

SB

245

SFIN

FILE

SB 245

was referred to the
Senate Finance
Committee

Hearing(s) were held

The bill did not move
from Committee

TONY KNOWLES
GOVERNOR
governor@gov.state.ak.us



STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001
(907) 465-3500
Fax (907) 465-3532
www.gov.state.ak.us

January 16, 2002

Rick Halford
President of the Senate
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear President Halford:

The Fiscal Year 2003 operating budget I am transmitting today addresses three key goals:

- It continues our investments for Alaska's children in education and provides for their health and safety;
- It maintains the existing level of vital public services Alaskans count on;
- It encourages responsible resource development to help create and protect jobs for Alaska families.

Together with the capital budget and my legislative proposals for K-12 education and veterans, this budget is a \$180 million general fund increase over the current fiscal year. Some \$81 million of this increase is a direct result of actions you have taken in approving laws, budgets, contracts and replacing lost federal and other funding sources. It includes debt for approved new schools. Operating new facilities, from the Ketchikan youth home to the Anchorage jail. Obligations you approved for pupil transportation and state worker contracts. Medical care required by law for more seniors and Alaskans with disabilities. And holding constitutionally required elections this fall. The remaining amount is for fuel and utility price increases and heavier workloads, such as more state prisoners, or backlogs in permitting and safety inspections.

I am indeed proposing some additional investments next year — to improve educational opportunities for our children in K-12 and the university, to keep our children safe in their homes, and to free them from the dangers of tobacco, alcohol abuse, inhalants and suicide. On these investments, I recognize there is a fundamental difference of opinion

The Honorable Rick Halford

Page 2

between some legislators and the many Alaskans who, like me, believe this is a top priority. So I welcome a healthy, open, honest debate on two different visions of what our Alaska can be.

There can be an Alaska where our children can learn to the best of their abilities, provide for their families, be good citizens. An Alaska that has saved hundreds of millions of dollars in fewer prisons, less welfare, lower health costs and fewer broken lives. I want to realize tomorrow's returns by making wise investments today.

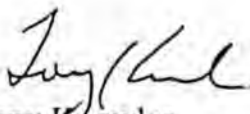
Each year my budget proposals in education and Smart Start have been declared dead on arrival by the Legislative majority. Yet thanks to the vision and grassroots advocacy of thousands of Alaskans and eventually bipartisan support in the Legislature, good ideas have prevailed. Rather than tying the commitment for our kids to the price of oil, I believe Alaskans will always put children first.

It is worth noting that under my proposed investments, Alaska would spend \$1,100 less per person in today's general fund dollars than in Fiscal 1979 — the year before the pipeline boom began. Budgets have been cut in five of the past six years.

I urge you to consider the future impacts of making similar investments again this year — better schools, an even more vibrant university, fewer children abused or in foster care, fewer youth in detention and young adults in prison, Alaskans filling the best jobs in the economy of the future. These opportunities for tomorrow are well worth the investments we must make today.

I stand ready to work with you to develop a responsible FY2003 budget for Alaskans.

Sincerely,


Tony Knowles
Governor