



City of Valdez, Alaska

2020 State Legislative Priorities

Expand Incentives for Community Development

State laws regarding taxation need to be revised to allow local jurisdictions the ability to develop their own tax-based incentive tools for community development and redevelopment.

Alaska Marine Highway System

The City of Valdez is committed to finding a statewide solution for AMHS. We support a governance model which includes 1) creation of a public corporation to manage AMHS, 2) maintain State ownership of AMHS assets, and 3) interim enhancement as line agency of state government. The City considers unacceptable the reductions to funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System in FY20 and the changes to the winter schedule for many ferry-dependent communities; and opposes any further reduction to the System's budget and supports reform that is sustainable and responsive to the needs of coastal communities.

Maintaining Local Alaska Wildlife Trooper Position

Maintaining the Valdez post for an Alaska Wildlife Trooper (AWT) is important to the fishing community of Valdez and Prince William Sound (PWS). Valdez is home to 41 permit holders and homeport to 91 vessels participating in various commercial fisheries. A local AWT provides;

1. Regulation enforcement and protection of wild and hatchery fishery resources in Valdez and PWS. Port Valdez and Valdez Arm are home to one of the largest purse seine salmon fisheries in Alaska. Up to 200 commercial vessels fish each summer in close proximity to the Solomon Gulch Hatchery, the Alyeska Marine Terminal and regulatory closed waters. The on water presence of the Valdez AWT helps to ensure an orderly fishery and maintain established boundaries for resource protection and marine traffic.
2. Enforcement of hunting regulations in Prince William Sound and the Copper River Basin.
3. Local Valdez office for fishery registration, administrative and education needs.
4. Support for Valdez Police Department.

The local AWT acts as a liaison and resource for the Valdez Police Department to contact larger State resources when necessary. Without this position the closest law enforcement officer, other than the VPD, is a state trooper stationed in Glenallen – 120 miles away. Often this distance is further as AST jurisdiction out of Glenallen reaches as far away as Paxson, Palmer, and Tok. The AWT is also routinely used as a force multiplier during more significant events. He is locally trained to help respond to active shooter and domestic violence situations.

Community Jails

The City of Valdez supports maintaining funding at the 2019 level. Continue working with the Department of Corrections to conduct electronic monitoring for both post-conviction and pre-trial releases. Strive towards a local model of supervision and identify additional areas in which the community jail can better be utilized to maximize efficiency, diversify services provided, and partner with the State of Alaska to produce the most cost effective solution.

Alaska Department of Fish & Game Budget

The Legislature must recognize the need for a balanced approach to budget reductions that create minimal impacts on the core functions of fisheries resource management. Valdez and Prince William Sound fishermen rely on these functions to provide for maximum fishing opportunity and sustainable resource management. Key elements include;

1. Maintaining adequate staffing levels in PWS to provide for effective and dedicated fisheries management.
2. Full funding for in season data collection through aerial surveys, stream assessments and other methods. This establishes accurate in season reporting to provide the tools necessary to maximize fishing time and area for Valdez and PWS fishermen.
3. Ensure budget reductions do not reduce or eliminate economic opportunity for industry and resource users.
4. Continued support for ongoing research projects.

Support Funding for Spill Prevention and Response (SPAR) Division of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Governor Dunleavy's proposed FY 2021 Operating Budget contains a cut of \$531,000 and the loss of 7 positions for the Spill Prevention and Response Division (SPAR) of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. SPAR is funded primarily through a 5 cent per barrel surcharge on North Slope crude oil and a .95-cent surcharge on refined fuel. Continuing shortfalls diminishes the State's ability to prevent oil spills and maintain an adequate level of response readiness should a spill occur. Maintaining the State's capacity to prevent oil and hazardous substance spills and its ability to robustly respond if a spill occurs is crucial to protecting the environment, the economy, and the health, safety, and welfare of Alaskans. The Legislature is urged to establish funding mechanisms necessary to adequately support the prevention of oil and hazardous substance releases and provide adequate response and clean-up capabilities should prevention measures fail.

Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute

The functions and programs of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) are vital to the promotion of Alaska's seafood resources and the development of new markets for local seafood producers. Any future budget reductions must fully consider the impacts for ASMI's ability to effectively promote the benefits and sustainability of Alaska's seafood products.

Alaska Tourism Marketing

The City of Valdez encourages strong investment by the State of Alaska in a statewide tourism marketing program. Valdez supports the efforts the Alaska Travel Industry and the Alaska Tourism Marketing Board are taking to create a new sustainable marketing funding formula in the form of a tourism investment district.

Support for the Value of Medicaid Expansion in Alaska

Medicaid covers the health care costs of our most vulnerable populations – the temporary or permanently disabled, elderly and low income – and those organizations whose mission it is to support them. Medicaid expansion is associated with improved hospital financial performance and significant reductions in the probability of hospital closure, especially in rural areas like Valdez.

Support for Valdez City Schools Legislative Priorities

TRS/PERS

Beginning in 2016, legislators have attempted to raise the maximum employer contribution rates for PERS and TRS, in an attempt to shift costs from the state to local governments. Similar legislation introduced with substantial shifting of costs onto local governments would be devastating. The PERS/TRS system is the legal and moral responsibility of the State, as it is THEIR program. School districts simply pay an amount set by the State in order to be participants in the plan. We do not provide retirement benefits; we do not have a say in any of the fiduciary decisions.

Predictable Funding

School districts need reassurance of timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools; funding the true cost of education in all districts and providing full funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional services. Early notification of funding is crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

Early Childhood Funding

Equitable access to fully funded, sustainable preschool programs provides a foundation of excellent social, emotional and cognitive instruction to students. Research clearly demonstrates that early intervention and instruction is one of the best ways to increase student achievement across all demographics and create the greatest opportunity for all students to read proficiently by 3rd grade. Early childhood education should be considered as part of the school funding through the BSA.

Support for Alaska Municipal League Legislative Priorities

PERS/TRS/Termination Study Fix

We support reform to PERS that includes a complete pay-down of the unfunded liability; and conditionally request that the State also conduct termination studies, small or struggling employers be allowed to opt out of the system, and that the high interest rate on non-payment be eliminated.

Restore AMHS Funding

The City of Valdez urges the Alaska Legislature to override the \$5 Million veto of AMHS funding for FY2020.

Support Census Count

The City of Valdez supports all and diverse efforts that contribute to a complete count during the U.S. Census.

Local Government Tax Authority

The City of Valdez opposes any State action that would diminish the ability of local governments to tax or receive a share of State tax on local economic activity.

Real Property Sales Disclosure

The Alaska Association of Assessing Officers overall goal is to promote the fair and equitable distribution of the property tax burden which funds local governments.

State Harbor Grants

The City urges full funding by the Governor and the Alaska Legislature for the State's Municipal Harbor Facility Grant Program in FY2021 to ensure enhanced safety and economic prosperity among Alaskan coastal communities.

Legislative Adoption of a Sustainable Budget Plan

The City of Valdez supports adoption of a sustainable budget plan which does not rely primarily on cuts, but on new sources of revenue. We urge you to take this opportunity to solve the deficit crippling our economy by generating revenue with some combination of one or more broad-based tax.

Statewide Energy Policy

The City of Valdez urges the Governor and the Alaska State Legislature to increase investment in the Renewable Energy Fund; and additionally support continued investment in State energy and energy efficiency programs, including the Revolving Loan Fund Program, Weatherization, Home Energy Rebate Program, Bulk Fuel Construction Program, and Rural Power System Upgrades. As progress continues on a large diameter LNG pipeline, the State must also concurrently develop a comprehensive strategy to maximize the distribution of that energy outside the pipeline corridor, and to dedicate appropriate revenues from the sale of that gas to support other energy projects serving all areas of Alaska.