

HB

352

Session:
State Capitol, Room 13
Juneau, AK 99801
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Alaska State Legislature
Representative David Guttenberg



District 8

Interim:
119 N. Cushman
Suite 211
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 456-8172
(907) 451-9293 Fax

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 20, 2004

To: Representative Bruce Weyhrauch, Chair
House State Affairs Committee

From: Representative David Guttenberg

Re: HB 352 Longevity Bonus

I respectfully request that you schedule a hearing in the House State Affairs Committee for HB 352, appropriation for longevity bonus grants.

A copy of the bill, a sponsor statement, and additional background material are attached.

A teleconference site in Anchorage and Fairbanks will likely be needed. If you have any questions or need additional information, please call Danielle Brown at 465-4457.

Thank you.

Alaska State Legislature

Representative
David Guttenberg
House of Representatives
District 8



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Representative_David_Guttenberg@legis.state.ak.us

Sponsor Statement HOUSE BILL 352

"An Act making an appropriation for longevity bonus grants"

The Longevity Bonus Program was created in 1972 with the intent to provide an incentive to mitigate the costs of senior Alaskans who continue residency in Alaska. In 1993 due to the projected decrease in state revenue, Alaska Governor Walter Hickel created a "phase-out" of the Longevity Bonus Program. The then Governor sought to ensure benefits for Alaskan seniors who turned 65 before January 1, 1994 for the duration of their lifetime. These 17,600 remaining recipients in their 70's, 80's, 90's and 100's rely heavily upon the longevity bonus for expenses including but not limited to housing, food, heating, and medical expenses. By a stroke of the pen, Governor Murkowski's abrupt elimination of the longevity bonus funding has caused unnecessary hardships on those who depend on the program and their families.

House Bill 352 seeks to appropriate \$44.8 million from the general fund to the Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Alaska Longevity Programs, for payment of longevity bonus grants for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005.

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Democrats proud to support Longevity Bonus

By REP. ETHAN BERKOWITZ

"I am transmitting a bill that phases out the Longevity Bonus Program over a several-year period. . . . This bill protects current bonus recipients, and those future recipients who turn 55 before January 1, 1994, by providing that they will receive \$250 a month for the remainder of their lives. . . . I am proposing this phased elimination because many Alaskans who will be reaching 65 in the next four years have counted on the bonus in planning for their retirement, and an abrupt termination of the program would not be fair to them."

- Gov. Walter J. Hickel in his letter of transmittal, signing House Bill 81 into law in 1993 (emphasis added).

"A promise made is a debt unpaid." Robert Service wrote it, and honorable Alaskans respect the pledge of a handshake, the commitment of giving one's word. That's why abandoning the 1993 promise to recipients of the Longevity Bonus runs counter to values that we each our children to hold dear.

Even those who disagree with the merits of the Longevity Bonus should oppose a retreat from a promise made to Alaska seniors, the youngest of whom is now almost 75 years old. What Governor Hickel recognized as "not fair" in 1993 is unconscionable in 2003. The 17,000 surviving seniors who counted on the promise made in 1993 deserve better. Those who are not seniors should pay attention as well. If seniors

It is irresponsible to cut the budget and ignore the impacts to real Alaskans simply to reach a bottom line. The financial and social cost of this cut exceeds the benefit.

can be targeted, no one can be sure that other promises won't be broken and other Alaskans sacrificed for budget expedience. The litmus test of convenience has no place when deciding whether to honor commitments. Over the long term, damage to the government's credibility harms Alaska's ability to conduct business.

Promises only count when they're hard to keep, and keeping a promise is an important measure of character.

Importantly, no economic analysis accompanied this cut and many questions about it remain unanswered. Though the Longevity Bonus cost \$44 million, the decision to cut it saves nowhere near that amount. Over 7,000 seniors now collect "Alaska Senior Assistance" – and honest accounting must deduct the dollar cost of that new welfare program from alleged savings.

Other hidden costs have also emerged – costs that have not been directly accounted. For example, how many seniors went without food or medicine because a lifetime of pride prohibited them from taking a handout, and what increased

hidden medical and housing costs that had been borne by individuals now add to the cost of other government programs?

