



BERTA'S BRIEFINGS

REPRESENTATIVE BERTA GARDNER

Serving Geneva Woods, College Village, Green Acres, Tudor, Taku & Campbell Park

FEBRUARY 17, 2011

Local Jobs, Small Business Top Priority

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

On this beautiful cold and blustery day, my staff and I are working to make sure our state government is working for you. Over the past few weeks I appreciate that many of you have contacted me to let me know what is on your mind. I hope you will continue to do so.

With much legislation whirling around here to spend public money, develop state resources, or change our taxation system, one thing I repeatedly ask when I am in committee is, "Does the legislation or program before us really benefit Alaskans?"

As a member of the House Special Committee on Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, I am charged with oversight of several key programs, including tourism, seafood marketing as well as voting on key legislation. My job is to ask the tough questions to ensure that state resources are working to create jobs and a better future for all Alaskans. Here are some of the issues we are facing:

Tourism for Alaskans

Each year our state government spends millions to market Alaska tourism, both nationally and internationally, by participating in the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA). ATIA is a public-private partnership with the goal of attracting more tourists to Alaska. While the cruise ship industry is a vital component of Alaska tourism, as it should be, I want to ensure that state tourism funding also



Local resident Norman Sarabia shows Rep. Gardner the Tlingit dance blanket he carefully crafted.

helps the local mom-and-pop businesses, the independent hotels and restaurants, and the small tour companies and operators. Studies have shown the more we encourage vibrant small businesses, the bigger the economic bang to create jobs and bring more money into circulation locally.

While serving as a spending watchdog, I am encouraged that ATIA appears to have a diverse board and membership from around the state and from varying types and sizes of tourism operations. I would like to see more of the small, mom and pop business represented in ATIA leadership, and I will continue to strive to ensure that critical state resources promote our tourism businesses of all sizes.

Alaska Seafood – Best in the World

We Alaskans are exceedingly lucky to have access to wild and bountiful seafood harvested from cold, clean waters. Our seafood is worth \$5.8 billion in terms of Alaska economic impact and brings in \$100 million in state and local tax revenue. While the Midwest may be the nation's breadbasket, we are our nation's fishnet. In an ever more crowded and polluted world, the reputation of our fish is growing exponentially and internationally. Our success is the result of skillful processing and investments by private entrepreneurs – along with State of Alaska participation in marketing.

As part of my committee work, we oversee the allocation of state funding to the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI). I am pleased that ASMI sees its role as branding Alaska's seafood resources in a way that helps all parts of the seafood industry, both large and small and from all regions of the state. Once again, my goal is to ensure that state marketing dollars benefit small Alaska businesses rather than just large national or international processors.

Alaska Film Industry

I have just signed on as a co-sponsor of legislation to provide state incentives to support our growing Alaska Film Industry. Many of you may have seen or knew someone who participated in the recent filming of "Everybody Loves Whales". Senator Johnny Ellis has led the effort to create a vibrant Alaska film industry and new legislation this year continues to build on this success. The economic spinoff here has been phenomenal with new jobs and revenue for local restaurants, hotels and other small businesses throughout Anchorage.

Our Future is Bright

More and more, Alaskans realize the need to diversify our economy. Tourism, Fishing and the Film Industry are growing sectors in our economy which will hopefully help us create more jobs and opportunities throughout our state.

I welcome your questions and thoughts regarding how we can create a more diverse economy with benefits for all Alaskans. Send me your ideas!

I'm Berta and I'm still listening,

Beta
