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KODIAK RESIDENTS SHARE IDEAS ON THE STATE'S FISCAL FUTURE

(Kodiak) — More than 100 Kodiak residents joined Senator Alan Austerman (R-Kodiak/Southeast Islands) and Representative Gary Stevens (R-Kodiak) for a Fiscal Policy Caucus Town Hall type meeting on October 10th.

The legislators were also joined by Annalee McConnell, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget; Larry Persily, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Revenue; and Kevin Ritchie of Alaskans United. The two and a half hour program featured a question and answer format, with presentations by Persily, McConnell and Ritchie on the anticipated one billion dollar budget gap. A myriad of ideas on this dilemma included the future role of the Constitutional Budget Reserve, discussions on a combination of taxes and how the Permanent Fund interest earnings might be dovetailed into a long-term solution. Though there were no firm conclusions drawn as to what ideas the legislature should pursue, both local lawmakers were pleased with the response from the community.

“By and large the audience was receptive to the message that we have to do something,” said Senator Austerman, Co-Chair of the bipartisan Fiscal Policy Caucus. He further stated, “Nobody said ‘Don’t tax us!’ and nobody said ‘Don’t touch my Permanent Fund Dividend!’ I think the audience was very aware that it’s going to take a combination of elements to keep state spending in-line with its income.”

It was noted that the majority of the participants attending the meeting were teachers. Representative Gary Stevens said he is encouraged by this intense interest from the educational community. “I hope these educators network with their colleagues around the state to promote what we are trying to do. It would be great if they can incorporate some of the material they heard at the Town Hall Meeting into the classroom. Educators around the state could really help give the Fiscal Policy Caucus’s efforts a real boost,” said Stevens.

The [Fiscal Policy Caucus](#) is a bipartisan group of legislators who are working to address the financial future of Alaska.

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