One must also ask why the new program penalizes married seniors, since unmarried seniors living together receive more than a married couple.

Finally, no one has studied the effect of the Longevity Bonus as it flows through the state's economy – what businesses and what regions will be adversely affected? It is irresponsible to cut the budget and ignore the impacts to real Alaskans simply to reach a bottom line. The financial and social cost of this cut exceeds the benefit.

Leadership frequently means making tough choices, but tough choices should never be made callously or recklessly. The 1993 promise endured for 10 years before the administration did away with the program. What they did was insulting and unfair. That's why Democrats are fighting to restore the Longevity Bonus – because we believe in keeping our promises, and we know that there are better ways to balance the budget than to take it out on seniors. Ultimately, this isn't about party politics, it is about doing what's right.

That's why, when I walk down the street and run into seniors, I'm proud that I can look them in the eye and say, "I'm fighting for you."

Ethan Berkowitz, D-Anchorage, is the Minority Leader in the Alaska State House of Representatives.

Bonus battle continues

Legislators file bills; seniors file lawsuit

By DAVID WASHBURN
Senior Voice

Though the last checks were mailed in August, the battle over the state's Longevity Bonus program is not over. In November, a Fairbanks legislator prefiled a bill to restore funding for the program, and Democrats promise to keep the issue on the front burner when the legislative session begins January 12.

Then in December, a group of seniors filed a lawsuit in Fairbanks Superior Court against the state, claiming it broke a promise when it defunded the Bonus. The lawsuit seeks class-

Bonus battle prompts new legislation, lawsuit . . .

continued from page 1
action status for all seniors enrolled in the Bonus program, and wants the program reinstated.

Unfair and too expensive

Although the Longevity Bonus program remains in place in state statute, Gov. Frank Murkowski vetoed funding for it last summer, effectively bringing the 30-year-old program to an end.

Alaska started the Bonus program in the 1970s as a way to thank long-time Alaskans for their role in pioneering and building the state, and to help them meet expenses so that they would be able to remain here. Over the years, enrollment grew and costs skyrocketed after the courts struck down the original 25-year residency

Guttenberg said that the bill, which requires only a 50-50 vote, will be easier to pass than an override of the governor's veto, which requires a majority vote.

requirement, and opened the program to any senior living in the state a year or longer. In the early 1990s, the state decided to phase out the program, and no new enrollees have been accepted for seven years. Still, more than 18,000 seniors were receiving monthly checks of \$100 to \$250 through the program, at an annual cost of \$44 million, when Murkowski killed it.

Murkowski said the state can no longer afford the Bonus, and that the program was unfair because it created two categories of se-

niors, the "haves and have-nots." But when the checks stopped, some senior households saw their income drop by up to \$500 a month. Murkowski launched a new Senior Assistance Program, which pays \$120 a month to seniors who meet low-income standards. Seniors who were receiving the Bonus checks did not have to meet any income guideline.

New legislation

In November, Rep. David Guttenberg, D-Fairbanks, announced he was filing legislation to restore funding for the Bonus. The bill, HB 352, would appropriate \$44.8 million in state general revenues for the program.

In a press statement,

Guttenberg said that the bill, which requires only a 50-50 vote; will be easier to pass than an override of the governor's veto, which requires a majority vote. Many legislators in Murkowski's own party were taken by surprise when he announced his plan to end the Bonus, and some even supported continuing the program, but a call to override the governor's veto last summer failed.

"Alaskans from all political stripes have been quite clear. Balancing the state's budget by cutting the Longevity Bonus remains an unacceptable option," Guttenberg said. "I think the legislature will jump at the chance to put things right."

Companion bill SB 251, sponsored Sen. Hollis French, D-Anchorage, has been filed in the Senate.

Court challenge

In December, Anchorage-based attorney Joe P. Jo-

sephson filed a lawsuit on behalf of eight seniors, challenging Murkowski's veto.

The plaintiffs say Bonus enrollees were promised they would get checks for the rest of their lives as part of the phase-out agreement adopted in 1996, and that Murkowski violated that promise.

