

"It's About Our Kids"

State Candidate Responses – 2008

1. Hunger According to the Food Research and Action Center, the cost of food in the general Consumer Price Index rose by 5.1 percent from April 2007 to April 2008, but the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (a USDA-created list of a mix of food items on which low-income people rely and a more accurate indicator of how food prices affect this sector of our society) rose even faster at 7.2 percent. Rising food prices are making it even more expensive to be poor which explains the recent increases in numbers at local food pantries. In turn, those pantries are struggling to keep the lights on and the shelves full as they battle a decrease in donations and the pinch of their dollars to purchase food.

What should the state's plan be to insure children and their families do not go hungry during this time of increased stress on the family budget?

For more information on Hunger contact: Kerri Burrows, Alaska Food Coalition, afc@foodbankofalaska.org or (907) 222.3103

Lynda Placek: food stamps- free school.

Bob Roses: I am open to all ideas and comments on the issue. We passed a resource rebate that provided \$1200 to every man, woman and child that qualifies for a PFD check. That added \$ 1.2 billion to the overall economy. That is a substantial bonus to families with children in Anchorage since the cost to heat their home went up less than 8% over last year. That extra money should go a long way to provided other needed services.

Kevin Meyer: As the Co-Chair of the House Finance Committee, I was able to secure critical funds for the Foodbank Alaska network, Beans Café, the Soup Kitchen, and various other non-profit organizations whose mission is to assist Alaskans from going hungry. Also, the Legislature established an option for Alaskans to donate a portion of their PFD to approved non-profit organizations during the PFD application process. Many of the approved non-profits are organizations who seek to provide food for Alaskans. I met with several groups last year who are seeking State assistance with before school breakfast programs, as well as some sort of state reimbursement program for providing low-income lunches in school districts. This type of assistance will help greatly with family budgets and ensuring that our children have a full stomach, thus improving their performance in the classroom.

Bob Buch: Our economy is slightly worse than what the rest of the US is currently realizing. This is not a problem of the school system which is what we as legislators address through the budget process. I realize that many children come to school hungry, that we have cut back on our public school programs to feed our kids. I hope to help turn the public school system around so that we can address many of the problems that have been made worse in the last eight years. As I said at the beginning, the economy is not something that schools control. I will be working to move our schools into a progressive system of offering pathways to various opportunities, not just academic as has been historic. Getting out of school being prepared to be able to work in a career that provides a living wage is the first step to raising the poverty level.

Berta Gardner: I support school breakfast and lunch programs and the Food Bank of Alaska. More importantly, I support increasing the minimum wage so that employed Alaskans earn enough to feed themselves.

Bob Bird:As a candidate for the U.S. Senate for the Alaskan Independence Party, I have also been endorsed by the national Constitution Party at their Kansas City convention last April. As such my answers here tonight will not be popular, but they will be Constitutional. I ask those who will be disappointed by the replies to remember that I, as a U.S. Senator, will be bound by oath to "defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take the oath freely without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office that I am about to enter, so help me God."

A candidate who takes this oath, and his God, seriously must study all aspects of the Constitution, not just the parts that are popular or in which erroneous opinion leads. The 10th amendment to the Constitution makes it very clear that Congress can provide funding for only those activities listed in Article 1, Section 8. Federal subsidies for state medical programs are unquestionably unconstitutional. But they are also arguably destructive. With federal subsidies comes federal dependency and control. In order to preserve funding, the states would soon be coerced into performing functions that were anathema to its own intents. One example that comes to mind: What if children's health care would be expanded to include "reproductive services"? This is a code word for abortion and contraception.

But subsidies also are destructive to families, in that they create an increasingly impossible tax burden, a burden so onerous that the American family and economy can no longer shoulder it. Or if taxes are not raised, new money is pumped into these programs that create inflation. This does more to destroy pensions and savings than any dynamic in the economy, and it is pensions and savings that provide family independence and security.

Thus, while families are being crushed by taxes and inflation, they then become seemingly more dependent upon federal largesse, thus creating a self-perpetuating engine that eventually becomes socialism . . . and socialism in all its forms sees the family unit as its enemy, seeks to reduce or destroy its proper and just influence upon child rearing, and transfer the responsibility from the parents to the state.

For these reasons in both Constitutionality and in principle, I cannot support federal subsidies to these state programs.

