



Berta's Briefings

Beginning of Session Newsletter

26th Legislature

January 2010



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We're back in Legislative Session with all our usual excitement and zeal and this year, again, **it's all about energy, folks**; our own energy, the state's energy and the nation's energy! Getting it right is the key to everything from heating our own homes cost effectively to building the educational systems, the industry, the employment and opportunities which will give our families security and will allow us all to continue to live in this beautiful state. I think of energy in two parts.

Firstly, **energy for Alaskans**: We've heard a lot about looming shortages of gas for rail belt Alaska, and unsustainable costs for everyone else. One obvious way to address shortage is to reduce need through improved efficiency and increased development of renewable and alternative energies. We continue to work for energy efficiency in homes and buildings and on increasing Alaska's use of our abundant additional sources of energy. Our efforts to explore options for bringing gas to Southcentral through development and storage efforts for Cook Inlet or through various new pipelines to our region are ongoing. We will be analyzing the data as it comes in and will keep you informed.

Secondly, Alaska continues to look for **a pipeline to take our abundant North Slope gas to market**. We've heard a lot of gloom and doom about gas pricing, regulatory and competitive issues, and all the hurdles to completion of a pipeline but the fact remains that there are two competing gas pipeline proposals which continue to move forward. Our Alaska gas pipeline remains a priority of the national administration. Reducing the nation's dependence on foreign energy is an issue of national security. Conversion of coal plants to gas is a priority of the Congress and we even hear proposals to convert the nation's truck fleet from diesel to natural gas. Alaska's gas pipeline is crucial to each of these efforts and construction is in the nation's interest!

I'm Berta and I'm listening...

P.S.- I send out a regular electronic newsletter during session. To be added to our list, please send us your email., or let us know you'd like a printed copy of the newsletter.



Through a bi-partisan effort, Representative Nancy Dahlstrom and I, along with 15 other representatives sponsored House Bill 274 which designates August 7 as Purple Heart Day in perpetuity. The bill was brought forward by Ron Seibels, a constituent who is the Commander of the Military Order of The Purple Heart.

I am Honored to Serve *You!*

As many of you know, I am passionate about keeping in touch with my community. If you have news about important events or issues please let us know. I will be delighted to attend your events or help you with an issue. Also, please consider attending our constituent meetings in Anchorage in late February and March. More information will be coming soon.

Place
Stamp
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Survey

Fold here, tape edge, and mail or visit www.akdemocrats.org/gardner to take the survey online.

1. Which of the following issues or problems do you think are most urgent to Alaska?
Please rank choices numerically, using 1 for your top priority.

- Jobs / Economy
- Education / Schools
- Neighborhood Safety
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Road / Traffic Conditions
- Health Care / Rx Drugs
- Trails and Parks
- Energy Supply and Costs

2. Are you concerned right now about someone in your household losing a job or having a job situation change in the next year?

3. Which Alaska natural gas project is your priority?

- All-Alaska gas line for export and state revenue
- Canadian gas pipelines routing (TransCanada or Denali) for export and state revenue
- Bullet / stand-alone gas line to bring North Slope gas to Alaskan consumers and export markets
- Any of the above

4. Which energy projects are your priorities?
Please rank choices numerically, using 1 for your top priority.

- Tax incentives for Cook Inlet gas production
- Develop Cook Inlet gas storage capacity
- Promote underground coal gasification
- Install Fire Island wind generators
- Develop other renewable energy
- Help homes and businesses reduce energy use
- Expand State's home energy efficiency program
- Other: _____

Would you like to receive my periodic email newsletter?

- Yes No

Email: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Would you like me to call you?

Phone: _____

Review of Oil Our Taxes?

There is talk in Juneau and in the press of revisiting our new oil tax known as ACES. ACES moved us from the easily administered “tax on the gross” to a “net profits tax” requested by the industry. ACES also provides very **generous tax credits** for exploration and capital investment in our oil fields. Importantly, ACES allows the producers to **ask the state for reduction or waiver of tax** on fields which can be otherwise unprofitable for development. To request reductions they need only show us the numbers. In the meantime, in 2008 Alaska saw the **highest oil field employment in state history** (other than pipeline construction) and 2009 might be even better. One of the goals of ACES was to spur employment and it looks to be successful on that score! At this point, I’ve not seen any reason to revisit ACES, but I’m still listening.

Who Owns Our Government?

Is our government of the people, by the people and for the people? What happens if you take out the word “people” and insert “corporations”? What if you insert “foreign owned corporations”? Left unchallenged, the Supreme Court decision will shortly bring us absolutely the best government money can buy.

In its recent decision, the Supreme Court continues to maintain that money is free speech and that corporations are people. I cannot move away from my own conviction that if money is speech, then whoever has the most money has the biggest voice. Now that corporations are citizens whose rights to spend money in pursuit of political goals are unrestricted, how will the voice of the concerned Citizen be heard over the din? Democracy is threatened as never before.

Governor’s State of the State Address

While touching on many issues, two of his proposals stand out for me:

Commitment to addressing our **appalling rates of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**: Alaska ranks among the highest in the nation for incidents of domestic violence and sexual assault. I applaud the Governor for initiating an uncomfortable conversation but I believe his suggestions miss the mark somewhat. **Without meaningful access to effective alcohol treatment** we should not expect real change. We challenge the Governor to **fund treatment programs** as well as shelters, public safety officers and jails.

Merit Scholarships for Alaskan graduates who continue their education (academic and vocational) in state: We appreciate the Governor’s support for higher education and while we continue to study the proposal, I will make every effort to include funding for needs based assistance too.

Staff

Noah Hanson has been in my office since 2007. He is a political science graduate of UAA. This session Noah will be my aide for the Education and Rules committees. He will also be handling the Capital Budget and constituent issues involving roads and other infrastructure, and education issues.

Virginia Allen will return helping me with the Community & Regional Affairs and the Ethics committees, when needed. Virginia will also be handling constituent issues involving health related items and newsletters.

We are very fortunate to have UAS Intern **Ellie Sica** in our office this year. She is a social science major with an emphasis in government/political science. Ellie will staff me on the Department of Revenue Budget subcommittee budget, developing newsletters and researching issues.

On February 27, Senator Ellis and I will be hosting a constituent party at Tudor Elementary. Look for more details coming soon.



Representative Berta Gardner

Beginning of Session Newsletter

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I'm Berta and I'm Still Listening...

Community Councils

The best way to have an impact on your community and see the change you desire is to participate in your local community council. Our neighborhoods includes all or part of seven different councils, meeting once a month at a designated time. Here is a list of the community councils I represent. If you do not know which is your specific community council, please feel free to contact me and I will help you out.

Abbot Loop - Meets the last Thursday of every month at Abbot Loop Christian Center at 7pm.

Campbell Park - Meets the second Thursday of every month at Tudor Elementary School at 7:30pm.

Midtown - Meets the second Wednesday of every month at Mt. Vernon Commoun House at 7pm.

Rogers Park - Meets the second Monday of every month at Rogers Park Elementary at 7pm.

Taku / Campbell - Meets the second Thursday of each month at the Dimond Center Hotel at 7pm.

Tudor Area - Meets the first Thursday of each month at Rogers Park Elementary at 7 pm.

University Area - Meets the first Wednesday of every month at College Gate Elementary at 7pm.

Highway to Highway



In November of 2009, Senator Ellis and Representative Gardner collected over 200 pages of **your public comments** on route selections for **Highway to Highway** and delivered those comments to the H2H headquarters in Anchorage. Eventually, East City and Boniface City routes were removed from the selection due, in part, to the vast amount of public dismay.