State officials say the state retains the power to change its programs, including the Longevity Bonus.

Plaintiffs named in the suit are Helen Simpson, of Anchorage, and Fairbanks seniors Roger and Rose Anderson, Ruth Bohms, Jorgy Jorgenson, Niilo Koponen, Harold Starkel and Pearline Starkel. If the court grants class status, all Bonus recipients could join as plaintiffs.

The lawsuit names as defendants Murkowski, Dept. of Administration Commissioner Mike Miller and the State of Alaska.

Room 13
Dear Senator or Representative:

Buttenberg
SUBJECT: LONGEVITY BONUS PROGRAM

9450 Herbert Pl.
Juneau, Alaska 998
789-7516

Please leave this program alone, it is working well. The State of Alaska made a PROMISE to the people who helped get us Statehood, built up Alaska in Territorial days and took pride in doing so. Fourth Avenue was the only paved road in Anchorage, the fishermen trappers and miners ran the Territory they loved. They were all hard working people. When they aged, they wanted to stay in Alaska. The Sitka Pioneer Home, the only one at the time helped a lot. Others had to leave Alaska due to our high cost of living.

The PROMISE was the Longevity Bonus Program to help these Pioneers stay here. They were the people who had lived and worked here, even though it was hard at times. Governor Murkowski says we can use other available programs to offset the loss of the monthly check. NOT TRUE.

1. Medicare pays less and less. More medical no longer covered. Some needed blood tests not covered, hospital charges \$91.00 for this one alone.
2. Some doctors will not take new Medicare patients.
3. Costs of prescriptions are out of sight. Some people have to decide whether to eat or get needed medicine to help their condition.
4. Meals on Wheels cannot bring a meal to your home if you can drive a short distance or a family member can. Or if you walk your dog in your own yard. I can't get respite for even 2 hours a week for the same reason.
5. The Pioneer Homes have long waiting lists, lots of empty beds due to the lack of help. I also know some people are paying over \$4,000 a month there even though they are not bed ridden. I don't understand this charge. Suppose the Governor closes these Pioneer Homes? At \$4,000 per month, how much of your savings could be left to go elsewhere? I realize the "have nots" stay there, too, but how is the amount charged the "haves" decided? A percentage of the remaining balance in savings?

fewer The Longevity Bonus check has been figured into all our budgets. Each month there are of us to receive these checks because we are a dying breed. I figure the youngest person receiving a check of \$100 per month was 72 years old this year. I was 74 on 12/23/2002, which makes me one of the last people to qualify for \$250.00 per month. I have been in Alaska 55 years. This means a lot of people who receive \$250 are older than I am, but may not have been in Alaska as long due to the program rule of residency was declared to be unconstitutional and opened it up to anyone of a certain age, no matter how recently they had come to Alaska. Lots of people we know brought up Mom & Pop to live here and get the \$250 a month, turned the garage into an apartment. This made the list of those getting checks go out of sight.

Three generations of our family born in Alaska, children, grandchildren and great children. We do own our home. I receive \$250, date of birth 12/23/28, my husband gets \$200 even though he's been here longer, dob 2/22/29, 2 months younger than me. Every penny we spend for anything is spent here. We contribute to local charities, and quietly help individuals needing it, taught remedial reading without salary, helped deaf 13 year old to speak and other personal help to make life better here. That's what the pioneer Alaskans always did, help each other because we cared and not for money.

We need this program to continue as it is, it's working well. As I said in the beginning, leave the program alone, we're dying off and the Governor is wrong, most of us don't qualify for the programs he thin's are there and we don't want charity. Also, if we lose this program I can think of other ways to save money, but then a lot of people wouldn't like it because it would be their money being given up.

I cannot believe the Governor and our Senators and Representative would even consider touching this program. At the same time the Tourist Industry, which is private industry, is again asking for a government FREE subsidy to offset its advertising costs. Tourists have always come to see our different, beautiful State. Let this private industry finally stand on its own. I would think the elderly are more important, remember, we live here.

Thank you for your time, Sincerely

D *9/11*

2.