2. After School Programs Alaska's working families are finding it harder to balance their budgets and are facing difficult choices to make ends meet. For low-income families, state eligibility and reimbursement rates fall far behind the actual cost of quality care. Since 2005, many youth advocacy agencies in Anchorage have seen requests for fee assistance increase by as much as 70%. Youth need to be in safe places after school while their parents are working. The hours between 3 pm and 6 pm are the peak hours for juvenile crime and victimization. Working parents need to know that their children are being cared for so they can be productive in their professions.

What steps will you take to insure quality after school programs are accessible for all youth and working families in our community?

For more information on After School Programs contact: Barbara Dubovich, Camp Fire USA Alaska Council, bdubovich@campfireak.org or (907) 257.8806

Lynda Placek: When I was young, there were programs such as Scouts. This was and probably still is a great program, it needs to be utilized again, Along with community programs with after school activities and sports as my boys were involved in. Kids could commute with other kids to these programs after school hours or have some in school after school activities; with volunteers. We need community effort period a joint community family effort.

Bob Roses: We provided funding through the last capital budget for most of the programs that you mentioned. We also increased the amount the state pays for assistance for day care for families that are eligible. I am open to all ideas and concepts in this area.

Kevin Meyer: I am a firm supporter of after school programs. In terms of after school programs, there are more options that are available for kids over the age of 8, than there are for children under the age of 8. We should focus on providing more opportunities for these children and families. Also, these opportunities and programs should coordinate with each other so that families that have different aged children know that their kids are together, when possible, thus reducing the stress on the parents to meet time-lines for pick up and curtailing the cost of transportation. I have worked with organizations such as Camp Fire Alaska and the Boys and Girls Club in securing fund for after school programs. Tremendous efforts have been made, but we must continue to engage in conversation with organizations that provide these important programs and discuss creative ways to establish programs for our kids.

Bob Buch: My wife and I were fortunate to have healthy children who actively engaged in many sports. Their time was taken up with school and sports like soccer, baseball, and hockey. I think it is very important that these and other activities are made available to youth of all ages as they go through our school system. I believe we have many capable teachers who act as coaches; these folks will need the kind of incentives to invite participation. I think there are many people who would volunteer their time to help if they were sought out in the community. Here again, I think it is very important to maintain the difference between raising someone's children and teaching them. I believe we have overburdened our schools with many of the responsibilities of parenthood and we need to understand the purpose of the education system is to teach our children and is not responsible for raising them.

Berta Gardner: I am a long time supporter of Camp Fire programs, the YMCA and youth athletics.

Bob Bird: None, as per the principles stated above. Additionally, private charities are unquestionably more efficient for these needs. If private charities appear unable to meet the needs, this too is part of the socialist Catch 22: by reducing people's legitimate livelihood through an unconstitutional tax burden or inflation, disposable income is lowered, forcing the middle class's historic generosity to circle its wagons merely in an attempt to meet daily living expenses. But beyond this, the ultra-wealthy, which bear the greatest share of social responsibility in such matters, always seem to be most eager to expand government services at the expense of the middle class.

3. Behavioral Health In 2005, approximately 35% of child care programs asked families to withdraw a child under the age of 6 because of social/emotional concerns. Research shows a qualified, stable workforce dramatically impacts the quality of early learning environments for children and promotes healthy social/emotional development. However, there is a 45% turnover rate among child care workers in Alaska.

How would you propose to expand early childhood behavioral health training and consultation and increase other professional development supports available to early care and learning professionals in order to address these issues?

For more information on Behavioral Health contact: Meghan Johnson, Voice's for Alaska's Children, meegorama@yahoo.com or (907) 360.7384

Lynda Placek: It all depends on community, we need to learn from our past. A family, and community raises up our children. We have to get back to our roots, Maybe pay more towards our workers so they can make their ends meet, pay their bills, so their mind is clear to take great care in being professional.

Bob Roses: I do not have a proposal at this time, but have been engaged in conversations about state funding for early childhood programs through the schools. I am again open to suggestions and ideas.

Kevin Meyer: The answer to this question actually exists within our own backyard: the University of Alaska. With such a high turnover rate of child care workers in Alaska, this tells me that we need to better prepare our workforce, which should include more instruction, education, and on-the-job training programs. Like every profession, a stable workforce is predicated on having a prepared workforce. I will work with the University to explore the options that they currently have for Alaskans who wish to work in childhood behavioral health and early care and learning. From there, I would like to work with child care and early education providers to outline specific needs of this workforce. Finally, we can all work with the University to put together a program that fulfills the needs of the workforce.

