myers).....To L&C, SA
- SB 17: Establish crime of airbag fraud (By Claman) .....To L&C, JUD
- SB 18: Communication devices in public schools (By Wielechowski) .....To EDU
- SB 19: Use and possession of electronic devices by prisoners (By Myers) .....To SA, JUD
- SB 20: CPR resuscitation (By Gray-Jackson) .....To EDU, FIN
- SB 21: Alaska Work and Save Program; Alaska Retirement Savings Board (By Wielechowski) .....To L&C, FIN
- SB 22: Financial literacy education program for public schools (By Wielechowski) .....To EDU, FIN
- SB 23: Civics education; civics assessments; and secondary school graduation requirements (By Stevens) .....To EDU, FIN
- SB 24: Raise minimum age for tobacco, nicotine, electronic smoking products (By Stevens) .....To L&C, FIN
- SB 25: Information on judicial officers seeking retention in office (By Myers) .....To SA, JUD
- SB 26: Daylight savings time (By Merrick).....To CRA, SA
- SB 27: Teachers and public employees retirement plans (By Kiehl) .....To L&C, FIN
- SB 28: Retirement systems; defined benefit option (By Giessel) .....To L&C, FIN

## Senate Bills Introduced

- SB 29: Executive administrator for the Big Game Commercial Services Board (By Bjorkman) .....To RES, FIN
- SB 30: State park permits for disabled veterans (By Bjorkman) .....To RES, FIN
- SB 31: Address confidentiality program (By Kiehl) ..To SA, FIN
- SB 32: Allowed costs in electric coop rates (By Giessel) .....To RES, FIN
- SB 33: Synthetic media; liability; elections (By Cronk) .....To SA, JUD
- SB 34: Repeal 90-day legislative session limit (By Giessel) .....To SA, FIN
- SB 35: Delivery network companies (By Bjorkman) .....To SA, L&C
- SB 36: Appropriation limit; governor's budget (By Kaufman) ....To JUD, FIN
- SB 37: Strategic plans for state agencies (By Kaufman) .....To SA, FIN
- SB 38: Office of information technology (By Kaufman) .....To SA, FIN
- SB 39: Payday loans (By Dunbar) .....To L&C, FIN
- SB 40: Hispanic Heritage Month (By Gray-Jackson) .....To SA
- SB 41: Mental health education (By Gray-Jackson) .....To EDU
- SB 42: Law enforcement; use of force (By Gray-Jackson) .....To CRA, JUD
- SB 43: Women's History Month (By Gray-Jackson).....To SA
- SB 44: Minors, psychiatric hospitals (By Claman) ..To HSS, FIN
- SB 45: Medicaid mental health parity (By Dunbar) To HSS, FIN
- SB 46: Education funding (By Claman) .....To EDU, FIN
- SB 47: Chugach Park easement (By Giessel) .....To TRA, RES
- SB 49: Violence protective orders (By Claman) ..... To SA, JUD
- SB 50: Municipal comprehensive plans: housing (By Dunbar) .....To CRA, L&C
- SB 51: "Sunrise" Review Board (By Myers) .....To L&C, FIN
- SB 52: Absentee voting (By Hughes) .....To SA, FIN
- SB 53: Accreditation, law enforcement (By Gray-Jackson).....To SA, JUD
- SB 54: Extend termination date of Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Survey .....To L&C, FIN
- SB 55: TRS contribution rate; supplemental employee benefits (By Stedman).....To L&C, FIN
- SB 56: Appropriations, operating budget (By GOV) ...To FIN

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### Committee Code:

- FIN ... Finance
- RES ... Resources
- JUD ... Judiciary
- L&C ... Labor and Commerce
- HSS ... Health and Social Services
- CRA ... Community and Regional Affairs
- SA ... State Affairs
- EDU ... Education

## ... Rural/Education ...

**Education committees start work today, Monday:** The House Education Committee begins work on HB 69 today, Jan. 27, in the first of several hearings on the bill. School districts will also make presentations today to the the Senate Education Committee on problems they face. Several hearings are planned in the Senate Committee. HB 69, by Rep. Rebecca Himshoot, I-Sitka, approves a \$1,808 increase to the Base Student Allocation over three years and allows for annual inflation-proofing beginning in FY 2026. School costs have increased 39% sine 2011.

