

SPENARD COMMUNITY COUNCIL-SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON REPORT

DECEMBER 6, 2023

Education

I had the privilege of visiting Mt. Edgecumbe High School, which is a public boarding school in Sitka, along with Senator Stedman on November 8th. Superintendent, Suzzuk Huntington gave us a six-hour tour of the campus which included the dormitories, swimming pool, gym, dining hall and more. The Campus houses more than 400 students.

Legislative Council

As reported in earlier notes, I serve as chair of the Legislative Council. In 2018, the Juneau Community Foundation donated a building to the Legislature to address rental shortages during the session and in the event of a special session. The building was converted to apartments and the Foundation also donated \$2M to assist with the renovations. I'm excited that the building has 33 apartments to house both interested legislators and staff and will be available to rent prior to the next legislative session. During our Legislative Council meeting on November 17th, we approved management services and apartment rental policies for the building.

National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL), Emerging Leaders Program

I had the honor of being selected to join legislators from 30 states during the NCSL Emerging Leaders Program. The two-day program included a series of sessions that addressed communications, negotiation/coalition building and emotional intelligence for emerging leaders.

Upcoming Session

The following is a list of my current legislative priorities for the upcoming session.

Juneteenth (SB 22) — Make Juneteenth an observed legal state holiday.

Use of Force Registry (SB 23) — Establish a use-of-force database that will be overseen by the Department of Public Safety which will collect reports of use of force by a municipal police officer, municipal correctional facility employee, probation officer, parole officer, correctional officer, state trooper, village public safety officer or regional officer.

Public Schools: Mental Health Education (SB 24) — Amends existing health education curriculum to include mental health curriculum in all K-12 health classrooms to adequately educate students on vital information pertaining to mental health symptoms, resources, and treatment.

Asian American/Pacific Islander Program (SB 131) — Teaching students in our Kindergarten through 12th grade education system about the contributions of Asian

American and Pacific Islander communities to the economic, cultural, social, and political development of the United States. Several other states across the country have passed similar bills which allows students to feel empowered and to understand their ethnic identities as well as their personal civic duty.

Education for Deaf & Hearing Impaired (SB 143) companion to HB111 — This bill is a deaf and hard of hearing children’s bill of rights that establishes consistency in the information provided to parents by the school district, allows parents to choose the best method of communication for their child and requires the school district to provide services using the parent’s chosen method of communication.

New Legislation

Stay at Work/Return to Work – I plan to introduce a bill that adds a Return-to-Work Coordinator to State Statutes to assist with planning for individuals who experience on the job injuries resulting in compensable time loss injuries. The program will help supervisors manage employee injury, illness and disability and ensure that employees can return to the workplace as quickly and safely as possible.

Budgets

My focus continues to be developing a comprehensive and sustainable fiscal plan. During the last legislative session, we made some progress but still have lots of work to do.

Capital Budget. As usual, you can submit your priorities through the legislative capital budget website.

- The Capital Project Submission & Information System (CAPSIS) is now open until mid-February so I am encouraging my community councils to consider what projects they might want to submit for consideration.
- The Capital budget has been relatively thin the last few years due to the State’s current fiscal climate, but it is important that projects are noted so that when the fiscal climate recovers, we can address the most pressing projects. The reality – even without current funding, listing needed projects serves as placeholders for the future.
- I’m hopeful that some of the projects that were not funded during the last session, will qualify for funding through the infrastructure funds.

Committee Membership

I currently serve on the following committees.

- Legislative Council, **Chair**
- Education, **Member**
- Community and Regional Affairs, **Member**

- Labor and Commerce, **Member**
- Commerce, Community and Economic Development (*Finance Subcommittee*), **Member**
- Health (*Finance Subcommittee*), **Member**
- Labor and Workforce Development (*Finance Subcommittee*), **Member**

Senate District G Office

My staff and I are in the process of transitioning to our Juneau office; however, we will continue to work in the Anchorage Office located at 1500 W. Benson Boulevard, Suite 328 until the second week in January. We are always available to assist you with your concerns so feel free to stop by, email me or call the office at 907 269-0174. Our office will be closed on the upcoming holidays: Christmas Day and New Years Day.

Always representing your interests!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sen. Gray-Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S" and "G".