Bob Buch: I believe education is a birth to death experience. I hope to join with many others who promote early learning. Opportunities should exist for children gifted with advanced abilities to have access to learning even though they have not reached currently prescribed age. I do not think starting at age 5 works for everybody, I'm sure there is plenty of data to support how much youngsters at three years old can learn. All of these undertakings will cost us and we all share in finding ways to fund such ventures.

Berta Gardner: When a representative of the Community Mental Health Center said "You should see what intake day is like", I took him up on it. My staff and I spent the day at the center to see first hand the problems faced. Alaskan families deal with substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, homelessness and hopelessness. Pay scales for service providers are important, but another issue is the grant funding of agencies which does not allow planning for long term because funding is insecure from year to year.

Bob Bird: The greatest action that the federal government could do to assist the poor and hungry (rather than to assist the federal programs and bureaucracy which increases the need rather than alleviate it) would be to permit working families to keep their income and livelihood earned by their honest labor, rather than to use the intimidating power of government to confiscate and redistribute it.

Government welfare programs increase, rather than alleviate, hunger. However, the principle of subsidiarity as formulated by economist Heinrich Pesch, would permit local and state governments to meet the shortfall should private charities fail to do so. The system was not perfect when utilized in a more Constitutional era. But it would prove far more compassionate and efficient than today's reliance upon federal welfare.

For those who advocate federal welfare, the question must be asked: If it is so necessary and proper a function, why not amend the Constitution to permit lawful authorization? If this process

seems long and difficult, it could and should have been done two generations ago during the New Deal.

4. Children with Special Needs ILP, the Infant Learning Program, assures early intervention services are available for families with infants and toddlers (birth to age three) with special needs. ILP has been flat funded by both state and federal dollars since 2003. Additionally, recent federal legislation requires referral and evaluation of all children under age three with substantiated reports of harm. ILP programs have not been able to hire and retain enough qualified staff to serve the needs of all identified children. Children aged 3 to 5 years at a 25% delay level are legally eligible for services.

What measures would you support for ILP to expand services to include more eligible children?

For more information on Children with Special Needs contact: Meghan Johnson, Voice's for Alaska's Children, meegorama@yahoo.com or (907) 360.7384

Lynda Placek: I worked with Special needs children in Career Center, and it was great.

Bob Roses; Actually the state's contributions have increased for many of the service areas just to keep even. The federal government has continually reduced their support, so the state has had to pick up the decreases just to stay even. Attraction and retention of service providers and evaluators is a serious concern in all areas of employment. I helped to address part of this probably by supporting and cosponsoring the bill that addressed the PERS/TERS unfunded liability that was devastating to all school districts and municipalities. The next area to address is the question over the defined contribution plan vs the defined benefit plan.

Kevin Meyer: who display early signs of special educational needs need assistance and intervention as soon as possible. If the issue is the availability of workforce, the first thing that we can do is assess the need for staff. How many staff do we need? What are the qualifications for staff? Why is it hard to recruit and retain individuals for these jobs? Is it salary? What is the average salary for an individual who performs these assessments? How many children are we seeking to assess? What is our goal? Once we have answers to these questions, we can address the funding issue. With federal funds in decline, it is more than likely that the State of Alaska will have to step up and contribute more financial assistance to this program. It is clear that more funding is necessary to do proper screening. Also, given the importance of this program, more Alaska families should be aware that this program exists. I think that it would be appropriate to even build into the budget for the program funds for marketing this program to Alaska families.

Bob Buch: Our State Legislature has followed the Federal mantra for several years and it has not worked. Given the opportunity to change the system from within I hope to reverse the way the State has conducted it's operation in regard to special needs children. I would like to see a coordinated effort to use State, private, and non-profit entities who would like to focus on this issue, act in unison to help resolve this issue.

Berta Gardner: We have been penny wise and pound foolish because it is well-known that early intervention can have great impact. I support full funding to provide services to all eligible children.

Bob Bird: How is it that after \$500 million the issue seems to be to ask for more of the same? After \$1 billion will come the demand for billions more. It is clear that "throwing money at problems" merely instigates not a satisfied, but rather an increased, appetite.

There is also a very sinister aspect in regards to "home visitation programs". Who wants a federal bureaucrat to check up on the education of their families or how they are being taught or raised? What new social innovations and attitudes will come as part of such a package? This is exactly what I discussed earlier: federal subsidies bring federal dependency and control.

