



Representative Rauscher's Report

House District 9 - Alaska at its Best!

Hello, neighbors! As most of you know, we are back in Juneau for the second half of the 31st Legislative Session. It has been a very busy and interesting first few days here at the capital. Ill try to address a few here.

January 2020

*Sutton / Valdez / Glennallen / Delta Junction / Ft. Greely / Whittier / Chickaloon / Paxton / Eureka / Big Delta / Farm Loop / Fishhook
Sheep Mountain / Glacier View*

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Click [HERE](#) to follow bills online

The Legislature Loses a Pillar of Dedication



On January 24, Representative Wilson (R- North Pole) resigned from the Legislature on the House floor. She was an inspiration, a teacher, a confidant, and a friend to all in the building and her district.

I sincerely wish her the best in her new position at OCS where I am confident she will work with as much passion and diligence as she has in the legislature.

She will be truly missed by all whose lives she has touched in this building and beyond.

Shake Up In The Senate

While the work of the House of Representatives is my main focus, recent developments in the Senate involving our other Valley members is worth noting here.

On the first day of session, there was a heated exchange regarding the balance of power in the Senate. Sens. Lora Reinbold, Mike Shower, and Shelley Hughes were punished for breaking caucus "rules" regarding budget votes from last summer; they were at odds with their caucus because they supported the full statutory dividend and decisions each made associated with the definition of Statutes and the Alaskan Constitution.

All three lost their committee chairmanships and most of their committee assignments. Some have called this a shifting to the left of the power in the Senate

Saying Hello

As we say goodbye to Representative Tammie Wilson, we are also saying Hello to Representative Mel Gillis. His name was forwarded from District 25 to fill former Representative, now Senator, Revak's seat in the House. He was nominated by the Governor and confirmed by Republicans in the House of Representatives.

He is an extremely warm gentleman with a strong background as an outdoorsman and has been a pleasure to work with.





Veto Override Vote

On Friday, January 24th, the House and Senate met in a joint session to consider overriding the vetoes that the Governor made to the Marine Highway System and the School Bond Debt Reimbursement program.

On the Marine Highway:

Since the budget votes last summer, minority members in the House and members of the Senate have been working with the Governor and his administration to expedite getting AMH vessels back into service which have been dry docked since strike for much needed maintenance, As a result, over \$12 million was set aside in the supplemental budget to get those ships back in the water.

Voting to override the Governor's 5 million dollar veto, possibly jeopardizing 12 million set aside, will not result in getting those vessels back in the water any faster, nor show good faith in working with the governor in the future.

On the School Bond Debt Reimbursement:

Education is important to our community, and so is keeping our word. Minority members also negotiated the 50% return on the school bond debt reimbursement last summer. I believe many legislators felt future negotiations would be ham-

Around District 9

Delta Junction Post office Staffing Issue

I am deeply sympathetic to the delays and problems this understaffing situation causes to our families, friends and neighbors. Often, a one-size-fits-all policy from a Federal Agency does not work in our unique state. ***I have been assured that the Post Office will not close, but may have different hours until they get back to full staffing.***

I am working with my congressional counterparts on this unfortunate problem for an urgent solution.

In the meantime, the USPS Consumer Affairs number is:
907-564-2828

Palmer Correctional Center to Re-Open!

The Governors' administration has decided to keep Alaskan prisoners in Alaska, and instead to reopen the Palmer Correctional Center. Presently, we are at 93% capacity. Nancy Dahlstrom, the Commissioner for the Department of Corrections, has announced that the Request for Proposal issued in October of 2019 to house prisoners in the lower 48 would be cancelled. She gave the timeline of 12-18 months for the reopening of the Palmer Correctional Center, but she is hopeful for a shorter timeline. "I will tell you that we are going to accelerate that as quick as we safely can," she said. The Palmer Correctional Center is located in District 9. We are told 80 new officers will need to be hired to reopen the facility.

The Weather Outside has been Frightful

As Alaskans, we know that winter can be a beautiful and wonderful time of year, with hardships embraced just like our neighbors. This winter has also been marked with big snowfalls, heavy wind, and deep snow pileups. I have been fielding questions, concerns, and comments from across the district regarding road plowing and snow removal. Just as we would never refuse to help our neighbors, the DOT needs to be aware of any help we need. I have been in continual contact with the DOT to ensure they are aware of problem areas and upcoming issues. I am sincerely grateful for the calls and comments to help me stay responsive of the needs in our district.

Community Contacts

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Chikaloon Community Council

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Glacier View Community Council

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Delta Junction

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Vern Halter, Mayor
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Copper Valley

Ahtna Intertribal Resource

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Chitina Native Corp

Linnie Lohse
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Chitina Traditional Native Council

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Cheesh'na Tribal Council

Pete Peschang
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Budget Legislation Watchdog

I am honored to Serve you

In addition to staying busy with efforts to reduce the budget I'm paying close attention to legislation in the Capitol. I aim to make Alaska better and government more responsive to the people.

I am fighting for my district.

House Bill 131/Senate Bill 104– Appropriation Limits

These companion bills aim to set an appropriation limit on the legislature. While both of these bills are sponsored by the powerful Finance Committees, neither bill has had an actual hearing. An appropriation limit is a step forward to maintaining downward pressure on government spending, but I hope we can enact an actual constitutional spending cap.

We do not have a revenue problem, rather, we have a spending problem.

In order to begin restoring our savings, we need to:

- Put a constitutional spending cap to a vote of the people
 - increase development of our existing resources
 - Reduce the size and scope of government

Utilities Moving Forward

All six of the Rail-belt electrical utilities have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together alongside the Regulatory Commission of Alaska to help craft legislation that will move our electrical grid into the modern era. Stakeholders and policymakers have been meeting for over a year to create legislation that would create a reliability organization, streamline load shifting, enhance economic dispatch, and all work with common standards for safe and reliable electrical operation.

With the introduction of Senate Bill 123, the House Special Committee on Energy and the Senate Special Committee on Rail-belt Electrical Systems have been meeting jointly to take testimony, craft the final version of the bill, and move it forward.

This is a journey that is over 20 years in the making and great news for District 9! Except for those served by Copper Valley Electric, the rest of our district is served by either GVEA, MEA, or CEA. District 9 is unique in that the district is served by 4 utility companies. My office recently met with Copper Valley Electric who is also hopeful that this bill and groundbreaking cooperation among utilities is successful.

Budget Subcommittees

This is the part of our session where we break into budget subcommittees that are each tasked with evaluating and crafting sections of the budget. The sub-committees then pass recommendations along to the Finance committee for consideration of inclusion in the overall budget. I am currently serving on the budget subcommittees for the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Each of these budgets is unique in size and scope as are the tasks of those departments. We are diligently looking at each section of our budgets to closely and thoughtfully to streamline and find ways to save the state cost of operation.

VPSO's

The House and the Senate, in a joint working group, have been re-evaluating the Village Public Safety Officer program. A draft proposal of recommendations can be found [here](#). We will continue to work toward solutions and find ways to better serve our more remote communities and provide public safety in the villages.



My office is your office

I would love to hear from you! Please contact the office anytime:

907-465-4859

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