



**Representative
Berta Gardner**



**Senator
Johnny Ellis**



**Keeping in Touch!
Mission Newsletter**

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**Come and share your concerns,
issues, priorities, and DONUTS!**

**Please join us!
We would love to see all of our constituents.**

**Sen. Johnny Ellis
&
Rep. Berta Gardner
Constituent Meet and Greet**

**Saturday, March 13th, 2010
2 pm to 4 pm
Taku Elementary
701 E 72nd Ave**



Senator Johnny Ellis and Representative Berta Gardner

Report to the People

Mid-Session Newsletter for Midtown Anchorage



Minor's
Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We hope this newsletter finds you well. The **2010 legislative session is underway, and we are working hard** on all of the bills and budget items that need to come before us over this 90-day session.

As always, **we'd like to hear from you**, so contact us if you have any questions on these or any other issues. Our offices are open here in Juneau, and there are a number of ways to contact us—our **toll-free phone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses** are included in this newsletter.

Best of all, we will be hosting our **annual constituent meetings**. This year, we've already held one—at Tudor Elementary on February 27th—and are looking forward to the second on March 13th at Taku Elementary. Turn this letter over for the details.

Inside, we have outlined our legislative priorities for the session. To keep you up-to-date as the process continues and the pace increases, **we each send out regular email newsletters—to sign up, just call or send an email**. Look for another in-depth newsletter like this one that will recap the events of the legislative session when we return home to Anchorage in a few months. The current schedule has us here in Juneau until April the 18th, and we intend to complete the state's business on time.

As always, **it is an honor and a privilege to serve you** in the Alaska Legislature.

Senator Johnny Ellis

Rep. Berta Gardner



Representative Gardner and Senator Ellis serve pizza and chat with constituents at their annual midsession constituent meeting on February 27 at Tudor Elementary School. We'll host another meeting on March 13 at Taku Elementary.

Senator Johnny Ellis

A BACK-TO-BASICS AGENDA THAT PUTS PEOPLE OVER POLITICS: MY GOALS AND VALUES FOR THE 2010 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE ENERGY

Reliable and affordable energy equals a strong economy and jobs for Alaskans. First, we must **fill the pipe**. Increasing oil production on the North Slope is key to preserving the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, Alaska's economic backbone. Second, **natural gas exploration and storage in Cook Inlet** will help Anchorage maintain our primary source of heat and electricity. Finally, **energy efficiency and renewable energy** will help Alaskans lower their bills and move us off of the boom-and-bust cycle of global oil prices.

Whether through tax incentives or direct investment, **every state dollar we spend must bring**



Senator Ellis with constituents and Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson at a Rogers Park Community Council meeting in October, one of the biggest meetings in recent memory.

concrete benefits to the people of Alaska —not just a give-away to powerful interests.

PROMOTE JOBS & REPAIR ROADS AND BUILDINGS

The state must take care of what we have. Funding the backlog of deferred maintenance work will keep our smaller contractors and laborers working through an economic slowdown, while protecting state investments for future generations of Alaskans.

I am also working with the Department of Transportation to make sure **projects the state has funded are quickly implemented in order to put people to work**. It is unacceptable for bureaucratic delay to keep people out of work and construction off the street.



Senator Ellis, founder of the UA Boosters Caucus, discusses the new science facilities at UAA with Chancellor Fran Ulmer.

REPAY THE SAVINGS ACCOUNT: SAVE OUR SURPLUS

For the first time since the fund was established 20 years ago, the **Legislature is in position to repay our debt to Alaska's savings account**, the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR). Just a few years ago, we faced a shortfall of over \$5 billion. However, **the Bi-Partisan Working Group has been on a savings spree** and the debt has been reduced to \$400 million, which we intend to repay in full this year.



Senator Ellis is continuing in his role as the Majority Leader of the Senate Bi-Partisan Working Group alongside Senate President Gary Stevens (R-Kodiak).

Saving now is the right thing to do. Alaska's future depends on the stability that drawing on these savings can provide if future oil prices crash or production continues to decline.

SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The health and safety of our neighborhoods are fundamental. Unfortunately, too many of our communities have been threatened over the past year. The quality of life across the city — and especially downtown — is impacted by **substance abuse and its repercussions, including domestic violence, sexual assault, crime, and homelessness.**

That is why I have introduced legislation to **dedicate the state's income from the existing alcohol taxes to substance abuse treatment and prevention**, and worked with Mayor Sullivan and others to create a **Specialized Treatment Unit at Point Woronzof**. Substance abuse is a threat to public safety and public health, and we must confront it head on. **I believe every citizen has a right to feel safe in their homes and on the streets.**

Representative Berta Gardner

It's all about you!

The most important part of my job as a legislator is to **represent you**. We may not agree on every issue – even my husband doesn't agree with me on everything, but it *is* my job to **listen**, to **learn** and to **give voice** to your concerns.

Bills going through the legislature this year are mostly energy related. How do we best obtain **reliable and affordable energy** for Alaskans? How do we balance an oil tax structure to **promote investment** and still **ensure Alaska gets a fair share**? Do we need incentives to **promote the building of a gas line**?



Representative Gardner and Senator Ellis listen to constituents at a recent meeting.

All of these questions are considered as a bill works through the committee process.

These considerations help us

focus on legislation to benefit both our districts and the wider state, weighing a bill's intended consequences against the costs and potential impacts.

The single most influential part of the committee process is **your voice**. Through my e-news letters and publications I work to keep you informed on important issues and invite you to be involved. Consider joining your Community Council, testifying at public hearings through your Legislative Information Office, writing a letter to the editor or calling, writing or emailing me. I love to hear from you and find out what is on **your** mind!

"Leaders are more powerful role models when they learn than when they teach" - Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Can you find a doctor when you need one?

Of growing and serious concern is the **shortage of primary care physicians who will accept Medicare** patients in Alaska. As our state population ages, we hear stories of seniors' inability to find or even retain their own primary care physician once they reach Medicare age.

In Alaska many doctors won't accept Medicare patients because of the low federal reimbursement rates for office visits and draconian penalties for billing errors. One possibility is to **establish community health centers that focus on providing care for patients on Medicare**. The centers can bill Medicare at a much higher rate and would then be able to provide services for Alaska's seniors. The state should encourage established clinics and those in the works to provide primary care to more Alaska seniors.

Leaving no stone unturned

One of my primary responsibilities as an elected Representative is to leave no stone unturned in our efforts to get **Alaska's gas to consumers** here and in the rest of the nation. The Energy Council in DC was an opportunity to participate in discussions on energy policy and to contribute an Alaskan perspective to the debate. We continue to explain our needs to Congress and to push for details of the \$18 billion federal loan guarantee to help finance our gas pipeline.

I also took the opportunity to have discussions with decision-makers about **permitting problems on oil and gas projects** and to ask our own delegation to work on getting the **federal government** to fulfill the **statehood promise** of 180,000 acres of school lands.



Representative Gardner conversing with US Senator Lisa Murkowski about energy issues.