5. Housing Homeless Coalitions are re-focusing their efforts on securing stable housing so homeless individuals and families can then address other issues. The federal Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) provides funding for housing assistance, through Section 8 and other programs that assist with construction of specific kinds of congregate facilities. Federal funding has been declining. The Legislature appropriated an additional \$2.5 million in General Funds to Alaska Health Finance Corporation's (AHFC) Homeless Assistance Program. The Legislature also approved allowing AHFC statutory powers to set up a housing trust program.

Please tell us what next steps you would support for ways to address the systemic barriers in existing homelessness and housing programs.

For more information on Housing contact: Brenda Moore, Christian Health Associates, bmoore@christianhealth.org or (907) 244.5810

Lynda Placek: Habitate for Humanity needs to be expanded on.

Bob Roses: I strongly supported the capital budget request for Safe Harbor to purchase the Ramada Hotel on Muldoon for transition housing. I also served on the Health and Social Services budget subcommittee that added the \$ 2.5 million. I worked with the group that lobbied for the housing trust program and stewarded through the HESS committee in the House. I believe it has great potential for increased private funding and grants as a result of our action. We need to bolster this program and give it time to work as it was designed.

Kevin Meyer: The accomplishments of the Legislature this year was a positive step in the right direction. The additional funding, the support of non-profits such as Safe Harbor, Cook Inlet Housing Authority, and Habitat for Humanity, and the establishment of the Housing Trust will lead us to a better understanding of what the next step is. Through the establishment of the Housing Trust, we will be able to coordinate efforts to meet the goal of providing affordable housing for Alaskans. I would support increased funding for the Housing Trust, however, a plan of action must be presented to the Legislature that has measurable outcomes.

Bob Buch: This is a way of looking at the symptoms of a problem rather than the cause. Aiding and abetting a welfare state is not a way to stop the problem. Finding ways to help people get better paying jobs. Helping employers with incentives to get employees health care. Change what is causing these problems is the long term goal and that's where we all should be looking. We can look at ways to get people started on the right track, or a helping hand to someone with

crappy luck, that's fine. You help folks help themselves, not support them in maintaining an unfortunate lifestyle. It is imperative that we find ways to help folks become self-supported.

Berta Gardner: I need to understand where gaps are today so that we can effectively address them.

Bob Bird: Simply put, categorizing federal children's programs separately will only serve to highlight for public consumption a propaganda gambit, "exposing" the supposed stinginess of nasty, inhumane Constitutionalsists and conservatives. It will create fuel for an illusory public demand that "children are being inadequately cared for" that will only feed the machine of socialism until the entire society becomes enslaved in the name of compassion.

6. Health Care Denali KidCare (DKC) is the major health insurance program for many Alaskan children. Half of all births in Alaska have DKC as their insurance provider. Alaska started with 200% of federal poverty level as the eligibility guide; it currently is 175%. That means to qualify, a family of four's monthly income cannot exceed \$3865.

What will you do to return Alaska to 200% as the eligibility guide?

For more information on Health Care contact: Mary Grisco, All Alaska Pediatric Partnership, Mary.Grisco@ELMENDORF.af.mil or (907) 580.3180

Lynda Placek: Write bills to change this, get signatures, go forward, not backwards.

Bob Roses: I would like to see the agencies focus on addressing the low rate of participation by those that are currently eligible before expanding the program. The data that was presented to us in our budget subcommittee indicated that over 40% of those eligible do not use the services. We also had reports from physicians concerned about the current program that doesn't address appointments that are missed and therefore the clinics or doctors lose revenue at not cost or accountability for the parents. We need to fix this program and make it work to its maximum efficiency before expanding it.

Kevin Meyer: Denali Kid Care is an important program. Alaskan families deserve to have access to affordable health care, if they cannot afford health care, than the State should provide insurance to cover these families. The State of Alaska has many programs that assist families who are struggling under a budget. We have made efforts to improve access to health care, including efforts to reduce the cost of health care in Alaska. There have been recent attempts to raise Alaska to 200% of the federal poverty guideline. There are a few things to consider when doing this. What will the cost be to the State of Alaska? How many more families will qualify? Can the State afford to make this change and sustain the funding for this change? With oil prices high, my first inclination is to say, "Yes, we can." If we go to 200% of the federal poverty guideline, we must ensure that we will have the resources to pay for it.

