

THE ALASKA FOOD COALITION



Alaska State Legislature - Twenty-Fourth Legislature

A Report on Bills and Resolutions Relevant to the Hunger Issue

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Executive Summary

The work of the Alaska State Legislature is critical to the elimination of hunger in our state. The decisions made by legislators in Juneau directly affect the hungry and the anti-hunger network of Alaska. For that reason staff of anti-hunger agencies, advocates and clients of food assistance programs need to keep up with the legislation being discussed by elected officials. The anti-hunger network must not risk falling out of touch with a key stakeholder in ending hunger in Alaska. Tracking bills and resolutions of Alaska's Legislature helps the anti-hunger network to understand fluctuations in need and to advocate for change. This report supplies the anti-hunger network with the information from the Twenty-Fourth Alaska State Legislature it requires to achieve both of these tasks.

The report assessed and categorized bills and resolutions by accessing the Alaska State Legislature Bills Action and Status Inquiry System (BASIS) webpage (<http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/>). Most of the bills which were selected for tracking have the potential to increase or decrease client income. These shifts in earnings can change the pattern of food distribution at anti-hunger agencies.

The report singles out for special attention five bills, which are deemed to have the greatest effect on clients and charitable anti-hunger agencies. Two are connected with a possible increase in the public assistance of seniors; two more involve a potential rise or fall in unemployment compensation benefits; one concerns quarterly payments of the Permanent Fund Dividend.

Four future actions are suggested in order for The Alaska Food Coalition to continue informational work on legislation. These are:

1. Track the bills identified, especially those highlighted by the report and produce a bi-annual report on their status.
2. Create a system whereby the coalition is informed of bills creating concern and action, taken on an individual basis, is suggested.
3. Share anti-hunger information with a wider audience through the Food Bank of Alaska's Advocacy Network with the aim of mobilizing the wider anti-hunger community on particular issues of concern, especially the physical constraints on anti-hunger agencies.
4. Build the Alaska Food Coalition network by participating in the Advocacy Network Advisory Committee. This involves The Alaska Food Coalition in the consultative process of the Food Bank of Alaska Advocacy Program Manager's establishment of program strategies, priorities and activities.

Background

At a meeting of the Alaska Food Coalition Committee on Legislation Issues in March 2006, members decided that the Program Coordinator track bills and resolutions of the Alaska State Legislature. The mandate was broad and included following all bills and resolutions expected to affect clients and charitable organizations alike. The reason for beginning this tracking system was to anticipate any increases in client participation in charitable food programs. The research would allow Alaska Food Coalition members to:

- understand the reasons for spikes in client numbers
- provide a rationale for the Capacity-building Project to the public, legislators and potential funders
- be better informed and engaged in relevant legislature activity
- meet legislators equipped with detailed information
- anticipate possible legislation affecting their organization

Explanation of Methodology

- Tracking was carried out on the Twenty-Fourth Legislature (2005-2006).
- A list of bills and resolutions subject summaries were accessed from the Alaska State Legislature Bills Action and Status Inquiry System (BASIS) webpage (<http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/>).
- Subjects deemed relevant to clients and charitable organizations as well as subjects of general interest were selected. These are outlined below:

Clients

Aliens	Medical Care	Social Security
Child Support	Mental Health	Unemployment
Credit	Minors	Vocational Training
Day Care	Natives	Wages
Debt	Nursing Homes	Women
Employment	Permanent Fund	Workers Compensation
Families	Public Assistance	
Housing	Residential Care	
Labor	Retirement	
Landlord & Tenant	Salaries & Allowances	
Longevity Bonus	Senior Citizens	

Charitable Organizations

Boards and Commissions	Finance	Nonprofit Organizations
Budget	Food	Public Finance
Budget Reserve Fund	Funds	Revenue
Capital Projects	Grants	State Aid
Disaster	Health and Social Services	

General Interest

Agriculture	Education	Subsistence
Appropriations	Fish & Game (Both)	Taxation
Economic Development	Rights	
Economy	Schools	

- Each bill or resolution subject was then researched. If a bill or resolution was considered of interest a link was created to the so that its history through the legislature could be followed.
- Once all relevant bills were identified a summary and conclusion was written to highlight the most pressing items to Alaska Food Coalition members.

