

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

House Majority News

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House Concurs on Fast-Track Supplemental Passage Speeds Funding to Time-Sensitive State Functions

(JUNEAU) – The House of Representatives today agreed to Senate changes in its fast-track supplemental budget bill and gave final legislative approval to a measure providing a quick infusion of funds for time-sensitive needs.

The House voted to concur with Senate changes to House Bill 117, which provides for \$28.1 million to support oil and gas development, redraw election districts, help cover costs of the 2001 Winter Special Olympics, fund primary elections, hire Pioneers Home nurses and cover other expenses.

“The Legislature has done a good job of balancing the need for quick action on these items, while maintaining our responsibility to see that we spend state funds responsibly,” said Rep. Eldon Mulder, co-chair of the House Finance Committee. “Any differences between the House and Senate versions aren’t significant enough to hold up the process of getting these needs met.”

The supplemental budget includes \$5.7 million in state funding priorities, including:

- **Arctic Power:** \$1.6 million to help the private lobbying group Arctic Power persuade Congress to allow oil development on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- **Kaktovik:** \$250,000 to help the coastal plain’s only settlement manage the inquiries, visits and other burdens associated with the growing ANWR debate
- **North Slope gas line:** \$780,600 to help the state to prepare for eventual construction of pipelines to bring North Slope gas to market
- **Reapportionment board:** \$608,400 to fund the efforts of the state redistricting board, which must redraw final state election district boundaries by mid-June
- **Special Olympics:** \$500,000 to help cover the costs incurred to lodge and feed athletes and supporters who came to Alaska for the 2001 World Winter Special Olympics
- **Alaska Pioneers Homes:** \$100,000 to hire skilled nurses at the Anchorage, Juneau and Sitka Pioneers Homes and avoid critical staff vacancies caused by lower-than-market-level wages for Home nurses
- **Division of Elections:** \$252,000 to defray costs of last fall’s special primary election resulting from a U.S. Supreme Court ruling requiring separate ballots
- **Suicide prevention:** \$325,000 to fund statewide efforts to prevent suicide

The bill also authorized the state to spend \$14.1 million in federal funds for low-income energy assistance, Medicaid services, fisheries research, a Fairbanks transportation study and other functions. The bill now goes to the governor to sign into law.

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