Bob Buch: This is issue will come up in the next legislature, if I'm re-elected I will fight for reinstatement the original guidelines.

Berta Gardner: The legislature could easily have funded DKC at 200% of eligibility but leadership chose not to do so. It is simply a lack of will.

Bob Bird: I am in favor of a much, much larger tax credit: abolishing the IRS. By following the mandate of the totally ignored 10th amendment, working families will be able to keep all of their income and apply it in the way they see fit for the benefit of their children. By insisting on Constitutionality, we can now see how families, and not the federal government, can actually regain control of their own social and economic destiny.

7. Energy Families are under stress from ever increasing energy costs: home heating, work and school transportation and groceries cost more each week. Support programs, such as food stamps, weatherization, child care subsidies, while helpful are not keeping up with these cost increases. When faced with difficult decisions, families do their best to cut corners, but often have to forego a necessity such as food, shelter, or heat.

What one action will you undertake that will begin to address this energy crisis?

For more on information Energy contact: Trevor Storrs 4As, tstorrs@ALASKANAIDS.ORG, 263-2050 / Maureen Haggblom, United Way of Anchorage, mhaggblom@ak.org, 263-3823

Lynda Placek: Utilize our excessive dead trees, cut them down use them for homes with fireplaces I heard something about water power, and wind power, and solar power. The time has been here to work these options.

Bob Roses: During the last regular session we passed legislation that provided \$ 250 million to the renewable energy fund over the next 5 years. During the special session we added another \$ 50 million for this year. We put hundreds of millions into alternative energy projects and studies such as wind, hydro, geothermal, coal to gas, coal to liquids, etc. During the special session we increased funding for the rural power cost equalization program and raised to limits of eligibility. We also significantly increased the revolving loan fund and bulk fuel grants for rural communities along with suspension of the motor fuel tax and the \$ 1200 resource rebate. During the regular session we appropriated \$ 300 million for weatherization and then added another \$ 60 million during the special session. I would say we are already doing as much as is feasible.

Kevin Meyer: During this past special session, the Legislature made progress on addressing this problem. We increased the amount of assistance available to areas that experience high electricity costs. We approved a one-time appropriation to assist Alaskans with the cost of heating their homes. We suspended the fuel tax for one year, to help with transportation costs. Last session, the Legislature created the Alaska Heating Assistance Program, which will supplement the federal low-income heating assistance program. An additional \$10 million was added, and the qualification level was increased to 225% of the federal poverty guideline. This program assists Alaskans wherever they live and with whatever their fuel source is. The major factor is an individual's income. In January, the State Energy Coordinator will release a statewide energy plan. The plan will be targeted at reducing the cost of energy in Alaska communities. From there, the Legislature and the Governor will need to be diligent in our efforts to implement this plan.

Bob Buch: I will be striving to promote renewable energy, starting with getting the Fire Island Wind Farm up and running by 2010.

Berta Gardner: Longterm solution is investment in renewable energies, weatherization of housing, increased access to public transportation and increase in minimum wage.

Bob Bird: It is amazing, but children's brains have been able to develop quite well for centuries without government programs. Here we see again the insistence of a cradle-to-grave dependency that is truly Orwellian in nature. In the name of compassion, we are destroying the middle class, the economy and our freedom in one fell swoop.

8. Family Support Alaska has the highest rates of abuse and neglect and domestic violence in the country, yet funding for prevention and intervention falls well below funding spent on child protective services. Given the current status of Alaska's children and families, there is a need to provide comprehensive family support and parent education that impact the ability of families to nurture and support the healthy development of their children.

What is the role of state government in the prevention of child abuse and neglect and what kind of budget would you propose to spend on prevention?

For more information on Family Support contact: Panu Lucier, Friends of the Alaska Children's Trust, akchildrenstrust@alaska.net or (907) 248.7676

Lynda Placek: People in neglectful and domestic violence, need to have to have strong consequences. The system is to lenient, way to easy to get away with abuse, it may happen to you; but that doesn't make it ok to do to other, and that should be a strong message we send to violators.

Bob Roses: We created a taskforce to study and make recommendations to the Legislature regarding domestic violence and abuse. I will work within the suggestions of this group. We also need to begin to address and secure funding for the parental involvement piece required under No Child Left Behind federal education program. It is required but few states have implemented programs to address that issue.

