

April 4, 2008



SENATOR DONALD OLSON

25TH ALASKA LEGISLATURE

ULU NEWS - DISTRICT T



Our 90 day session ends at midnight, Sunday the 13th. Of course we can still extend the session. But barring some catastrophe, I believe we will make this deadline. In part this is because most of the spending decisions are done.

The Senate passed its version of the capital budget, SB 221, over to the House. It is about \$1.8 billion in total spending on a variety of projects throughout the state with \$700 million coming from state general funds. Two noteworthy items are \$20 million to help schools with their energy costs and \$400 million more going into the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR).

The CBR is the state's savings account to be used when there are revenue shortfalls. This session we have put \$5 billion into this account because of the revenue surpluses from \$100 per barrel oil. It is estimated that the state will receive between \$7 billion and \$8 billion in extra money both this year and the next from oil revenue. The House and the Senate are now discussing ways to insure long term fiscal stability for the state with this new wealth. We are kind of following that bumper sticker plea, "please God, give me another oil boom and I promise not to..."

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~TWO EXPECTANT MOTHERS~

Pictured at right are Governor Palin and my wife, Willow Olson.

Willow was invited to the governor's mansion for a luncheon honoring legislative spouses. Governor Palin is due in mid-May and Willow is due in mid-July. It will be a busy summer for both...

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I expect that the House will add in some more projects to SB 221 along with some of the Governor's requests that did not make it into our bill.

The Governor announced that we will begin a special session on June 3 to consider either approving the Transcanada gas line proposal or changes to law that would improve chances of getting a better proposal. Its hard to get my mind on the special session when we are still trying to finish up the work of the regular session. Coming down to Juneau for 60 days in the middle of the summer is not appealing on its face; reindeer herding, new baby, campaign, no time to rest.

The Governor released her decisions on the Supplemental funding bill, which as you may remember, included some capital projects that she vetoed last year. The good news for our district is that all of our capital projects that were in that bill were either approved as part of the supplemental or they were approved for funding in the capital budget. Our projects that were approved in the supplemental were: \$4 million for the Nome Public Safety Building, Diomede waste oil recycle system, Savoonga Teen Center renovation, and road improvements in White Mountain. Approved for movement to the regular capital budget was the funding for emergency medical packs for NSHC.

Congratulations to Sweepstakes mushers Conner Thomas, Cari Miller, Kirsten Bey, Jeff Darling, and Ed Iten who finished in 5th place in the Sweepstakes race and 17th in this year's Iditarod.

Recent visitors from the district are as follows: George Sr. and Geraldine Beans, St. Marys; Dana Johnson, Kotzebue; Janet Ahmasuk, Mark Allred, Jeff Selvey, Stan Lujan and Dr. David Head, Nome; Jim Hickerson; Unalakleet; Joe Okitkun, Kotlik; Charlee Lockwood, St. Michael; Edward and Elsie Itta, Barrow. I missed reporting Edgar Jackson of Shaktoolik visiting a while back.