**Division of Community Development, \$1.2 billion in grants to grow to \$2 billion:** The Division of Community Development, a part of the Department of Commerce told the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee last week that it is now administering \$1.2 billion in federal grants, mostly for disaster relief, and that this is expected to grow to \$2 billion with recent flood events.

*Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposes to add \$30 million to the Community Assistance fund for FY 2026. The fund now holds \$69.9 million. If the governor's appropriation is approved the fund would have enough for payouts of \$24 million in Community Assistance grants next year.*

## ... Status of Bills ...

### House Bills Introduced

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vested in the state (By GOV) .....To FISH, L&C  
-- HB 61: Employment of minors (By GOV) .....To SA, L&C  
-- HB 62: Sexual assault examination kits and tracking system (By GOV) .....To JUD, FIN  
-- HB 63: School and election boards; voting; and education (By GOV) .....To SA, FIN  
-- HB 64: Surrender of infants (By Tomaszewski) To HSS, JUD  
-- HB 65: Alaska Railroad Corporation financing (By Stutes) .....To FIN  
-- HB 66: Pretrial services supervision agreements (By GOV) .....To CRA, JUD  
-- HB 67: Alaska Railroad Corporation financing (By GOV) .....To FIN  
-- HB 68: Posting of warning signs for alcoholic beverages (By L&C)..... To L&C, HSS  
-- HB 69: Education funding (By Himschoot) .....To EDU, FIN

### Coming this week

- House Education Comm, Monday and Wednesday  
HB-69: Increase Base Student Allocation (BSA)
- Senate Resources Comm., Alaska Gasline Development Corp.; also Tuesday, House Finance Comm.
- Governor, State of State Address, Tuesday
- Seafood task force, legislation, Wednesday

### Senate Bills Introduced

– Continued from page 5

-- SB 57: Appropriations, capital budget (By GOV)..... To FIN  
-- SB 58: Mental health operating budget (By GOV) .....To FIN  
-- SB 59: Supplemental appropriations (By GOV) .....To FIN  
-- SB 60: May 12 as Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Day (By Tobin) .....To HSS  
-- SB 61: Electronic device recycling (By Tobin).....To RES, FIN  
-- SB 62: Board of parole (By Tobin) .....To SA, L&C  
-- SB 63: Local Boundary Commission (By Cronk). To CRA, SA  
-- SB 64: Relating to elections (By RLS) .....To SA, FIN  
-- SB 65: Legal representation of public officers in ethics complaints (By Claman) .....To JUD, SA  
-- SB 66: Tribal education compacts (By GOV) ...To EDUC, FIN  
-- SB 67: Procurement, farm products (By GOV) ...To RES, FIN  
-- SB 68: Employment of minors (By GOV) .....To SA, L&C  
-- SB 69: Sexual assault examination kits and tracking system (By GOV) .....To JUD, FIN  
-- SB 70: School and election boards; voting; and education (By GOV) .....To SA, FIN  
-- SB 71: Pretrial services supervision agreements (By GOV) .....To SA, JUD  
-- SB 72: Alaska Railroad Corporation financing (By GOV).....To FIN  
-- SB 73: Marijuana: taxes; registration of establishments; tax exemption for small businesses (By Claman) .....To L&C, FIN

# Trump's Alaska resource plans: Speed bumps looming?

– Continued from bottom, page 1

## **Many Alaskans, but not all, pleased with Trump's plan**

Many Alaskans, but not all, are pleased about new President Donald Trump's plans to push aggressive Alaska oil, gas and mining development. His list includes Arctic refuge drilling, expanded development in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, or NPR-A, and reopening permitting for the Ambler access road. But things may not happen as fast as the President hopes. Many are disappointed, too, that the President's list doesn't include seafood, an industry hard hit right now. Trump could further damage fisheries, in fact, if his planned tariffs on China, Canada and Mexico invite retaliatory tariffs, which they will. All that will make exports of Alaska seafood even more difficult than they are now.