My husband and I worked hard for Statehood, at our own expense, working with Delegate E. Bob Bartlett. My husband's letter to Congress regarding our Fisheries, was so impressive it became a part of the Congressional Record.

I'm sorry this is so long, but it is a very important to our age group and it seems as though the needy, the handicapped and the elderly are often targets of cutting costs of government down and more funds are asked for and given to businesses which should always stand on their own two feet. I consider this a form of welfare, meaning the business handouts, because it is their problem how they advertise. Saying they are bringing business to Alaska, they are doing this advertising for their business, Alaska itself does not need advertising. They choose to do big time advertising, fine, they can pay for it like the rest of us do. We pay for an ad in the newspapers. The State should not pay for anyone's advertising and these funds are not repaid to us, the people of Alaska. The industry is quick to say how much they do for Alaska, it looks to me like they want to be paid twice, one when they charge the customer and once when they ask the State for money for free.

Sorry if I sound cynical, these two subjects are related. One, the government wants to take away from people who can no longer work except for charitable organizations due to health and age restrictions and continue to give to private industry every single year. If they were a charity that would be different and would be considered however, maybe these people have over extended their business for the all mighty dollar and feel the State owes them something. Not true, as Harry S. Truman said, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. Businesses come and go, I know this to be true, I feel very strongly about this, we should not subsidize tourist industry.



Web posted Monday, May 12, 2003

My Turn: Alaska's seniors are a \$2 billion industry

By Mike Miller

It really doesn't make much sense, does it? Here Gov. Murkowski runs for office on a platform of economic development and, within a month of taking office, tells the Legislature to cripple an industry that generates billions of dollars of revenue for the state each year. (And, yes, that's right - we're talking billions with a "B.")

The industry in question: the senior industry.

The McDowell Group, Inc., of Juneau, completed a study in December 2000 called "Issues Affecting the Economic Well-Being of Alaska Seniors." It was prepared for the Alaska Commission on Aging. Among its startling conclusions were these:

- "Senior income is responsible for at least \$2.4 billion of (Alaska's) total \$17.7 billion in 1999 personal income."
- "The \$2.4 billion for seniors is more than the estimated impacts of employment created by most of the state's leading industries. These include the petroleum industry (\$2 billion), the seafood industry (\$1.2 billion), and the tourism, mining and forest-products industries combined (\$1.6 billion)."

In other words, although the income and impact of a single Alaska senior may be modest, the cumulative economic effect of having these people in Alaska is hugely beneficial.

Of course, the McDowell Group study was based on a year 2000 enrollment of 21,000 seniors receiving the Longevity Bonus. The bonus has been closed to new applicants since 1997 and these days, if the governor's figures are correct, there are only 18,000 recipients, an 8.5 percent decrease in less than three years.

Apparently us old timers are dying off at the rate of well more than a thousand a year. As we all get older that rate will accelerate.

So, be patient, governor. We'll get this burdensome expenditure off your shoulders and down to zero in no time.

But, in the meantime, what can the state, specifically the Legislature, do to protect the \$2 billion industry that seniors represent?

It's a no-brainer: Keep the bonus. Help seniors avoid having to pack up and move Outside, taking with them - to spend Outside - their retirement checks, their Social Security, their savings, their veterans benefits, etc.

A little history: When we were a Territory and even in the early decades of statehood, it was almost the norm for many seniors to have to retire to the Lower 48 where the cost of living was cheaper. The Pacific Northwest was probably the most popular area, because it "seemed more like Alaska."

Why did they go? They had to. It was purely an economic thing. They didn't want to leave; for many, moving Outside broke their hearts.

Then, in Alaska, a wonderful thing happened. A series of legislative enactments, supported by Republicans and Democrats, made it possible for Alaska old-timers to stay here with children, grandchildren and friends. In 16 years of proudly representing Juneau in the Alaska House of Representatives, I consider my "yes" votes for these bills among the very best I ever cast.

The centerpiece of the effort to keep senior Alaskans in Alaska was, and remains, the Longevity Bonus Program. Strange as it may seem to some, for many old timers a modest bonus check each month makes all the difference. It makes staying here possible. In dignity. No "pauper's oath" required.

