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Senate Majority Announces Team, Caucus Agreement

ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Senate Majority today announced its complete team for the 31st Alaska Legislature, which begins Jan. 15. The majority also announced a caucus agreement reflecting Alaskans’ desire for more engagement in the state budget process, an expanded Senate Finance Committee and committee leaders.

Sen. Lyman Hoffman (D-Bethel) joined the majority as the 14th member.

“Senator Hoffman brings years of experience and is a strong advocate for rural Alaska,” said incoming Senate President Cathy Giessel (R-Anchorage). “I am pleased to welcome this esteemed member of the Alaska Senate to our ranks.”

The majority identified passing a responsible budget, on-time, as the single most important task. To best accomplish this, the majority will increase the number of Finance Committee members and amend its caucus agreement related to budget votes.

Expanding the Finance Committee by two members gives nearly 50 percent of Alaska’s senators hands-on roles in the budget process. The committee will include senators from every corner of the state and emphasize the Senate’s first priority: passing a responsible budget in a timely manner.

The amended caucus agreement recognizes the rights and responsibilities of each majority member. Members will have more opportunity than ever to actively participate in budget deliberations, and therefore have more ownership of the majority budget. However, members who find themselves unable to vote for the majority budget will not face automatic removal from the caucus. Consequences for such a vote will be determined by the caucus and consider the importance of representing constituents.

“We are committed to a productive session, delivering solid results for Alaska families and businesses,” Sen. Giessel said. “This modified caucus agreement strikes the balance of putting the budget front and center without an automatic penalty that adversely impacts members’ constituents.”

The nine-member Senate Finance Committee will be co-chaired by Sen. Bert Stedman (R-Sitka) and Sen. Natasha Von Imhof (R-Anchorage). Sen. Stedman will direct the operating budget, and Sen. Von Imhof will manage the capital budget and legislation before the committee. Committee members will be Sen. David Wilson (R-Wasilla), Sen. Click Bishop (R-Fairbanks), Sen. Peter Micciche (R-Soldotna), Sen. Mike Shower (R-Wasilla), and Sen. Lyman Hoffman (D-Bethel). The remaining two committee members will be selected by the Senate Minority Caucus.

“The state is facing a very significant structural budget deficit,” said Sen. Stedman. “To help fix the problem, the Senate Finance Committee is adding two members. These additional members broaden the geographic representation and bring valuable experience to the Senate Finance table.”

Chairs of the Senate’s standing committees will be:

- Sen. Shelley Hughes (R-Palmer), Senate Judiciary Committee, and Senate Transportation Committee;
- Sen. Gary Stevens (R-Kodiak), Senate Education Committee, and Legislative Council;
- Sen. Mike Shower (R-Wasilla), Senate State Affairs Committee;
- Sen. Chris Birch (R-Anchorage), Senate Resources Committee;
- Sen. Lora Reinbold (R-Eagle River), Senate Labor and Commerce Committee;
- Sen. David Wilson (R-Wasilla), Senate Health and Social Services Committee; and
- Sen. Click Bishop (R-Fairbanks), Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee.

As previously announced, Sen. Mia Costello (R-Anchorage) will be the Majority Leader, and Sen. John Coghill (R-North Pole/Fairbanks) will be the Senate Rules Chair.

For more information please contact Senate Majority Communications Director [Rena Miller](#) at (907) 269-0220.

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