

Senator Johnny Ellis & Representative Berta Gardner



2009 Legislative Update

Dear Friends & Neighbors:

The 26th Legislature convened on January 20th. Our work in Juneau is being done in a very different economic climate than it was a year ago. The national economy is on many people's minds, but as a state we took steps to keep Alaska on solid financial footing. Last year, with oil prices high and a new oil tax regime that we authored in place, we saved over \$5 billion of our surplus. Since then the price of oil has dropped dramatically, so ***we will be scrutinizing the Governor's budget*** to make sure that any proposed savings are real, and that essential state services are not sacrificed. Here's a sampling of other projects we're working on this year:

QUALITY HEALTHCARE:

A bill (SB 32) to adjust the Medicaid rate review process would offer greater assistance to seniors and those with developmental disabilities who need quality in-state services. Representative Gardner is pushing legislation (HB 51) to limit the amount of overtime a nurse can work, which will improve patient safety.

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID:

Senate Bill 33 would establish an endowment for merit-based scholarships for students to attend postsecondary schools in Alaska. Bolstering UAA and its programs has long been one of our top priorities.

ANTI-PRICE GOUGING:

Companion legislation in the House (HB 68) and Senate (SB 54) would make it illegal to sell gas at exorbitant prices. With two in-state refineries, Alaskans deserve answers as to why we are paying the highest prices at the pump of any state. More than 30 states already have anti-gouging laws in place.

DESIGNATING THE MALAMUTE THE STATE DOG:

Students at Polaris K-12 School approached Rep. Gardner about a bill to designate the malamute as the state dog (HB 14). This bill has received a lot of media attention, but the real benefit is to the students who are learning about the legislative process and civic engagement. Rep. Gardner is happy to help the students with their project.

We will continue to work hard on these important issues. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or comments about these or any other issues. You can reach Sen. Ellis at (888) 330-3704 and Rep. Gardner at (800) 331-4930.

Warm Regards,

Senator Johnny Ellis

Representative Berta Gardner

P.S. As always, it is our honor and privilege to serve you.

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Senator Johnny Ellis



Representative Berta Gardner



Keeping in Touch!

SAVE THE DATE — SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

★ Senator Ellis and Representative Gardner
Invite you to their annual **"Mid-Session Update"**

PIZZA PARTY
Saturday, February 28th
11 AM to 1 PM
Tudor Elementary School



COME FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN JUNEAU!

★ Bring your kids, your questions and your ideas. ★