



2023

Principles & Policy Statements

Approved by AML members on December 2023

Principles

- Support the Alaska Constitution's mandate "to provide for maximum local self-government"
- Support State policies that enable reduction of tax burdens and maintain local revenue authorities
- Support State revenue assistance as an investment in and support for municipal governance
- Support adequate State funding for basic public needs and State obligations, and leverage federal infrastructure funding
- Support continued partnership with the State, whereby statutory mandates of the State are funded fully and equitably, and in ways that preserve local government tax base and overall capacity

Policy Statements

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE (TITLE 29)

- Support increased capacity for State tax assessment and analysis to ensure appropriate value and distribution of those taxes, including of fisheries, alcohol, minerals, cruise ships, and property.
- Support improvements to records retention, public records access, and public notice, while reducing the administrative burden of information requests.
- Support reduction of the administrative burden of elections and municipal official reporting in small communities.
- Support issuance of a municipal implementation impact and fiscal note in proposed legislation.
- Support reductions to State policy that limits or specifies municipal exemptions and other actions, and support policy that expands municipal authorities and decision-making.
- Support efforts to increase the State's ability, to directly support through DCRA or partner in ways that increase local governance and financial management capacity, competency, and capabilities.
- Support reimbursement for all mandatory exemptions.
- Support efforts that appropriately account for the distribution of municipal lands and ensure the availability of lands for future use by boroughs that emerge to fulfill Constitutional obligation
- Support policies and practices that grow tribal/city partnerships to collaboratively address Alaska's local challenges.

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE AND REVENUE SHARING

- Support a return to the baseline floor of \$60 million annual distribution.
- Support a method to waive debt, forgive loans, or otherwise bolster "financially stressed" communities, and reduce the financial burden for all local governments.
- Support changes in statute to ensure that interest rate penalties found in AS 26.45.500(b) and other statutes should be consistent with market rates, or reduced in the public interest.
- Support for the State to conduct an annual municipal rate review – fees charged to local governments – and work to lower the costs to political subdivisions by State agencies.
- Community Assistance applications should have a biannual option, be streamlined for ease of application, and/or DCRA should provide active assistance in completing it.

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PERS/TRS CHANGES

- Support the reduction of costs associated with termination studies and late payment.
- Support the development of a pathway to decrease overall unfunded liability.
- Oppose any cost shift of the State “on behalf” payment over 22%, or any other changes that haven’t been negotiated and agreed to by municipalities.
- Support recognition of the value of a defined benefit plan as a significant tool for recruitment and retention, and other options that might provide greater employee benefits.
- Support additional technical assistance to Tier 4 employees for long-term planning.
- Consider use of fiscal year windfalls to decrease debt obligation for long-term sustainability.

FISCAL POLICY

- Support agency and programmatic efficiency and right-sizing, but oppose cost-shifting to municipalities and eliminating essential services utilized by municipalities and residents.
- Support the development of a broad-based tax to increase State revenue, consistent with a budget that supports municipal and resident needs, and fulfills statutory and Constitutional obligations.
- Oppose State management of municipal sales tax, and preemption of local rates and exemptions.
- levels of capital spending.
- Support the exclusion of funding for local mandated obligations under any proposed spending cap.
- Support the sustainable use of earnings from the Alaska Permanent Fund.
- Support maintenance of PCE to ensure appropriate levels available for annual distribution.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- Support the return to cost-sharing or increased State contribution for attendance by municipal police at the Trooper training academy.
- Support adding the 911 surcharge to cell service and VOIP billing.
- Support increased tools available for public safety recruitment and retention, including shared State/municipal candidates and background checks.
- Support increasing the number of Village Public Safety Officers in communities without police presence, and provide pathways for greater local governance.
- Support local input on determining what kind of law enforcement is needed/best for a community.
- Support state efforts to decrease access to and impacts from opioids and other substances, and implement and strengthen local partnerships.
- Support increased state funding of community jails, training for correctional officers, and technical support.
- Support funding of the administrative costs of municipal hosting of E911 systems or explore state-wide service and fee structure.
- Support elevating input from local governments in emergency/resilience planning and ensure policy supports adequate and timely state resources to support local emergency response.
- Support and encourage partnerships between municipal and tribal governments to develop effectively resourced public safety programs.
- Support and prioritize increased funding and state capacity for key roles of our judicial system like prosecutors and public defenders relating to municipal and state offenses.
- Support efforts to decrease crime and reduce high rates of recidivism including education and substance abuse treatment.
- Support greater funding and development of Crisis Now programs.
- Support additional funding for the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) system, include the funds needed to upgrade to the latest technology.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Support increased investment in training and workforce development for residents.
- Support state responsiveness to local economic development planning, including local economic diversification and small business development strategies.
- Support efforts to sustain local economies, improve quality of life, and reduce regulatory burdens.

