

Sarah Douthit

KPBSD School Board Member

## 2026 Legislative Fly in Report

Day 1:

### School Safety & Security

AASB presented school safety & security training with a testimonial from a former coach/educator at Bethel High School when a school shooting occurred in 1998. Host testimony was very powerful. APD lieutenant presented on ASD's school resource officers and their protocols for danger in schools. This was a particularly hard day and heavy conversations. However, this is valuable and important conversations to have. Our parents, including myself, send their children to school and expect them to return safely. There were a few questions I had for our district because of this training. I've provided those questions to district staff and I'm hopeful there will be a future work session to educate the public and the board on KPBSD's safety and security protocols in collaboration with local law enforcement.

Day 2:

### Legislative bills & Updates

AASB training on day 2 was primarily focused on legislative updates and meeting techniques.

This includes the bills being presented at this session and what bills are pertinent to education. Representative Andi Story presented an award by the 33rd Alaska State Legislature honoring Alaska School Boards and Members. This was very encouraging for all board members across the state to be recognized for their efforts to work towards a positive impact on education in Alaska. That evening, I spent a considerable amount of time speaking with Representative Alyse Galvin (Anchorage) about education topics.

Day 3 & 4:

### Legislative Meetings:

We had 20 scheduled meetings, two cancellations, one addition and two impromptu meetings. I was able to have several one-on-one meetings with our local legislators. These conversations were extremely helpful to share ideas and thoughts on the outcomes of this session and the hopes of our district. Tuesday, Tim Daugherty and I were able to take a

meeting with Lt Governor Nancy Dalstrom, which was extremely insightful in our state's administration positions and future.

After meeting together to strategize, Board Member Daugharty, Board Member Cizek and myself, we outlined our primary focus during these legislative meetings was to educate and advocate on three issues using KPBSD's legislative priorities. School consolidations, CTE offerings and the gap between State and Borough funding.

**School Consolidations:** Many legislators were unaware that upon closing a school building, districts are unable to reopen that school for 7 years. We had many that were concerned about this and how it seems to punish districts who are all struggling with rising costs and having to consolidate buildings. There was discussion about changing this in the future.

**CTE:** Some of our schools have facilities for CTE type course offerings but are not staffed. We spoke about how we'd like to expand and staff these offerings properly for the benefit of our high school students as they prepare to enter the workforce. We also talked about our Middle College program and how straight through funding would be ideal for CTE programs. Rep Bill Elam introduced HB358 which addresses CTE funding and is worth following!

**Funding Gap:** Legislators seemed both aware and not aware of the funding gap between state and borough funding that is related to property tax assessments. This is something that is being looked at and continued conversations are happening in Juneau according to Senator Bjorkman.

Day 5:

On our final day, I visited the offices of legislators that we could not meet with due to scheduling conflicts and left packets of information for them to review. I was able to have an impromptu meeting with Rep Foster's office regarding education funding as well. His chief of staff is interested in continuing conversations, as KPBSD is one of the big five districts and influential in the state.

During this trip to Juneau, there was very little downtime. I consistently sought out contacts in the area to meet and discuss a wide range of topics. I was able to meet with Rachel Lord (Homer Mayor), several Board Members from Fairbanks as well as our local legislators. These conversations are ongoing and I am encouraged with the connections we made on this trip. I want to thank our board president for the opportunity to represent the district in Juneau this year.