



TRUSTEES FOR ALASKA  
PROTECT | DEFEND | REPRESENT



Southeast Alaska  
Conservation Council

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2020

### Contacts:

Kelsey Wallace, Native Peoples Action, [kelsey@nativepeoplesaction.org](mailto:kelsey@nativepeoplesaction.org), (907) 799-6149  
Veri di Suvero, AKPIRG, [veri@akpirg.org](mailto:veri@akpirg.org), (907) 350-2286

## ALASKA GOVERNOR PUTS CITIZENS AT RISK WITH RECENT BUDGET VETOES

*Alaska leaders disagree with the handling of public health and safety by the Governor*

ANCHORAGE, AK — Governor Dunleavy has gambled with Alaskan lives by [cutting \\$261 million](#) in two budget bills and expecting \$191 million in federal stimulus funds to alleviate his cuts. Using budget vetoes to push a political agenda when Alaskans are showing up for one another like never before risks the health and safety of every Alaskan in every community. Alaska lawmakers went on the record in the *Anchorage Daily News* stating they believe the Governor is wrong, recognizing the federal dollars are for “necessary expenditures” related to the global health pandemic. Alaskans and Alaska’s small businesses urgently need all available funds to get through this public health crisis.

“The Governor continues to prove to Alaskans that he doesn’t care about the ‘Alaskan Way,’” says **Native Peoples Action** executive director Kendra Kloster. “Alaskans are coming together—caring for and protecting our elders and those most at risk in our communities—like Alaskans do. That is our way.”

Misrepresenting plans for emergency federal funds not only misinforms Alaskans but puts them at risk. Alaskans rely on current and reliable information to budget limited funds and will find themselves left with un-bankable IOUs as a result of the Governor’s wager amidst this global crisis.

“In an ironic twist, the Governor, who has repeatedly claimed he doesn’t want federal overreach in our state, is relying solely on the Federal stimulus to protect Alaskans,” says **AKPIRG** executive director Veri di Suvero. “Betting Alaska’s health on a murky federal stimulus process is antithetical to the public interest and will have disastrous consequences if it turns out these funds cannot be used as the Governor has implied.”

Alaska communities face unprecedented threats. During this period of isolating and social distancing, instances of domestic violence are increasing, mental health hotline workers are

being overwhelmed, and our shelters are operating at capacity with no relief in sight. Now is the time for our state government to protect our people. Unfortunately, the Governor is showing just how misaligned his priorities are with the need to keep Alaskans safe.

###

### **Additional Statements of Support**

"The Governor is using a public health crisis and emergency federal funding to shirk his responsibility to safeguard the health and safety of all Alaskans and Alaska communities," said Vicki Clark, executive director of **Trustees for Alaska**. "The State must provide funding for the well-being of Alaskans and Alaskan businesses and communities, for they are bearing the burden right now while public health experts work day and night to treat and mitigate the spread of Covid-19."

"Governor Dunleavy took a predictably combative position by slashing the budget, leaving Alaskans even more vulnerable in a time of crisis," said Polly Carr, Executive Director of **The Alaska Center**. "His vetoes remove money designed to protect Alaskans, while he claims federal Coronavirus funding would foot the bill. He's playing a dangerous political calculus, forcing legislators who are required by law to assemble in person to override a veto to choose between their own health or the health of their communities,"

"People should always come first, and the Governor is proving again that he is putting politics and partisanship ahead of the health and well-being of Alaskans," said Elisabeth Balster Dabney, executive director of the **Northern Alaska Environmental Center**. "This is predictable, but nonetheless frustrating as our State is coming to terms with a new way of existing and surviving during this global pandemic."

"Governor Dunleavy has consistently acted and budgeted against the best interests of Southeast Alaskans," said Meredith Trainor, Executive Director of the **Southeast Alaska Conservation Council**. "He should be ashamed to slash essential services like the Alaska Marine Highway System, which is Southeast Alaskans' lifeline to one another and to necessary goods and services, especially at a time when the public is struggling and our communities feel more isolated than ever."

"We are looking now to our Alaska state legislators to protect Alaskans and override the Governor's vetoes," said Enei Begaye, **Native Movement** executive director. "Alaskans are watching our elected leadership now and we will remember come election time."

"Community members and organizations, providing essential direct support to Alaska's most vulnerable people, are experiencing unprecedented demands due to COVID-19 and are now forced to focus on additional cuts by those who are elected to support these communities," says Jessica Girard, Director of the **Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition**. "Our communities need

direct additional support rather than further limitations. We continue to be appalled by the response from our leadership during this pandemic.”

**Additional Press Contacts**

Meredith Trainor, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, 907-957-8347, [meredith@seacc.org](mailto:meredith@seacc.org)

Leah Moss, The Alaska Center, 917-613-6791, [leah@akcenter.org](mailto:leah@akcenter.org)

Dawnell Smith, Trustees for Alaska, 907-433-2013, [dsmith@trustees.org](mailto:dsmith@trustees.org)

Erica Watson, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, (907) 452-5093, [erica@northern.org](mailto:erica@northern.org)

Enei Begaye, Native Movement, (928) 380-6296, [enei@nativemovement.org](mailto:enei@nativemovement.org)

Jessica Girard, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, (907) 251-5293,

[jessica@fbxclimateaction.org](mailto:jessica@fbxclimateaction.org)