## **On ANWR, which of two environmental reviews will apply?**

Here are a few questions we have on Trump's oil initiatives: In ANWR, we expect a move to rescind former Interior Secretary Haaland's cancellation of leases won by the state's Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority. If this works, AIDEA would hold leases and could negotiate deals with companies for exploration. New lease sales might not be needed, at least soon. But there will be lawsuits and one question is which of two ANWR Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) would prevail? One is the EIS for the first lease sale in 2020 done previously by Trump which set the terms for AIDEA's leases sold in 2021, or the more recent, more restrictive EIS and lease terms set by Haaland in ANWR sale held in January. If Trump's Interior Department opts to use the first EIS and less restrictive 2020 lease stipulations, it will be challenged. The new Secretary will have to justify the easing of environmental protection requirements for wildlife in ANWR and whether that complies with the "maximum protection" standard for refuge management. The Trump administration may prevail but this will be in the courts for a while, we would guess.

## **Similar questions surround any move to ease protections in the NPR-A**

We see efforts coming to rescind protected areas enlarged by former President Biden and perhaps rescind restrictive NPR-A land regulations put in place last year as well as the comprehensive land management plan adopted after President Biden took office. But a new Supplemental EIS will likely be needed for this and that will take time. Again, the new Interior Department managers will need to have the science that shows that an easing of rules still protect wildlife. And even though NPR-A is called a "petroleum reserve" the 1976 federal law establishing the reserve still requires "maximum protection" of lands and wildlife. *On the Ambler road things may be easier: President Trump can administratively adopt a new option in the Record of Decision on the EIS that was done, likely the proposed route and plan put forth, and rescinding the "no action" alternative that former Secretary Haaland approved.* But while the new Interior Department may assert no new EIS is needed, Ambler Metals, the mining joint-venture exploring copper discoveries in northwest Alaska, will want one, the company has told us. That's to provide more legal protection. But this will again add to the time needed for the project.

# Senate leaders talk priorities

## Comments from Senate Majority leaders, from Jan. 21 briefing

**Senate President Gary Stevens, R-Kodiak:** Priorities same as in last two years: Education funding, public employ pensions and recruitment, election reform, among other issues.

**Sen. Bill Wielechowski, D-Anch., Senate Rules Chair:** Election reform a real need. Outdated witness signature rules on absentee ballots resulted in 1,300 ballots being disqualified in the November election.

**Sen. Cathy Giessel, R-Anch., Senate Majority Leader:** Concerned that new President Trump’s rush to develop resources will jeopardize lands and water protection. This underscores need for state “primacy” in permitting so that state agencies have final say if Trump-appointed federal agencies are too lenient. Also: Assistance for fisheries and seafood processing will be priorities for Senate Resources Committee, which Giessel chairs.

**Sen. Lyman Hoffman, D-Bethel, Finance cochair:** Major concern is for balanced budget in tight revenue year. Governor’s request for a big Permanent Fund Dividend would throw the budget into a deficit. “It’s a place I don’t want to go,” he said. The big variable in finishing the budget will be the PFD and how much is affordable.

## Senate Minority comments, from briefing

**Minority Leader Sen. Mike Shower, R-Mat-Su:** Primary interest continues on election reform.

**Sen. Shelley Hughes, R-Mat-Su:** Will continue work on agriculture and food policy. Will work to form “Farm/Food Caucus” in the Legislature. Health care costs, availability also continuing priorities.

**Sen. Robert Myers, R-North Pole:** Streamlining of occupational licensing is a key area of interest; also judiciary reforms and concerns over large trial backlog, long delays in trials.

**Sen. Mike Cronk, R-Tok:** Will continue work on forestry, an interest carried over from Cronk’s work in the House in the last Legislature.

**Sen. Robert Kaufman, R-Anch.:** Interested in quality improvement planning, goals in budgeting.

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