Note: not all subject summaries contain bills or resolutions which are relevant *at this time*. A list of all subjects is provided to show that these areas will be tracked in the future.

What follows is a list of subject areas in three groups (clients, charitable organizations and general interest) and links to inform members of their progress through the Alaska State Legislature.

Clients

Child Support

BILL: HB 69

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB69

BILL: SB 51

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB51

Day Care

BILL: HB 193

SHORT TITLE: LICENSING MEDICAL OR CARE FACILITIES

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB193

BILL: SB 125

SHORT TITLE: LICENSING MEDICAL OR CARE FACILITIES

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB125

Employment

BILL: HB 7

SHORT TITLE: UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BENEFITS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB7

BILL: SB 136

SHORT TITLE: UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BENEFITS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB136

Longevity Bonus

BILL: HB 39

SHORT TITLE: APPROP: LONGEVITY BONUS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB39

BILL: SB 257

SHORT TITLE: APPROP: LONGEVITY BONUS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB257

Public Assistance

BILL: HB 106

SHORT TITLE: SENIOR CARE PROGRAM

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB106

BILL: SB 78

SHORT TITLE: SENIOR CARE PROGRAM

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB78

BILL: HB 186

SHORT TITLE: PERMANENT FUND: QUARTERLY PAYMENTS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB186

BILL: HB 303

SHORT TITLE: ADULT COMPANION SERVICES WAIVER

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB303

BILL: SB 277

SHORT TITLE: MEDICAL ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB277

Senior Citizens

BILL: HB 168

SHORT TITLE: VETS'/PIONEERS' HOMES RESIDENTS' INCOME

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB168

BILL: HB 193

SHORT TITLE: LICENSING MEDICAL OR CARE FACILITIES

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB193

BILL: SB 125

SHORT TITLE: LICENSING MEDICAL OR CARE FACILITIES

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB125

BILL: HB 430

SHORT TITLE: APPROP: PALMER SENIOR CITIZEN CENTER

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB430

BILL: SB 81
SHORT TITLE: CONTINUE SENIOR CARE SERVICES

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB81

Women

BILL: HB 111
SHORT TITLE: MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR BIRTHING CENTERS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB111

BILL: SB 22
SHORT TITLE: MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR BIRTHING CENTERS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB22

Charitable Organizations

Boards and Commissions

BILL: SB 250
SHORT TITLE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/SEXUAL ASSAULT COUNCIL

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB250

Budget

BILL: HB 36
SHORT TITLE: APPROP: MUNI REVENUE SHARING/SAFE COMM

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB36

BILL: HB 370
SHORT TITLE: APPROPRIATIONS FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB370

Budget Reserve Fund

BILL: SB 219
SHORT TITLE: COMMUNITY DIVIDEND PROGRAM

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB219

Funds

BILL: HB 371
SHORT TITLE: COMMUNITY DIVIDEND PROGRAM

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB371

Grants

BILL: SB 199
SHORT TITLE: SCHOOL NUTRITION SUPPORT GRANTS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB199

State Aid

BILL: HB 144
SHORT TITLE: COMMUNITY DIVIDEND PROGRAM

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB144

BILL: SB 234
SHORT TITLE: COMMUNITY DIVIDEND PROGRAM

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=SB234

BILL: HB 289
SHORT TITLE: LOCAL TAX RELIEF & MUNI. ASSISTANCE FUND

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB289

General Interest

Taxation

BILL: HB 212
SHORT TITLE: PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR SENIORS/VETS

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB212

BILL: HB 262
SHORT TITLE: INCOME TAX

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB262

BILL: HB 299
SHORT TITLE: MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB299

Conclusion

In this survey of bills and resolutions relevant to the hunger issue from the Twenty-Fourth Alaska State Legislature, more were found to affect clients (20 entries) than charitable organizations (9 entries). General interest bills and resolutions registered 3 entries.

While none of the bills and resolutions of the Twenty-Fourth Alaska State Legislature, directly address the hunger issue, those bills and resolutions selected for tracking in this report were chosen because of their wider effect on hungry people or anti-hunger agencies. To observe the wider effect of legislation has been an objective of the Alaska Food Coalition Committee on Legislation Issues. The committee members feel that spikes in food distribution can occasionally be attributed to broader legislation. The removal of the Longevity Bonus in 2003 is cited as an example of this kind of occurrence. As a matter of fact its replacement, the Senior Care Program, appears in the bills and resolutions of the Twenty-Fourth Alaska State Legislature.

