Local Officials React to Palin's Stimulus Refusal

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Reaction statewide was swift to Governor Sarah Palin's announcement late last week that she would refuse major amounts of federal economic stimulus money. First she said about half of the nearly 1-billion dollars would be left on the table, but in a subsequent announcement, she said she would be accepting about two-thirds. KMXT's Jay Barrett has reaction from some of Kodiak's elected officials.

Palin is refusing 288-million-dollars - 171-million of that is dedicated for education, and the rest for energy assistance, food banks and other programs to help individuals and communities. As of late Friday, the Palin administration was backtracking a bit on her stand, saying she now "wants a discussion" on the stimulus funds.

Much of the money Palin is refusing is for education, which upset Borough Assemblywoman Judy Fulp, who spoke Thursday night at the assembly meeting:

-- (Stimulus A 43 sec "I know what the rural schools ... change this a little bit.")

Palin's decision puzzles Alaska Senate President Gary Stevens, a Kodiak Republican:

-- (Stimulus 1 29 sec "I'm really concerned ... we'll want to apply for that.")

However, Kodiak Island Borough School Board President Norm Wooten said he wouldn't second-guess the governor's decision:

-- (Stimulus 2 41 sec "Well I haven't ... the money is this bill.")

Stevens, who was reached in a Washington D.C. airport, shortly after he met with President Barack Obama, said he understands that the stimulus package is intended to be a one-time jump-start of the economy:

-- (Stimulus 3 30 sec "I've got to tell you ... financial problems ourselves.")

Kodiak Representative Alan Austerman was also concerned that Palin is rejecting education money:

-- (Stimulus 4 29 sec "We're stilly trying to ... may be being left behind.")

Stevens said the state legislature has some time to consider accepting stimulus money, but action may be swift:

-- (Stimulus 5 51 sec "April one was the ... veto any money that's in the budget.")

Governor Palin joins fellow Republican Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana in refusing portions of the federal stimulus money. Both Palin and Jindal have higher national elective aspirations, and both have been criticized for playing politics with the stimulus money.

I'm Jay Barrett.

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