

Name: **Ed King**

District: **House District 34**

1. The State of Alaska continues to face significant budget challenges, how will you address the State's budget and revenue issues? Please provide details.

A1: I propose taking another look at our current budgeting structure and the way we hold our assets. It appears that part of the problem is solved simply by changing our spending limits and rearranging our balance sheet. Once that process is complete, we need to look at every program in the budget and figure out if we can deliver those services at a lower cost. Then we need to look closely at the economic landscape and determine if there are revenue sources that we can pull from without damaging the economy. Finally, if there is still a gap, we need to involve Alaskans in a conversation about their preferences for PFD reductions and personal taxes.

2. In 2017, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) ranked Alaska as having a C- with respect to the condition our state's infrastructure – see following link: <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/alaska/> Do you support taxes and user fees, such as increased gas taxes, to help provide funding for these needs? If not, do you have another plan for maintaining our road system?

A2: Good public finance starts with identifying the needs of the state, then finding the best way to pay for them. Alaska hasn't budgeted that way in over 40 years. The process of cutting spending to match revenues is as flawed as spending whatever revenues come into the treasury. Infrastructure is one of the most critical things the government provides to allow an economy to function. We can't keep deferring maintenance and ignoring needs. A long-term capital strategy must be part of the conversation about right-sizing government. Given our current circumstances, a general obligation bond for deferred maintenance is worth considering.

3. Alaska is eligible for federal funds through the Lands and Water Conservation Fund for design and development of parks and cultural facilities. See following link: [https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/21\\_budget/DNR/Proposed/2021proj32552.pdf](https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/21_budget/DNR/Proposed/2021proj32552.pdf) Do you support the state receiving these funds? If not, why?

A3: Every federal dollar that flows into our state adds to our economy as it circulates. I generally support seeking out every federal dollar we can get.

4a. The University of Alaska (UA) system has faced severe budget reductions over the past several years. Do you support current funding levels, further decreases, or efforts to

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reestablish funding that has been cut in recent years? If increases, where do you see that funding coming from?

A4a: The university system is a constitutional requirement and a critical component to preparing Alaskans for the jobs of the future. I graduated from UAF and wholeheartedly support the University of Alaska. That said, no government program should be given a blank check. The University agreed to the cuts that have been made so far. I'm content leaving funding at its current level while the Regents prioritize the items in its budget.

4b. As a follow up, if cuts are maintained or deepened, which programs within the UA system should be prioritized over others and where does the engineering curriculum fall in the priorities list?

A4b: I believe that a University's primary mission is to build the skills that make students more valuable to employers. A college education should pay for itself, and not leave students with a mountain of debt and no ability to repay it. Therefore, programs that prepare students for their future should have priority over extra curricular and recreational programs.

4c. Architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design programs are not offered within the UA system. What are your thoughts on strengthening opportunities for Alaskans through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) program to make attaining these professional degrees more feasible so Alaskans can return home to our state to fill the need for design professionals?

A4c: As an economist, I appreciate the need to specialize and trade. Programs like WUE are a perfect example of how to accomplish that process in higher education.

5. Several states have sought to reduce or eliminate the scope of professional licensing (Engineers, Architects, Land Surveyors, and Landscape Architect) within their states. What is your stance on Alaska's current requirements for these professions: should the state's laws remain the same or be subject to change, and if changed, would you support decreasing or increasing the projects that require professional licensure?

A5: It's sometimes appropriate for the government to regulate things in the interest of the general public. But, sometimes governments go too far. I support a reasonable level of licensing, so long as it doesn't become a significant barrier to entry. I'm not familiar enough with the specifics for these licenses to know if they are ineffective or overly burdensome. So, I really can't say if I would support changing them without seeing a bill and talking to experts on the subject.

6. The "Industrial Exemption", found in Alaska Statute 08.48.331(a)(10), allows certain

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infrastructure, systems, and structural projects to be designed without the requirement of a licensed Professional Engineer (PE) IF the project is such that the risk to human health, safety, and welfare is limited only to employees of the company doing the work and not the "general public". It has been suggested that some very significant engineering disasters in our nation's history, such as the Challenger Space Shuttle Disaster of 1986 and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill of 2010, may have been linked to similar "Industrial Exemptions" and might have been averted had a licensed PE been the ultimate steward of safety in those examples. Do you feel it is appropriate or inappropriate to maintain Alaska's Industrial Exemption?

A6: I can appreciate the desire to waive requirements when risks fall on the individual rather than the public. Undue and unnecessary financial burdens placed by the government can often derail a project altogether. However, I worry that the person making the decision to take a risk might not be the same person whose life is on the line. While I don't know a lot about this specific law yet, it sounds like there might be reason to review it.

7. State law requires that all new buildings larger than a triplex are to be designed and constructed to the latest approved edition of the International Building Code. However, engineers performing earthquake damage assessments after the November 2018 earthquake found that a large portion of buildings are not being built in conformance with the code where there is no formal enforcement. This led to more structural damage in Eagle River and the Matanuska Borough, where there is no code enforcement, compared to Anchorage, where there is code enforcement, even though ground motions were similar. What would you do to bolster adherence to and enforcement of building codes in the vulnerable and growing population centers around Alaska that are not currently under the purview of a local code official?

A7: It sounds like there may be a gap in the current building code law and enforcement. While I'm generally in favor of solving problems at the level of government closest to them, Alaska is unique in that there are significant unorganized areas. I'd want to work with the Alaska Municipal League and local leaders to find ways to close this gap without infringing on local government control.

8. Do you have any plans to help reduce greenhouse gasses in order to mitigate the effects of climate change in Alaska?

A8: Climate change is a global problem that requires a global solution. I support the government reducing its carbon footprint, but hesitate to place heavy demands on the general population. In fact, supplying cheaper and lower carbon alternatives to China (like natural gas) would do more to reduce climate change than requiring every Alaskan to drive electric cars. The best thing Alaska can do to reduce the effects of climate change is to promote the development of natural resources that would allow

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people to reduce their footprint.

9. Is there anything you would like our organization to know about you?

A9: Thank you for the opportunity to share my views with your organization. I'd be happy to follow up on any of these questions.