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Member of the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties

AML Disappointed by Governor's Vetoes, and the Condition of the State Budget

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The State's revenue shortfall continues to impact local governments, businesses, and residents. Today, the Governor announced his vetoes of budget items that saw broad support in the Legislature. These represented funding for programs that are important to Alaska's recovery and future. AML was pleased to see the Legislature responsive to Alaskans' needs in this time of need. The Governor's actions are a step backward.

Specifically, the following vetoes directly and negatively impact local governments:

- Community Assistance – more than 80 communities will receive less in ARPA funds than they get in Community Assistance; this federal relief won't make up the difference. ARPA funds are to respond to the crisis created by COVID, not that manufactured by the State.
- School construction and major maintenance – at some point the State's Constitutional obligation to public education will have to mean something, and failure to meet it result in consequences.
- Municipal harbor matching grants and AMHS – local governments committed to strengthening Alaska's coastal infrastructure, even as they depend on the state keeping AMHS strong.
- Cuts to public health, law, and so many other human and social services – our residents depend on many of these services, and expectations shift to local governments to make up for the State.

Many communities are a long way from recovering from the impact of the economic crisis. Many Alaskans and Alaska businesses are still struggling to make ends meet. Alaskans face an uncertain future, which the Governor's today actions contribute to. The Governor has directly and fundamentally undermined Alaska's path to prosperity. It cannot be couched in terms of political brinksmanship.

The Alaska Municipal League encourages legislative leadership to counter this approach, and to look beyond leverage to address what have become intractable positions. The institutions that Alaskans depend on – and those elected to public service as governor, senators, and representatives of this great state – cannot be fractured and failing at a time when Alaskans need them most.

AML remains concerned that the actions of the Governor and unfunded programs within the budget reflect an unwillingness to follow through on constitutional and statutory obligations. The health, welfare, and safety of Alaskans are fundamental responsibilities that together we must work toward.

The special session in August takes on critical importance, but this single point in time requires Alaska's public servants to come prepared and willing to act, to compromise, to come up with new solutions, and to work together. Those principles were not evident in today's vetoes by the Governor.

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