

# NEWS FROM HUGHES

INTERIM UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2023



## SO WHAT'S UP WITH THE PFD IN OCTOBER?

I know inflation is hitting us all, and you're likely curious about the PFD due out soon. Appropriation language was included in the budget for this year that if revenue exceeds the Spring (2023) Revenue

Forecast of \$73/barrel, the amount of the excess will be distributed between the CBR (Constitutional Budget Reserve - our savings account) and a deposit capped at \$318 million into the Dividend Fund for an "Energy Relief" payment of up to \$500/person sometime *after July 1, 2024* (in addition to the PFD in October 2024). Revenue accrued above the \$83/barrel level would flow 100% to the CBR.

So for those of you wondering whether the recent higher-per-barrel prices would translate into an extra energy relief payment in addition to the PFD this October, the answer is no — unfortunately. The PFD passed at the end of session this past May is for approximately \$1300 to be paid out this October 2023.

What's our best guess for 2024 and a potential energy relief payment in addition to the PFD? Let's take a look at where we stand at this point.

Oil prices at this writing are \$93/barrel. Oil prices July-August averaged \$85.23. The break-even price for current state government to stay afloat is \$68/barrel. Combining July-August actual prices (\$85.23) with today's futures market (i.e. predicted) prices for the remainder of the year gives an average price of \$87.34. So, if the predicted prices play out, you will receive an energy payment of \$500 next year. We all know though that oil prices are volatile, so it's always best not to count your chickens until they hatch!



The State Board of Education voted unanimously on new regulations on August 31st that will promote fairness and safety in school sports by ensuring only biological females will be on girls' sports teams and by creating a third category, not based on biological sex, open to all athletes. This is a win for Alaska. Young female athletes can now train and work hard and be assured an even playing field, spots on teams, and a fair chance for athletic championships and scholarships. All student athletes will have two opportunities: to play on a team aligned with their biological sex or to play in the third category. No student will be deprived of an opportunity, or of being on a competitive and challenging team appropriate for their physical make-up. My work goes back to 2021 on this policy, so I provided guidance, research, and testimony at every turn to the Alaska State Board of Education on the case to be made and the importance of setting the policy before it becomes an issue in Alaska. It's been a long haul, but we finally got this common sense policy on the books! We do expect a lawsuit, however, so stay tuned.

## NEW SCHOOL SPORTS POLICY: A WIN FOR FEMALE ATHLETES

## ROAD OR RAIL TO PORT MACKENZIE?

Construction stopped in 2017 on the railroad extension from Houston to Port MacKenzie simultaneous to oil prices dropping. If completed, the project would allow for shortened transport of bulk commodities to a port designed for such goods (as opposed to general cargo like Anchorage's Port of Alaska) while creating Alaskan jobs and increasing state and local revenues.

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Now that prices of materials have increased over 1100% to complete the project, consideration is underway whether to turn the rail-bed into a road at a lower cost. What do you think?

I'm a big supporter of rail and want to see an improved network across our state and a connection into Canada. Good people believe a road is the better option. I am open to exploring both options.

The Mat-Su Borough is holding a special assembly meeting in the chambers on September 12 (4-6pm) to give the public an opportunity to weigh in on this topic.



Many talking heads have weighed in about child/human trafficking in the US, some in denial, others urging action – especially after the film release of *The Sound of Freedom* this past summer. What many Alaskans may not realize is that sex trafficking – including of minors – is right here in our backyard, right here in Alaska, right here in Mat-Su.

# THIS TIME IT REALLY IS ALL ABOUT THE CHILDREN

Hard to believe, isn't it? As disturbing as it is, it is true.

The reason I'm raising this topic is you deserve to know that I plan to do all I can to get a bill through that stiffens the penalties for the corrupt perpetrators promulgating their evil and grossly harming our children and young adults. I will need your help. We will need to work together to see that HB 68 *Crime of Sex/Human Trafficking* moves through the process, particularly through the Senate Judiciary Committee. The chair of that committee, Senator Matt Claman, refused to let legislation out of his committee last year and this year addressing this topic. We want to make sure that is not the case when the legislature reconvenes in January.

Stay tuned ,and when we head to Juneau after the holidays, I'll be in touch to let you know how you can help.



## ALASKA FOOD STRATEGY TASK FORCE

I am honored to chair the 36-member Alaska Food Strategies Task Force established in law, and we are solution-focused and practical, aimed at moving our recommendations to fruition to increase food security and independence in Alaska. Our next meeting is September 19 at 1PM and includes an opportunity for your public testimony. The schedule and first three of our seven focus areas can be reviewed in our 2023 report at [akleg.gov](http://akleg.gov) under Joint Committees, Alaska Food Strategies Task Force,

July 19<sup>th</sup> documents, or by emailing Anneliese Roberts at [anneliese.roberts@akleg.gov](mailto:anneliese.roberts@akleg.gov). We will be laying the foundation for researching and working on the last four focus areas with recommendations in report form due August 24, 2024.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR...

#### COFFEE CHATS



**September 9, 10am**  
Sophia's Café

**November 18, Time TBD**  
Location TBD

Questions? Call (907)376-3725

#### IN THE COMMUNITY...



The Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home (Palmer) opened a new pathway through their grounds to give their residents better and safer access to surrounding areas.

#### For additional information, contact my staff:



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