

## **It's Time for a Sustainable Fiscal Plan**

By Albert Fogle

For nearly a decade, many Alaskans have been asking public policymakers to spend only what the State earns, and to plan for the fiscal future. The goal has been for state leaders to acknowledge the realities of Alaska's fiscal situation and to build a government spending plan that matches revenues — a fiscal plan that is both durable and sustainable.

The Alaska Chamber is a diverse group of business owners, local chambers, individuals, and business leaders from across the state. Chamber members strongly and frequently disagree on budget priorities, various budget reductions, funding levels for government services, and even on what is or is not a responsibility of government. Even with those clashing opinions, Chamber members agree on two important issues related to a fiscal plan:

- Support reduction of spending to sustainable levels
- Support a meaningful cap on operating budget expenditures

We agree with the Anchorage Daily News editorial that, “Whatever your feelings about the governor’s budget and its values, Governor Dunleavy deserves credit for fulfilling his campaign promise to deliver a balanced budget. In previous years and on the campaign trail, politicians said they wanted such a budget but refused to give specifics about the cuts they would make to accomplish that feat.”

The Chamber respects the courage it took to prepare a government spending plan that matches actual revenue. We also respected the courage it took Governor Walker to propose a fiscal plan that included a permanent fund endowment proposal, modest budget reductions, numerous tax increases, and reductions to the Permanent Fund Dividends. In November, Alaskans collectively rejected most of Governor Walker’s plan. Now it is time for a different approach. It’s time to work together to build a durable and sustainable fiscal plan that has the support of Alaskans.

It’s time for a sustainable fiscal plan.

Building a fiscal plan that aligns spending with revenue and saves for the future brings more Alaskans together than any other issue. The Chamber’s 2018 Public Opinion Survey found that 72 percent of Alaskans support cuts to state spending. Even more, 78 percent want a cap on state spending.

The decisions facing the state are not abstract numbers — they are real. Now that tough decisions must be made, Alaskans — as expected — will disagree, debate, and fight for their priorities. Public debate and checks and balances are healthy, which is why separate branches of government with separate responsibilities exist.





Ultimately, the Legislature has the power of appropriation. So, now is the time for legislators, chamber members, local communities, organizations, business owners, and all interested Alaskans to get involved and work together to solve the fiscal challenges plaguing our state.

The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner editorial said that, “The governor’s budget plan should simply be viewed for what it is: the opening shot in what we hope is the final battle toward achieving the balanced and sustainable budget that Alaska simply must have.”

We agree, and the Chamber looks forward to these critical conversations about sustainable budgets, a spending cap, and a sustainable fiscal plan. We will continue to champion the business, fiscal and public policy priorities of our membership and the many Alaska businesses from across the state.

View a list of our current priorities and positions at [alaskachamber.com/priorities-and-positions](http://alaskachamber.com/priorities-and-positions).

*Albert Fogle serves as vice president of the Alaska Chamber.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Fogle', is positioned below the text.