

Living Longer Growing Stronger

from the Alaska Commission on Aging

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The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to ensure dignity and independence for Alaska's seniors and to assist them, through programs and services funded by the Commission, to lead useful and meaningful lives.



Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger is a monthly publication of the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA)

Chair

Marjorie Hays Soldotna

Commissioners
Doris E. Bacus Kodiak

Peggy Burgin Anchorage

Ella Craig Anchorage

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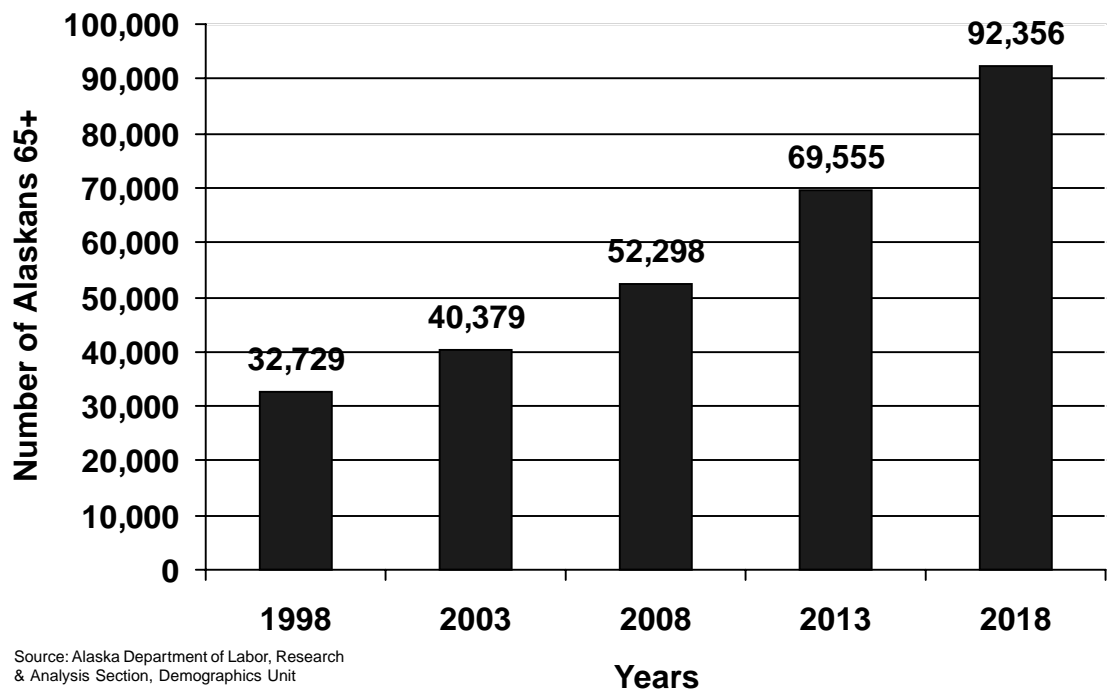
Don Hoover Fairbanks

Dan Karmun Nome

Jonathan Sherwood Juneau

Executive Director
Jane P. Demmert
P O Box 110209
Juneau, AK 99811-0209
(907) 465-3250
Jane Demmert
@admin.state.ak.us

Alaska's Senior Population Could Triple in 20 Years



A Look Ahead to 2018 Confirms Continuing Growth in Senior Population

The most recent projections from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development show more startling news about the expected senior population in Alaska. The high estimate indicates that Alaska's population aged 65 and older in 2018 could triple 1998 figures. Even the most conservative projection falls only slightly under that amazing figure. If this projection is accurate, in less than 20 years seniors will comprise almost 12 percent of Alaska's total population, up from 5.3% in 1998.

Most of this population will be centered around Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. These areas together with Fairbanks, Kenai Peninsula, Juneau, and

Valdez-Cordova will account for 85 percent of the senior population's expected growth.

These figures indicate that Alaska has the opportunity to benefit from the wisdom, experience, compassion, and economic contributions of a larger group of elders. In order to benefit, we must continue to work toward accommodating our needs as we age.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Legislation Affecting Seniors

Alaska Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger Returns!

Legislators Tackle Senior Issues

Second Session of 21st Alaska Legislature Opens in Juneau

January 10, 2000 marks the beginning of the second session of the 21st Alaska Legislature.

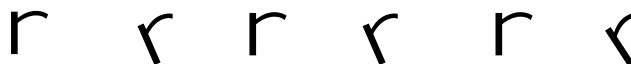
Legislation affecting seniors that passed last session includes:

- House Bill 18 became law June 5, 1999. This bill sets new state standards of review for applications for certificates of need required to construct new nursing homes.
- Senate Bill 56 was signed into law May 13, 1999. This Act allows disclosure of reports relating to inspection and investigations of certain health care facilities, home health agencies, hospice programs, and assisted living homes, and authorizes the Department of Health and Social Services to license home health agencies.
- Senate Bill 57 became law May 13, 1999. This law increases safeguards for vulnerable adults.
- Senate Concurrent Resolution 8, which created the Long Term Care Task Force of 1999, was filed on May 26, 1999.

Work will continue on legislation affecting seniors that went to committee in the last session:

- House Bill 148 and Senate Bill 58, which establish an in-home and community-based services program for adults with long-term care needs. They are in State Affairs and Finance Committees, respectively.
- House Bill 161, which would impact vulnerable Alaskans of all ages. If passed, it would require the state to pro rate certain basic support benefits if the Legislature doesn't appropriate enough money to fully pay them. This means that there would no longer be a "safety net" in Alaska for the most needy citizens—there is no limit to the amount of underfunding, and every new budget year would bring additional reductions.
- Senate Bill 113, which would make the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation subject to the Executive Budget Act, is in the Senate Finance Committee. This could significantly curtail the corporation's development of senior housing.

(Continued—see *Legislation*, page 3.)



Stay Connected in the New Session

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) hosts teleconferences on proposed legislation during the Alaska Legislature's annual sessions. The purpose is to foster informed discussion on legislation affecting the quality of life experienced by older Alaskans. The Commission's interests are intergenerational in nature. The ACoA also reviews proposed legislation affecting children, and groups of adult Alaskans, who, with responsive supports, successfully live independently in the community.

Teleconferences are scheduled for every other week of the Legislative Session through April 6th on Tuesdays, from 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. Teleconferences may be held weekly beginning in April. The Commission's first legislative teleconference will be January 18, 2000.

Alaskans can join the teleconferences from several sites throughout Alaska. Current sites (subject to change) include:

- The AnchorAGE Senior Center, 1300 East 19th Avenue, Anchorage
- The Dillingham Senior Center, 515 East 1st Street
- North Star Council on Aging, 1424 Moore Street, Fairbanks
- The Alaska Commission on Aging, 333 West Willoughby, Room 757 of the State Office Building, Juneau
- The Ketchikan Pioneers Home, 141 Bryant Street
- Kodiak Senior Center, 302 Erskine Avenue
- The Nome Legislative Information Office 320 E Front Street, State Office Building
- Sitka Senior Center (Double O), 402 Lake Street
- The Soldotna Senior Center, 197 West Park Avenue
- The Wasilla Senior Center, 1301 Century Circle

Teleconference minutes are posted on the ACoA web site, AlaskaAging.org/legislative/leginfo.htm.