- Support investments into and policy that increases funding for, access to, and affordability of child-care and housing
- Support local control of licensing that contributes to economic activity, including that of alcohol, and reconsider State-level population limits that bypass local planning and zoning commission responsibilities.
- Support greater and more direct connections to EDA, or otherwise be represented by ARDOR-type organizations to prevent communities falling through the cracks.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support increased availability of and funding for teacher and public safety housing.
- Support State middle-mile investments that improve access to affordable, high-speed broadband, and foster the establishment of regional or local broadband planning committees.
- Recognize and identify ways to address aging transportation, energy, and water/sewer infrastructure.
- Support short-term and long-term strategies for the development of broadband and cellular coverage in Alaska, and planning efforts thereof.
- Support community relocation efforts, adaptation, and climate action plans.
- Support ways for municipalities to better access grant opportunities, including to remove barriers of cost, timing, match, and complexity.

EDUCATION

- Support early childhood education, career and technical education, and preparing, attracting and retaining local, qualified educators.
- Support for educational accountability and assessment that meets or exceeds federal requirements and maximizes local control.
- Oppose any reduction in school funding and support investment in school construction and deferred maintenance.
- Oppose forced consolidation of school districts and support negotiated efficiencies of operation.
- Support the continuation of a well-funded school bond debt reimbursement program, including the annual and full distribution of the State's reimbursement.
- Support a sustainable university system capable of delivering educational opportunities, vocational training, workforce development, and credible research.
- Support a sustainable increase to the BSA consistent with higher costs experienced by school districts, including to consider and address inflationary pressures, health care costs, and fuel prices.
- Support culturally relevant curriculum development responsive to local decision-making.
- Support greater budget certainty sooner to school districts and local governments.

MARITIME

- Support for appropriately funded DF&G and increased investment in fisheries monitoring, research, impact analysis, and outreach.
- Support continued investment in port and harbor infrastructure, and the development of an Alaska Ports Strategy.
- Support full funding (equal to municipal match commitments) of the Harbor Matching Grant program
- Support an active role in federal fisheries management, including bycatch, and clean water, including through transboundary negotiations.

ENERGY

- Support for vetting of and investing in energy projects, processes and programs that decrease energy costs and improve access to renewables.
- Support reimbursement of municipal debt or investments corresponding to and by utilizing PCE savings.
- Support for energy corridors and regional energy projects, facilitating grid resilience.
- Support and encourage the use of and adequate funding of the Renewable Energy Fund and AIDEA investments to promote renewable energy project developments.

TRANSPORTATION

- Support the use of State matching funds to ensure local projects are viable and competitive for federal funding opportunities.
- Support increases to the State capital budget and to address deferred maintenance, including through a mechanism such as general obligation bonds.
- Support a sustainable ferry system that continues basic, year-round, ferry service.
- Oppose the transfer of maintenance to municipalities as the requirement for road and airport projects.
- Support locally delivered, federally funded project management by local governments.
- Support waiver of DOT&PF ICAP rates on passthrough funding to local governments.

RESOURCES

- Support responsible resource development and the reduction of investment barriers alongside improved environmental risk management.
- Support the maintenance of the authority of local governments to tax the extraction or production of local resources.
- Support and encourage the consideration of PILT agreements to the extent that these promote resource development and meet local responsibilities to tax.
- Support the ability of local governments to exercise taxing authority within their jurisdiction, on the extraction, production, and exporting of non-renewable and renewable resources
- Support current structure of the Petroleum Property Tax, to the extent that local rates are not reduced in any way.
- Support greater regulation of bycatch from trawlers in the Gulf, recognizing the broader impacts on resident access.
- Support and work with DNR for certification program of local lumber so that it can occur in state.
- Support and revise the farm use statute to make less onerous to property owners

WATER, WASTEWATER AND SANITATION

- Support increased State investment in maintenance and infrastructure upgrades.
- Support reinstatement of the Municipal Matching Grant program to help municipalities match or supplement local and federal funding.
- Support and leverage federal funding to ensure that all communities with more than 25 residents have access to clean drinking water and sanitation.
- Support State funding for improvements to and maintenance of facilities to comply with the Clean Water Act, including those facilities that need 301h waivers for 401 certification.
- Support continued investment in Village Safe Water and the State Revolving Loan Fund, and expanded outreach and use as possible.
- Support state and federal efforts to bring clean water to PFAS-affected communities, and to help communities manage solid waste impacted by PFAS.
- Support state review of certification standards of wastewater employees to support a larger pool of qualified operators for rural communities.

PUBLIC HEALTH

- Support sharing of State public health data and analytics to inform local decision-making.
- Support matching grants and other revenue sharing that increases the ability for local governments to support residents.
- Support the clarification of statutory language related to the powers of local governments to make public health related decisions.
- Support for funding for addiction treatment and reentry that is culturally appropriate.
- Support local governments' ability to address substance abuse issues by increasing the number of rehab facilities in the state, as well as mental health and wellness