

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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## SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE SENATOR LYDA GREEN, CHAIR

### SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR SJR 21

Urging the United States Congress to Extend the Authorization Date  
for Supplemental Block Grants to the State of Alaska under the  
Federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant established in the 1996 federal welfare reform law, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), included modest supplemental grants for 17 relatively poor or rapidly growing states. Alaska's TANF program, Alaska Temporary Assistance, was awarded a "high population" supplemental grant because the state's population grew by more than 10 percent between April 1, 1990 and July 1, 1994.

These supplemental grants included in the 1996 law were authorized only through fiscal year 2001, while PRWORA was authorized through fiscal year 2002. This means that beginning October 1, 2001, the state of Alaska will face a reduction of \$6.9 million in TANF funding, or 13% of its block grant.

The term "supplemental grant" is misleading in that these grants were never intended to be merely add-ons. They were designed by the architects of welfare reform as an integral part of the formula used to determine each state's block grant allocation. Alaska is currently using these 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 the Head Start program. The elimination of the supplemental grant will force the Department of Health and Social Services to scale back on these efforts compromising the ongoing success of welfare reform.

Many policymakers in Washington D.C. are aware of this issue and the American Public Human Services Association, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities and the National Governor's Association support the continuation of the supplemental grants.

SJR 21 is addressed to Alaska's congressional delegation and all other members of Congress. Action to extend the supplemental grants will need to be taken by Congress this year before the new federal fiscal year begins in October.

SENATOR LOREN LEMAN, VICE-CHAIR  
SENATOR JERRY WARD, SENATOR GARY WILKEN, SENATOR BETTYE DAVIS