From the bills and resolutions identified, the report recommends that 5 in particular (all from the client section) be flagged for special attention these are:

1. HB 106, Senior Care Program
2. SB 78, Senior Care Program
3. HB 186, Permanent Fund: Quarterly Payments
4. HB 7, Unemployment Compensation Benefits
5. SB 136, Unemployment Compensation Benefits

The two Senior Care Program bills are described as Acts "establishing the senior care program and relating to that program; creating a fund for the provision of the senior care program...and providing for an effective date." As the replacement for the Longevity Bonus Program, Governor Frank Murkowski asserts that "the Senior Care Program...provides financial assistance based on income... [t]he program [was expanded] to cover the Medicare prescription drug plan monthly premiums and annual deductibles as well as a \$1,250 annual dental plan. [It] is a program that ensures those seniors most in-need are getting assistance, and receiving more than just the Longevity Bonus". Source: (<https://murkowski.sagegroup.cc/question/>). The tracking of this bill ensures the anti-hunger network can assess if the creation and adequate funding of the Senior Care Program has any effect on the 8,401 hungry seniors in Alaska by observing any dips in distribution to seniors.

HB 186, Permanent Fund: Quarterly Payments described as "An Act relating to quarterly payments of a permanent fund dividend, and to a permanent fund dividend and eligibility for public assistance; and providing for an effective date", is worthy of special notice. The advent of quarterly payments for the Permanent Fund Dividend has the potential for anti-hunger agencies to detect new patterns of distribution. The drops in distribution numbers around the annual payment in October could be lessened while quarterly payments could also see possible drops around the time of the dispersal of dividends.

The Unemployment Compensation Benefits bill, described as "[a]n Act relating to the calculation and payment of unemployment compensation benefits; and providing for an effective date", should also be flagged for its prospective effects on client income.

As the above explanation relates, bills affecting clients also have a strong effect on charitable anti-hunger agencies. Currently, most of the bills in the Charitable Organizations section actually result in consequences, mainly in funding, for The Alaska Food Coalition's associate members, i.e. state agencies.

For future action the report suggests that The Alaska Food Coalition:

1. Further track the identified bills, especially ones highlighted for special notice. The results of this tracking could be formally presented in bi-annual reports, which would also include new bills in future legislatures.
2. If under tracking a bill draws a degree of concern, the Alaska Food Coalition Coordinator will inform members of the Committee on Legislation Issues and the Alaska Food Coalition President so that they can decide a course of action. Recommended action could include an action alert to members, asking members to engage in letter writing, public comment/hearings, calls to/meetings with legislators and opinion makers or testimonies. However, The Alaska Food Coalition, as a state-funded program, should not take any organization-wide stand. It must be made clear that members act individually. The Alaska Food Coalition's role in legislation issues is to provide information to its members. In addition, action should also emphasize the rationale behind The Alaska Food Coalition's Capacity-building Project, which attempts to meet increased need with an increase in physical capacity for Alaska's charitable anti-hunger agencies.
3. Share anti-hunger information with a wider audience through the Food Bank of Alaska's Advocacy Network. The information collected by The Alaska Food Coalition should be shared with Food Bank of Alaska's Advocacy Program Manager, Shawn Powers, whose Advocacy Network has a further reach than the membership of The Alaska Food Coalition. The Advocacy Program Manager will also provide his own action alerts to a large number of anti-hunger agencies across Alaska, which could include ones suggested by The Alaska Food Coalition. The Advocacy Network, not funded by the state, can also provide a more cohesive voice for the anti-hunger network. This sharing can be done by scheduling meetings as necessary between the Alaska Food Coalition Coordinator and the Advocacy Program Manager.
4. Build the Alaska Food Coalition network by participating in the Advocacy Network Advisory Committee. Members of The Alaska Food Coalition Committee on Legislation Issues and the Alaska Food Coalition Coordinator have been invited to serve on the committee. It is important that the coalition be represented on the committee as it is a key stakeholder. The consultative process of the committee means that concerns of The Alaska Food Coalition will be voiced to the Advocacy Program Manager and other anti-hunger agencies, consequently informing the public and officials of Alaska.