



ALASKA STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees Local 52

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Hart Senate Office Building, #522
Washington, DC 20510

March 1, 2021

Dear Senator Lisa Murkowski:

On behalf of the more than 8,000 members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Alaska State Employees Association (ASEA) Local 52, I urge you to support a coronavirus relief package that is based on President Biden's American Rescue Plan to provide aid as soon as possible.

Alaska and our country are suffering from one of the worst health and economic catastrophes ever. There have been over 500,000 deaths and millions of Americans have lost their jobs or are under-employed due to the pandemic. Those that contracted the disease and survived may have health conditions that compromise their quality of life for the rest of their life.

In Alaska, there have been 55,560 COVID-19 cases and nearly 300 deaths (see <https://covid19.alaska.gov/>). The U.S. economy lost more than 22 million jobs at the height of the pandemic last year, including [329,500 in Alaska](#). According to the [Economic Policy Institute](#), 26.8 million workers—15.8% of the workforce—are being directly hurt by the coronavirus crisis. People are struggling to buy food and other necessities. There is also an escalating housing crisis and many people are struggling to pay their rent or mortgage.

We must act right now and boldly to get our country back on track. AFSCME ASEA Local 52 supports President Biden's \$1.9 trillion plan as a starting point for Congress to put together a robust economic recovery package. The plan includes \$600 billion to support public services, including \$350 billion in flexible aid to state and local governments, education funding, public transit funding, increased unemployment benefits, raising the minimum wage, direct cash payments, and eradicating the virus by providing funding for testing, contact tracing, vaccine distribution and PPE. Front-line workers like nurses, teachers, EMS, custodians, correctional officers, childcare providers and others have continued working throughout the pandemic to keep communities safe and healthy. Flexible, direct aid is now needed to avoid deep cuts in vital public services and more layoffs that we face due to a [\\$2.4 billion budget shortfall](#).

If not now, then when? If not now, and later, Alaska families including our most vulnerable citizens (children, elders, foster youth) and citizens living in rural Alaska will face the brunt of the pain, disproportionately, and be wrought with unnecessary additional hardship for years to come. We ask that you oppose any amendments to cut or narrow the uses of these funds for states, local governments, tribes, and territories. Substantial investment is urgently needed to help Americans that are suffering and to stimulate economic recovery.

Sincerely,

Jake Metcalfe
Executive Director
ASEA/AFSCME Local 52