

Alaska Federation of Natives

Statewide Briefing



Week of August 9-13, 2021

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ALASKA SUPERIOR COURT RULING SIDES WITH AFN AND PROTECTS THE PCE FUND

AFN applauds Alaska Superior Court Judge Josie Garton's ruling on August 10 that the state must fund the Power Cost Equalization (PCE) Fund, a key program that keeps rural electricity costs on par with urban areas of the state.

"We are pleased that Judge Garton agreed with AFN that the PCE is not subject to a sweep, and that the decision was expedited so the legislature would not have to

decide whether to fund the program during the upcoming special session,” said Julie Kitka, AFN President.

“Furthermore, AFN thanks Governor Dunleavy for his time to discuss the PCE decision with AFN and his subsequent decision not to appeal.”

AFN also applauds the Superior Court’s ruling that payments for the PCE program, which were authorized by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Dunleavy, can go out immediately to the utilities that provide electricity to rural Alaskan families and businesses in 192 Alaskan communities.

“This decision averts a catastrophe in rural Alaska,” Kitka said. “Without the PCE funding, electricity bills for many of the 82,000 Alaskan homes would skyrocket, dealing a huge blow to the state’s economic recovery.”

On July 19, AFN through a state court filing disputed the legality of Governor Mike Dunleavy’s decision to ‘sweep’ funds from the PCE. AFN and other plaintiffs contended that PCE is protected from such budget maneuvers. AFN has long maintained that the endowment fund is separate from the general fund, which is the account that pays for the state budget.

AFN BOARD TO DECIDE ON AUGUST 24 WHETHER TO HOLD AN IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL ANNUAL CONVENTION IN OCTOBER

Given the recent trends in overcoming the coronavirus, particularly the surge of COVID-19 cases resulting from the delta variant globally and in Alaska, the AFN board of directors will convene August 24 to decide whether to hold an in-person convention at the Denaina Center in Anchorage on October 21-23 or a virtual convention as we did last year.

AFN members and delegates wishing to offer input should contact their AFN board representatives. Click [here](#) to visit the board section on AFN’s website.

Click [here](#) to review the decision brief with data, CDC guidance, pros and cons.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD TO START WORK ON NEW MAPS WITH JUST-RELEASED CENSUS DATA

The U.S. Census released its reapportionment data for states on August 12. States now must redraw congressional and state legislative districts to make sure everyone has fair representation and voting rights. In Alaska, a five-member board is appointed every ten years to redraw the 40 state House and 20 state Senate districts. AFN board member and Kawerak President Melanie Bahnke and AFN Executive Vice President and General Counsel Nicole Borromeo serve on the 5-member [Alaska Redistricting Board](#).

The board now begins processing the census data in order to draw new voting maps. Click [here](#) to read the KTOO article about the Redistricting Board's work going forward.

AFN APPLAUDS BIPARTISANSHIP IN U.S. SENATE'S PASSAGE OF INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

AFN praised U.S. President Biden's leadership and bipartisanship in the successful passage of the \$1 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in the U.S. Senate on August 10.

AFN also praised Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski and Alaska Senator Dan Sullivan for their bipartisanship in voting for the legislation, which contains billions for Alaska's critical infrastructure needs, including many tribal provisions.

"We applaud President Biden for his leadership in getting the bipartisan infrastructure bill through the Senate," said AFN President Julie Kitka. "We very much appreciate Senator Murkowski and her senior staff and Senator Sullivan and his senior staff for addressing the needs here in Alaska in crafting the legislation, and then improving it by working with senators on both sides of the aisle."

“This clearly demonstrates the Biden Administration’s and Congress’s commitment to significantly invest in Native communities,” Kitka said. “Building up rural Alaska with long-overdue investment in critical areas like broadband and safe water and sanitation is the only way all of Alaska will move beyond the pandemic economically while improving the health and safety of Alaska Native villages.”

FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE BILL POLICY OVERVIEWS AND WORKSHOP VIDEO RECORDING AVAILABLE

Click [here](#) for the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs' (SCIA) summary of the tribal provisions in the \$1 trillion federal infrastructure bill. Click [here](#) for SCIA's policy highlights of the bill.

For the August 5 AFN federal infrastructure bill workshop, click [here](#).

For the August 6 AFN tribal broadband connectivity workshop, click [here](#).

COVID-19 UPDATE



Data Dashboard Summary as of Aug 16, 2021

Vaccine Doses Given	Current Hospitalizations	Total Resident Cases	Total Resident Deaths
677,464	123	77,343	395

FDA Authorizes Additional Vaccine Dose for Certain Immunocompromised Individuals

On August 16 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration amended the emergency use authorizations (EUAs) for both the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine to allow for the use of an additional dose in certain immunocompromised individuals, specifically, solid organ transplant recipients or those who are diagnosed with conditions that are considered to have an equivalent level of immunocompromise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#) is scheduled to meet Friday to discuss further clinical recommendations regarding immunocompromised individuals. Today's action does not apply to people who are not immunocompromised.

Alaska's statewide COVID-19 alert level remains high, as determined by the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. Unfortunately, new cases and hospitalizations are on the rise mainly due to the delta variant that is sweeping across the U.S. and the globe.

TAKE ACTION – Choosing to get vaccinated is the single most important action you can take to protect yourself and your community and to reopen our economy. Check with your local health care provider to get the facts about vaccines, wearing masks and protecting your families. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, [find a vaccine](#).

CDC's new guidelines on safer activities for you and your family:

- [If you are fully vaccinated](#), you can participate in many of the activities that you did before the pandemic.
- To maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area [of substantial or high transmission](#).
- Wearing a mask is most important if you have a weakened immune system or if, because of your age or an underlying medical condition, you are at [increased risk for severe disease](#), or if someone in your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated. If this applies to you or your household, you might choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission in your area.
- You should continue to wear a mask where required by laws, rules, regulations, or local guidance.
- Learn more about the CDC's recommendations for fully vaccinated people at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html.

There is a lot of misinformation out there, particularly on social media. Here is a great page for [mythbusting](#).

For more information about vaccines, visit covidvax.alaska.gov.