

# NEWS FROM HUGHES

INTERIM UPDATE

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2023



## WHAT WOULD OUR SCHOOLS DO? ...IN THE EVENT OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER



Unfortunately, the question isn't *if* there will be a school shooting in Alaska; the question is *when*. The last tragedy in our state was in 1997 at Bethel High School. A former teacher

who was there that day and is now my constituent has asked if we could do what Utah, a state approaching 3 million residents, has done to deter school shootings: allow concealed carry. Our laws in Alaska actually don't prevent concealed carry in schools but allow superintendents and school boards to set the policy. None have. I think I know why and am working on a bill I'll introduce in January to address it.

There have been 389 school shootings, 118 involving an active shooter, and 304 deaths since the Columbine Massacre in 1999. It would be a horrific mistake to wait to have this conversation until after a tragic shooting in Alaska and loss of children's and teachers' lives. If such an event were to occur within our cities with police departments, emergency response times would be within minutes, but what about outside city limits? What about in remote locations? Response could be hours, if not days away. Even in cities with police, every second counts: 26 were killed at Sandy Hook, 21 at Uvalde, 17 at Parkland, 32 at Virginia Tech. Had the safety measures in my bill been in effect on these school campuses, lives would have been saved. Your input on this topic is welcome during the drafting process.

Alaska Food Strategy Task Force, Chair  
Legislative Food & Farm Caucus, Co-Chair  
Senate Minority, Ranking Member  
Senate Special Committee on World Trade, Member  
Senate Finance Law Subcommittee, Member  
Victims' Advocate Selection Committee, Member  
Article V Phoenix Correspondence Commission, National Commissioner  
State Agricultural and Rural Leaders, National Board Member  
NCSL Cybersecurity Task, Member  
CSG West Canada Relations, Member  
CSG Interbranch Committee, Member



The Governor's bill, HB 68 *Crime of Sex/Human Trafficking*, needs our support during this upcoming legislative session, and I plan to champion it. Human trafficking generates \$150 billion globally. It happens every day in Alaska and is the second fastest-growing crime in our state behind opioid abuse.

Children have become bigger targets, with most first entrapped at ages 13-15. The significant uptick in Alaska the last five years includes internet trafficking, child trafficking, gang trafficking, and child predators. Social media and gaming, especially, have become enormous platforms for sex trafficking in recent years. Child sexual abuse material, or CSAM, is a new and increasingly violent content phenomenon comprised of visual depictions of minors.

## WE MUST CONFRONT AND COMBAT THE EVIL

- 56.2% of CSAM cases depicted are prepubescent children
- 4.3% are very young children (infants and toddlers)
- 25.4% are pubescent children
- The younger the victim the more severe the abuse
- 84.2% of videos and images contain severe abuse

We cannot sit idly by. Join me in advocating for HB 68. Let's help the child, teen, and adult victims as we prosecute the perpetrators to the fullest extent of the proposed law for their evil deeds.



## AI TECHNOLOGY ISN'T GOING AWAY, SO WHAT NOW?

If you're old enough, AI used to be only a fictional, futuristic construct in literature and on screen. Some tales were utopian, others full of danger threatening humanity itself. Now AI is here with us in real life. While robots aren't uprising, AI is evolving rapidly, and we must harness it for good and ensure safeguards. Although we benefit daily from AI as it suggests the fastest route, lists eatery options, and recommends the next song to enjoy, the deployment of AI by [Continued on Next Page](#)

▶ AI Tech: Cont. from pg. 1

companies and agencies is not without concern. When algorithms result in bias, data outputs contain inaccuracies, human oversight is inadequate, personal data isn't protected, etc., real problems arise – and can include detrimental impacts on individuals. As a member of the NCSL Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, and Privacy Task Force, I recognize the opportunity for innovation and economic development AI is providing but also the need for parameters to protect our civil rights. I am combing through reams of information as I consider crafting legislation for next session. In the meantime, weigh in and stay tuned.



The Alaska Food Strategy Task Force (the 2-year, 36-member body established in statute to increase food security in our state) released its 2023 report on Aug 1, 2023 with policy recommendations pertaining to three focus areas:

- 1) growing the agriculture industry;
- 2) growing markets for locally made foods; and
- 3) improving transportation and infrastructure.

Attendees and the public are invited to the next meeting, Nov. 10 at 10:45am at the Egan Center or by phone to weigh in on the prioritization of recommendations and action steps relevant to the upcoming legislative session in Juneau. We want to hear from farmers, food processors, and other Alaskans. Come lend your expertise and learn more about how you can help advocate to increase food security in Alaska in the upcoming year as well as over the long term.



# 1 SMALLER PFD & PFD ACCOUNT IS RUNNING OUT

⚠ **WARNING:** this is not a feel-good article, but it is what you need to know.  
#Telling\_it\_like\_it\_is

Inflation, interest rates, and grocery prices are all up, but guess what isn't? The PFD. When Alaskans could have used a full PFD, they didn't get one. Add to this: the portion of the Permanent Fund available for PFDs, the earnings reserve account, may not have enough in it in a few years to pay out the PFD.

Billions have been used to pay for government and billions have been moved from the earnings reserve account into the principle in recent years where it cannot be touched. Tie these points to the fact that we have no spending cap, that the PFD amount has been a political football for seven years, and efforts to pass a fiscal plan have been met with resistance by a handful of legislators who've had the ability to block its components from moving forward. Why the resistance? Because their fiscal plan has just one component: your PFD; they have access to it and are happy to spend it. As hard as many legislators have tried for a comprehensive approach, it will only happen when supportive legislators are in the right seats to move the components through. ...*And that, of course, depends on who Alaskans send to Juneau.*

## COMING UP...

### COFFEE CHAT

**November 18, 10-11:30am**  
Strudel Baker's Deli & Bakery

With House Speaker Representative Cathy Tilton

Questions? Call (907)376-3725

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



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## AFSTF

ALASKA FOOD STRATEGY TASK FORCE

Learn About Food Security in Alaska & Weigh-In on Recommendations

Open to the public. Farmers, food industry workers, and concerned individuals welcome to give testimony in person or via phone/Zoom.

**November 10, 10:45am**  
*At the Egan Center*

Contact our office for a direct Zoom link or Call (253) 215-8782 if phoning in your testimony  
Meeting ID: 862 8820 8611 | Passcode: 929866