True, the \$2.4 billion annual economic benefit that the McDowell Group identified has already diminished through the effects of a phase-out that began in 1994. But, if we let the law run its course, the bonus can and will continue pumping significant billions into economy.

Even more important, retaining the Longevity Bonus will allow thousands of Alaska old timers to continue to live and die in the Great Land they love and serve. How, in conscience, can legislators vote to do less?

Mike Miller, an Alaskan since June 22, 1954, represented Juneau in the Alaska House of Representatives from 1971 to 1987.

Subject: [Fwd: HB 518 and SB 352]
Date: Sun, 07 Mar 2004 18:54:47 -0900
From: Bruce Weyhrauch <Representative_Bruce_Weyhrauch@Legis.state.ak.us>
Organization: Alaska State Legislature
To: Ginny Austerman <Ginny_Austerman@legis.state.ak.us>

for my bill file only

Subject: HB 518 and SB 352
Date: Mon, 23 Feb 2004 16:25:36 -0900
From: Susan George <Susan_George@fishgame.state.ak.us>
To: Representative_Bruce_Weyhrauch@legis.state.ak.us

Please table HB518 and SB352. As a single parent, I value my job and need the insurance that my job is secure. Thank you for your time.

Susan George
Juneau HQ, Finance, License Acctng Supervisor
(V) 907-465-6064, (F) 907-465-2440

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Alaska State Legislature

Please enter into the record my testimony to the HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS
committee name

Committee on HB 352
bill # / subject

Date, JANUARY 22, 2004

Normally I would say that I am fiscally conservative however as with anything there are some exceptions and I would definitely say my opinion on the Longevity bonus for the senior is exceptional. I support appropriating \$44,800,000 to reinstate the Longevity bonus.

Taking away the bonus from the senior's was not very nice. Anyone who voted to take this away from the seniors should be ashamed! Many seniors have a limited fixed income and have come to rely on their longevity check. We need to give the longevity back to the seniors!

Sure we need to cut our state's budget and stop deficit spending, however there are a lot of other areas that should have been chosen before taking away the longevity. We should have cut some administrative jobs in our state government, or reduced the overtime hours of state employees. We could have cut some departments, like DFYS.

Please amend HB 352 to take affect immediately rather than waiting until July 1, 2004. We have seniors who need that money right now! I know some seniors are in a financial crisis because they can't pay all of their expenses, like their house payments, utilities, medical bills, and some are making choices of whether they should buy food or life saving medication for health problems such as diabetes or heart medication.

VOTE YES ON HB 352.

VOTE YES ON HB 352.

VOTE YES ON HB 352.

Signed: LAURIE CHURCHILL
Testifier

SELF
Representing (optional)

P.O. BOX 7043 NIKISKI, AK 99635

Address

907-776-3499

Phone number

North Star Council on Aging, Inc.

Senior Center



1424 Moore St. ♦ Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone (907) 452-1735 ♦ Fax (907) 451-9974

Representative David Guttenberg
Room 13, 3rd Floor, State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99811

March 11, 2003

Dear Representative Guttenberg:

On behalf of the North Star Council on Aging (NSCoA), Senior Center and the many senior Alaskans we serve, I am writing this letter in strong protest of Governor Murkowski's proposed budget elimination of the Human Services Community Matching Grant (HSCMG) program administered by the Department of Health and Social Services. As a result of this budget cut, NSCoA will lose a critical piece of funding that supports the Meals on Wheels program for Fairbanks seniors.

The Meals on Wheels program is a vital community service for elderly people. This service not only provides hot nutritious food to feed the body, but a caring delivery person who nourishes the soul of an elderly shut-in. For some seniors, especially those who live outside the city limits, the Meals on Wheels driver may be the only human contact a person will have all day.

The North Star Council on Aging provides the Meals on Wheels service for 150 homebound persons of the Fairbanks area targeting at-risk elders who are frail, disabled and/or financially in need. Of those individuals, 94% suffer from crippling arthritis, heart disease, Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's, 66% are at poverty level earning less than \$1,000 monthly, and 63% are categorized as both medically impaired and financially in need. Meals on Wheels enhances the quality of life by providing healthy food and social contact for these individuals.

