Stevens Reflects On Special Session

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

For most of last week the Alaska House and Alaska Senate were at an impasse over how to help residents out in the face of soaring energy costs. When the dust finally settled – just hours before the deadline – the House and Senate agreed on a measure that had more elements from the House version, including a 12-hundred dollar cash payment to Alaskans.

Kodiak Senator Gary Stevens, the majority’s rules chairman, said he was satisfied with the resulting bill, but feels more work has to be done when the next legislature convenes in January:

-- (Stevens Energy 1 31 sec “… people pay their bills for this coming winter.”)

Besides the 12-hundred dollar check, Power Cost Equalization – or PCE – has been expanded in communities that already benefit from it, and the state’s fuel tax has been suspended for a year. That fuel tax holiday applies to automobile gasoline, truck and boat diesel fuel and aviation fuel.

The Senate had wanted to send Alaskans a smaller amount of cash, but to spend more money on reducing the cost of fuel and electricity, and for energy-saving programs:

-- (Stevens Energy 2 23 sec “… wound up to be considerably more.”)

Stevens said the legislature had debated sending the payment to Alaskans in mid-winter when it’s coldest and energy expenditures are greatest, but chose to tack it onto the PFD check for simplicity’s sake. He said to do it any other way would have cost the state more money. The Department of Revenue is also planning on issuing the combined checks earlier than the PFD is usually sent out, perhaps sometime in September.

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