

# Alaska State Legislature

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## Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee

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### Senate Wants Federal Grants to Continue

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska Senate passed a resolution today urging Congress to extend the termination date for supplemental welfare block grants that Alaska receives from the federal government.

In 1996 the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant program was established. Alaska was awarded a high-population supplemental grant under this program due to the significant increase in the state's population between 1990 and 1994. Despite being called "supplemental," these grants are not added on to other grants, but instead are an integral part of the formula used to determine each state's block grant allocation.

While the grants were only authorized through federal fiscal year 2001, the act that created them continues through fiscal year 2002. The result of the staggered dates is that on Oct. 1, 2001, the state will face a \$6.9 million reduction in TANF grants, 13 percent of the total block grant Alaska receives.

"With the grants ending one year before the act ends, it causes us to lose a significant portion of our welfare funds while we wait a year for Congress to decide the direction the federal welfare program will take in the future," said Sen. Lyda Green (R-Matanuska-Susitna), chair of the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee.

Alaska is currently using these block grant funds for employment-related and supportive services that are helping to move people off welfare and into self-sufficiency. TANF funds also support a variety of essential services to non-welfare recipients including childcare, child protection and early childhood education.

"If we lose these grants it will force the Department of Health and Social Services to scale back on these efforts, compromising the ongoing success of welfare reform in our state," said Green. "It is a shame that we could be set back simply because the ending dates of the program and the grants are not the same."

In order to extend the supplemental grants, Congress will have to take action before the next fiscal year begins in October. The Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee has sponsored Senate Joint Resolution 21 to send a message to Washington D.C. that the Alaska State Legislature wants these grants to continue.

SJR 21 moves to the House for Consideration.

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