NSCoA's Meals on Wheels program is cost-effective. NSCoA's Meals on Wheels program provides nutritional support to at-risk elderly individuals helping them to stay healthy and remain independent in their own homes, where they most want to be, as opposed to being placed in a nursing facility for illnesses and injuries preventable through proper nutrition. Home-delivered meals provide a very cost-effective community service that may forestall more expensive long-term care; \$10.34 per meal as compared to \$350 per day at a nursing facility.

Last year, the North Star Council on Aging delivered 40,425 hot meals to 14,300 homebound persons, traveled 36,400 miles delivering meals, and used our \$50,000 HSCMG grant to leverage almost \$300,000 in outside funds.

Elderly persons on a limited income may suffer physical and mental hardship that can become life threatening if they live on the edge of hunger, having limited access to nutritious food. The senior population is growing in Fairbanks, despite funding cutbacks. The number of elderly persons in need of the home-delivered meal service will undoubtedly grow.

We urge you to support the reinstatement of the Human Services Community Matching grant program. The HSCMG program provides funding to safety net agencies that reach out to those most in need in our community in a cost effective and efficient manner.

Sincerely,


Denise Danielle, Executive Director

KENNETH D. BREWER
1701 TAMARACK STREET
FAIRBANKS ALASKA 99709
(907) 452-2919

March 25, 2003

Senator Gary Wilken
Senate Bill 117

It sometimes amazes me as to how fast people forget about our pioneers. Just to let you know, I do not receive the Longevity Bonus, I am only sixty-four years old and have lived in Fairbanks since nineteen sixty nine and therefore do not qualify.

My only concern is the pioneers that are on a fixed budget. The bonus acts as a supplement to their Social Security Benefits and to help pay for their Medicare prescriptions. Depriving them of a supplement as small as \$250.00 means a lot to them and please do not kid yourself, there are a lot of them out there.

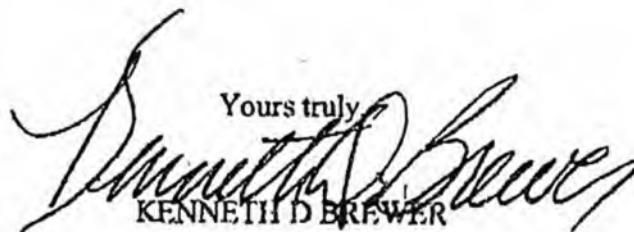
I checked my social security benefits, factored in my living cost, placed myself on a fixed budget and decided to see if I could live in Alaska after I retired. My budget didn't last one month when my vehicles broke down costing me seven hundred dollars to repair. There went that budget.

The point is simple; not everyone has a nice retirement. The best retirements have been given to the people in the school systems, government workers and union workers.

I feel that our pioneers should be rewarded and encouraged to stay in Alaska for the sake of Alaska. I myself will probably have to move to a warmer climate. In the mean time I will tell you like I told Joe Hayes, don't mess with the permanent fund dividend unless you're looking for another job. I will say the same thing to you when you start taking things away from the pioneers. The thing that you want to remember is.... can you afford to give up votes. My family votes every time and my front yard becomes a billboard on how we feel.

I have one suggestion: If you wish to save dollars, reduce government, I understand that the State of Alaska is some thirty thousand strong and still growing.

Yours truly



KENNETH D BREWER

Richard and Joan O'Leary
P. O. Box 75313
Fairbanks, AK 99707

March 9, 2003

Dear Governor and Legislature:

Re: Budget Cut of Longevity Bonus

Please think again about cutting the longevity bonus and look for other ways.

I am writing on behalf of my husband, one of the 18,000 elderly people you plan to cut from your budget by eliminating the longevity bonus. It was just a few years ago the state wanted to keep elderly people in the state when they retired. The state is no longer taking any applications but you feel inclined to cut this program. Of 600,000 residents you pick on 18,000, it just does not make any sense. What are the ages of these 18,000? I'm sure a lot of them will be passing on soon anyway, so why do this? My husband uses half this money for his medications and for household money. This will put a big burden on us by eliminating this money. All this money is spent locally too.

