

If I were mayor, I'd allocate a greater budget towards the school district, improving air quality, and provide more funding towards homeless shelters. I believe that greater funding towards these areas would inspire people to learn and work in different areas that may further the development of Fairbanks.

Probably the most pressing problem in Fairbanks today is the dreadful air quality. According to the American Lung Association, Fairbanks remains the most polluted city in the entirety of the United States¹. You see, log burning releases smoke and chemicals, which can cause lung damage, this wouldn't be a problem if it wasn't for the cold air, the cold air makes all the pollutants stay in one place, so it's difficult for the pollution to go anywhere non-damaging². This is a problem, how can we fix it? Well we can cut back on wood use, making more regulations on campfires and home wood heaters, we can use cars less whenever possible, use less energy in your homes.³ The best way, however, is to raise attention towards the issue, nobody wants to breathe awful air. Being a student myself, I recognize many of my peers care very much about issues that regard public safety. We can form fund-raising events and clubs for schools to raise money towards raising awareness, towards fixing this issue. For more general information, you can visit the "Division of Air Quality" website⁴

To explain why the North Star Borough School District needs continued funding priority, let me explore a few statistics with you. The 2017 approved budget plans⁵ was listed at 239,952,255\$, the 2018 approved budget plans⁶ was listed at 239,243,206\$, about 800,000 less than the 2017 budget. Notable changes between the two budgets, was a 15.38% increase in "student activities" a 12.24% increase in "local programs" and a 33.33% decrease in "state programs" as well a 2.35% decrease in "federal programs". So why do these statistics matter? Well, when we compare these statistics with the 2017-2019 PEAKS Proficiency rates⁷, we might see a correlation. Remember, the total 2018 budget had about 800,000\$ less than 2017. In English testing, the average PEAKS rates among students in 2017 had gone down about 5% from 2018, in Math, the average went down 2%, and in Science, the average went down 1%. There is definitely the possibility of other variables affecting this, and I'm not saying that just dumping more

¹ [Fairbanks is the most polluted city](#)

² [Alaska's Polluted Air](#)

³ [What you can do about air pollution](#)

⁴ [Division of Air Quality](#)

⁵ [2017-18 Approved Budget](#)

⁶ [2018 Approved Budget](#)

⁷ [PEAKS rates](#)

money into a problem is the definite solution, but we cannot ignore the clear connection between the budget and the testing averages.

The cost of living in Fairbanks, it's probably not something you think about often, but according to Payscale⁸, the cost of living in Fairbanks is 33% higher than the national average. That includes housing, which is higher by 22%, transportation and groceries, which are greater than the national average by 22-23%, and the greatest being housing, which is greater by 118% the national average. This is of course balanced out by jobs enough of the time, that's one of the reasons why people come to Fairbanks, because there's some good job opportunities here. But what happens when someone loses their job? In Fairbanks, this is often due to the drug and alcohol epidemic, Alaska being in the top 10 states nationwide of illegal drug use. In fact, 38% of all men in AK are binge drinkers, and 13% of all women in AK are binge drinkers, this means over half of all people in AK have had alcoholism problems, greatly exceeding the national average.⁹ So, a person shows up in Fairbanks looking for work, after a few years of living here, they start developing an addiction, and they cannot work properly, and they get fired. Perhaps it is reasons like this that the homeless statistics are so high? Alaska has a very bad homeless population. As we've discussed, the cost of living in Fairbanks is exceptionally high, with housing being doubled the national average. Without a house, the chilling weather can easily kill a human. So, how would we go about fixing this obvious issue? The housing cost is irrationally high, but for a reason, it is expensive up here, and it's so high that lowering it isn't exactly an option. The other option would be to provide greater funding towards homeless shelters, such as the Fairbanks Rescue Mission¹⁰, which provides homeless people with safety and food, and shelter from the cold. I believe that greater funding towards homeless shelters is a simple solution that I think could work.

⁸ [Payscale: Cost of living in Fairbanks](#)

⁹ [Alaska: An Illicit drug and alcohol epidemic](#)

¹⁰ [Fairbanks Rescue Mission](#)