



## **BERTA'S BRIEFINGS**

**REPRESENTATIVE BERTA GARDNER**

Serving Geneva Woods, College Village, Green Acres, Tudor, Taku & Campbell Park

**APRIL 19, 2011**

### **What the Heck Happened?**

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Shortly before the start of floor session on the 90<sup>th</sup> day, House Majority leadership notified the Democratic caucus that it was their intention to pass a resolution asking the Governor to adjourn the legislature and call us into special session immediately. A special session was needed because the legislature had not completed the statutory mandate of passing the operating budget.

The House did indeed pass the resolution and hearing the discussion, the Senate promptly sent a similar request to the Governor. The Governor then signed a proclamation to call the legislature back into session, putting ten pieces of legislation on the call.



Representative Gara and Gardner converse during an at ease on the House Floor during the last moments of session Sunday night.

Here is my take on the back story, though there may of course be more to it. When the House passed the Governor's oil tax bill and sent it to the Senate, it became clear that the Senate was going to be thorough in their study and that an oil tax re-write would not happen this session. The Governor then told the Senate that if his oil tax bill was not passed, he would veto capital projects.

To guard against this and perhaps push some buttons of their own, the Senate Finance Chairs inserted a couple of clauses in the capital budget:

- Energy projects were listed in one section with language saying that a veto of any single item was

a veto of all items. This meant that in order to vet any projects, the Governor would be forced to veto projects he also wanted.

- A group of the Governor's other capital projects were listed along with language saying that these projects were subject to oil being above \$150/barrel during a specified period this year.

House Majority leadership found the language on these two items unacceptable. Senate Finance leadership held firm, stating that they were protecting the right of the legislature to determine spending. And so, we've been at an impasse. Ultimately House leadership determined to solve the problem by throwing into the Governor's lap, claiming it was because we had to gavel out on the 90 day.

Although the only statutory requirement is the operating budget, here is the legislation now before us:

- Extension of the Regulatory Commission of Alaska
- Extension of Coastal Management Program
- Funding of Alaska Performance Scholarships
- Mental Health Budget
- Extension of Boards of Nursing, Dentists and Barbers
- Power Project, Alaska Energy Authority
- Operating, Capital and Supplemental Budgets
- Vocational Education and Basic Funding for Schools

What will happen now? Your guess is as good as mine so we'll take it day by day – hopefully not more than a few days for negotiations to conclude.

I'm Berta and I'm still listening,



Berta

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