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1. The Legislature's Permanent Fund Working Group issued a report in January outlining three options for the future of the PFD. The group only agreed on one thing: the draw of the permanent fund earnings reserve, including the dividend payment, should not exceed 5.25% of the fund's market value.

The other options include: 1) a full dividend in line with the 1982 formula in state statute, 2) a standard yearly $1,600 dividend, and 3) a concept referred to as the "surplus dividend" that would pay out what's left after government is funded, an amount that could vary depending on government funding levels.

What change, if any, do you support making to the permanent fund dividend formula? Explain.

I was one of the eight legislators asked to be on the permanent fund group, so I had a close up view of the proceedings. We definitely need a new formula, and in my presentation I included a concept of tying the PFD check amount to the state's oil revenue amount for a given year. If oil revenue was high, the check goes up and vice versa. This makes the check reflect the volatility of the oil revenue component, and if oil should go very low or to zero the state wouldn't be obligated to pay out funds it doesn't have.

2. Do you support continued use of the state's Constitutional Budget Reserve savings account to fund the government? Why or why not?

This question will answer itself this year because the CBR fund is almost depleted. Once it gets below $1 billion, we are told we'd be in unsafe territory. We need a certain amount of liquid cash on hand, and we are almost at the $1 billion threshold. I believe we will take money out of the CBR until about the $500 million level and then it's hands off.

3. Is it time for Alaska to have a statewide sales or income tax? Explain.

The state is desperately low on revenue. Oil income used to pay 90% of state services; now it's below 25%. We will be desperately short of revenue this year due to the oil price crash of the last several years. We need new revenue. We need a sales tax, an income tax or both. We need to join the other 49 states and have a broad-based tax.

4. An initiative on the November general election ballot seeks to repeal Senate Bill 21 and change the state's oil and gas tax system. Should Alaska change its oil and gas tax system? Explain.

Oil tax changes are the one thing that is a constant. Our tax system has changed many times and it could always use some tweaking. I'm not against making some changes, but I'm not sure now is the time to completely overhaul the entire system. Also, at these low oil prices, the changes proposed won't increase the state's revenue by very much.

5. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the state's COVID-19 response? Explain
For the most part, the state’s COVID response has been good. We have rigorous testing, especially for incoming travelers. Our numbers were very low for the first few months, and seasonal workers have been isolated from the general population. Now that COVID numbers are going up, we need to stay proactive. Mask mandates should be discussed at the state level. When kids return to school, numbers must be lower.

6. In June, Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz approved a municipality-wide policy mandating the wearing of masks in public indoor spaces. Many boroughs and municipalities do not have the powers to enact policies of that nature. Would you support a statewide policy requiring the wearing of masks or cloth face coverings in public spaces? Explain.

As of this writing, Alaska has been breaking daily records of COVID positives. We need to lower the numbers, and masks have proven to be successful. Since Fairbanks borough doesn’t have health powers and since over half the state is under mask mandates from their local governments, the state should implement a mask mandate. We have to wear seat belts. Masks don’t just protect ourselves, they protect others.

7. The University of Alaska narrowly avoided financial exigency last year after state funding for the university was cut by $25 million. The university has sustained annual cuts in state funding since 2012. Do you support the budget cuts the university has seen? Explain.

I do NOT support the continued budget cuts to the university. The university is a major driver in Fairbanks, both economically and culturally. We need an educated and trained workforce. We need an affordable option for quality education for Alaska students. We need to keep high quality jobs in Fairbanks and to keep UAF as a world-leading research institute. The world is changing and we need more higher education.

8. Alaska’s prison system is the number one provider of mental health services in the state. What, if anything, should the state do to improve mental health and substance abuse services across the state?

We shouldn’t have to call the cops and get someone arrested so they can get the mental health services that they need. We need more mental health and substance abuse facilities and less correctional facilities. We tried to go in that direction but it was reversed. Tele-health is a step in the right direction, and Medicaid expansion has helped some who need behavioral health services. We need more of that.

9. In the wake of George Floyd’s death at the end of May, large-scale reforms in law enforcement and policing are being called for across the country with specific calls for de-escalation, mental health and racial prejudice training and more transparency and attention to police misconduct. What, if anything, do you propose for Alaska? Explain

We need more people trained in mental health intervention who can react to some of the situations for which we typically call the police. Someone who is suffering from mental illness doesn’t always need the intervention of armed police teams. Maybe we need a different kind of first responder to these incidents who can get someone the help they need and if needed armed personnel can be called in later.
10. Nearly one-third of the Interior rural communities represented by Tanana Chiefs Conference have no running water village-wide. What steps would you take to improve village sanitation?

*Often the federal government has helped rural communities get access to running water systems. The Village Safe Water program needs to be maintained and funded by the state so we get the federal match. It is essential especially in these times of the COVID pandemic. I am aware that adding another utility bill to these communities that have challenged economies is difficult, but running water is a very basic need.*

11. Alaska’s fish and game boards have historically consisted of hunters and fishers. Should the boards have one or more seats designated for representatives of non-consumptive uses of Alaska’s fish and wildlife?

*I support having a non-consumptive board member on the boards of fish and game. Other boards have lay members just to give the perspective of a “regular person.” Not everyone on a board has a direct stake in the outcome. Also, people “consume” fish and game in different ways, sometimes just by viewing them. Tourists and residents alike like to view wildlife even if they don’t hunt them.*

12. The governor last year introduced legislation to repeal the authority of a local government to levy its property tax on oil and gas properties within its jurisdiction and to repeal the related credit for that amount an oil company receives against the state tax on the same properties. Last year, owners of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline paid the Fairbanks North Star Borough $11.4 million in property taxes. Do you support or oppose repeal of these provisions?

*This just seems to be an example of the state moving funds that would normally go to local governments and sending them to the state coffers. I oppose this move. The property tax paid to the local governments should stay with the local governments. The state has its own fiscal problems, but it shouldn’t rob Peter to pay Paul. The state needs to come up with solutions, but this isn’t one.*

13. Gov. Mike Dunleavy vetoed $50 million in state Medicaid funding in 2019 and $31 million in 2020, resulting in losses in coverage for Alaskans on Medicaid and payments for providers through the Medicaid program. Do you support this decision to cut state spending for Medicaid? Explain.

*I do not support the governor’s vetoes of Medicaid funding. The administration thought it could save money through certain federal exemptions in 2019, but we did not get the exemptions. We ended up funding it in a supplemental budget this past year. The 2020 vetoes were justified by saying that they’d be covered by CARES Act funding, but that has yet to be determined. We shouldn’t gamble with people’s health.*