Yet, you can spend dollars (many dollars) with the moose, wolves, bears, helicopter time, and so forth. I would think a lot more of the legislators and the Governor if they think of these elderly people and what the bonus means to them instead of relocating wolves and bears. I love animals more than anyone else, but I love people first. I am sure I could point out a few more examples if you wish.

My husband and I never miss voting, so we will be extra careful about our voting in the next election. First cutting longevity bonus, education, Permanent Fund, and then giving us taxes. "No big deal to live in Alaska or stay here."

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

Joan O'Leary
Joan O'Leary

Post-It® Fax Note	7671	Date	3/11/03	# of pages	1
To	INT. DELEGAT. CN	From	FBX LO		
Co./Dept.		Co.			
Phone #		Phone #			
Fax #		Fax #			

P. O. Box 91112
Anch., Alaska 99509-1112
907 562 4968
July 14 2003

Representative David Guttenberg
State Capitol
Juneau Ak. 99801-1182

Dear Rep. Max Guttenberg

With the Governor cutting my income by \$250.00. I will become very active in helping to cut the salaries of all legislators. Votes of seniors and their extended families will help do this. We want the session moved out of Juneau and shortened. This will take pay from per diem and excessive travel expenses. The Governor authorized billions for lobbyist for oil and road companies meanwhile eliminating money for those over 76 years of age. He did not cut legislators they receive almost that much a day. Legislators eat no matter where they are so why per diem for meals while they are in Juneau? The Governor should have cut the pork out of Juneau and government employees first, not just seniors over 76 years of age who are dying fast from age anyway. It says 12,000 over 76 will get the \$120 for a year more. That leaves 5,000 seniors who have incomes, to contribute to the states economy with their pensions and Soc. Sec.,

I register so I can vote for the person I like. I do not care for Tony Knowles, but against Murkowski I would vote him for Senator. I am going to do volunteer for those who are getting the petitions to move the shortened session up here and out of inaccessible Juneau, Gov. Murkowski's letter writer, is STUPID, that letter thoroughly irritated many of us. The writer said it made two distinctions. Think of how rooms are assigned in Juneau. He is making more distinctions. People over 76 who earned an income, are now no longer eligible for the longevity. Many who lived in the bush did not earn pensions, most are the 12,000. They will also vote.

I am 63 years old. I worked but not for the government. In 1985 I started getting the longevity. Because that meant \$6,000.00 a year we decided to stay and spend our Soc. Sec. and pensions here in Anchorage, Clyde is dead, so now only my pension and Soc. Sec. are what I have. I am still contributing to Alaska's economy. Many friends took their pensions and left the state when the longevity ended, a huge loss of revenue for the state. \$6000.00 a year longevity is a 10% loss if the combined pensions are \$60,000 if not like mine the \$3,000 is a bigger percentage.

Medicare is deducted from my Soc. Sec. I also pay AARP \$165 a month, with a deductible raised now to \$250.00 for prescriptions, Our son being a VETERAN, received inadequate care in 1996 from Providence. His care was just barely what they felt was necessary. They wanted him dead. I saw a tube rammed down his throat by nurse Ben Jackson, Our son had pulled it out. I requested Ben be removed but there continued his inadequate care so our son died, I spent from 8 until 4 with him, Ben wanted our son's skin for burn victims. The Governor and legislators received excellent care, when they had similar strokes so lived. Their medical is covered.

I pay retired dues at the culinary union. I can voice my opinions and vote on policies. I am a lifetime member at the Senior Center. I should be happy that I am now MOTIVATED to volunteer to making legislators accountable, moving them out of Juneau and cutting the session. Many of us at the Senior Center will feel the cut. The Gov. evidently does not realize those over 80, a 15 year difference, means we also are WW11 veterans or spouses as well as Alaskans. Watching sessions on TV, often the legislators couldn't get back to Juneau, bills couldn't be passed. It would be interesting to have published the actual hours days each legislator spent in the sessions. Many who campaign less when the session is moved from Juneau.

NH

Unice McCurdy