Kevin Meyer: Abuse and neglect of our children should not be tolerated. Parent education plays a huge role in the attempt to combat this problem. I believe that there is more than one source to assist parents. I think that the State has a role, but I also believe that our schools have a role, churches have a role, family members play a role, and other community organizations play a role. I believe that by creating a network of support, this is the most effective route to reaching out to parents and soon-to-be parents. Parenting is often stressful and people need to know that they have someone to turn to for advice and consultation. We have numerous state agencies already directed at this problem, however, the one thing that I think they are lacking is the willingness to coordinate with other groups and interested parties.

Bob Buch: I believe many of these problems occur to due to alcohol and other substance abuse. That is where we need to address our efforts. All of these programs have been cut in the past few years and the effects have been dramatic. We should be seeking to intervene at the earliest onset and provide support, education, and direction rather than when it becomes a police matter.

Berta Gardner: As a former Guardian ad Litem and CASA I have worked with many families struggling to raise their children in safety and security. I think that anyone who wants treatment for mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence should be able to access prompt assistance. I also believe that the state needs to be more proactive in engaging local communities in these issues, particularly in child protection. Anchorage does not and cannot do a very good job in assisting struggling families across this state.

Bob Bird: Federal programs, if they were effective, would indicate that there would be a drop, not a rise, in the "working poor". Instead, at best they are useless; or worse, they perpetuate the problem. It is arguably correct that they create the problem. Not one single historian has ever contended that either the New Deal or the Great Society programs solved the problems of the poor. By creating a tax burden that would sink a navy, many tax payers have developed an attitude that since they are crushed by taxation, the problems of the poor are not theirs to deal with, but belong to the government. This fosters the false impression that tax payers are heartless, when in fact they are merely attempting to avoid becoming poor themselves. And their disposable income, which might otherwise be pointed towards charitable works, becomes less and less.

9. Early Learning Too many young children in Alaska do not have the skills to be successful in school or in life. Economists say there is a profound link between a child's early exposure to learning and literacy and his or her success in later life as a contributing member of society. Children who have access to quality learning opportunities, at home or in away-from-home programs, are more likely to graduate from high school, get better paying jobs, avoid spending time in jail, and lead more productive lives.

What are your top three priorities for young children and why?

For more on information Early Learning contact: Melinda Myers, Best Beginnings: Alaska's Early Childhood Investment, mmyers@akhf.org or (907) 297.3300

Lynda Placek: Yes I know because if I had to take the test to graduate today, I'd FLUNK We need to make sure that kids are really learning their lessons.

Bob Roses: We passed legislation to study and make recommendations regarding early childhood education programs. We had also scheduled a Pre K education conference for several legislature for this summer, but it was canceled due to the special session. It is supposed to be rescheduled for latter this fall or early winter. This discussion was to help establish the priorities that you are asking for. I will wait until that meeting is held before making my recommendations.

Kevin Meyer: 1. Increased funding for early childhood programs 2. Increased funding for Head Start and reducing the waitlist for Head Start programs 3. Access to early learning programs: ensure that every one who wants their children to attend early learning programs can, regardless of economic situation.

Bob Buch: I would like to see children with advanced skills have opportunities to foster those abilities. Early intervention is key to maximizing the possibilities for those with disabilities. Give kids an education that involves all aspects of society's successes. Not just the mantra that they have to be a college graduate to be successful in America. That is not working for a huge segment of the populous.

Berta Gardner: Early developmental assessment and services for any "at risk" child and family. Head Start type programs for all qualifying children...with no wait lists! Access to basic healthcare services for all children.

Bob Bird: See answer #6. I am in favor of a much larger tax credit.

10. Nonprofits Through the dedication and professional work by private charities and nonprofits, Anchorage's children, youth and their families receive a broad array of services. Each year demand for services has been increasing. Funding for these services comes from state and federal competitive grants, individual charitable giving and private and public foundations. State and federal funding levels have been decreasing thereby increasing the competition and often decreasing the award amounts.

What is the role of state and local governments in providing support for the work that nonprofit organizations provide?

For more on information Nonprofits contact: Laurie Wolf, Foraker Group, lwolf@forakergroup.org or (907) 743-1208

Lynda Placek: If my child is in a non-profit school for whatever reason, I pay taxes and should get my share of the money to help me pay cost Period

Bob Roses: The state already has a role and provides considerable funding through matching fund programs. We need to continue to monitor those programs to guarantee that public funds are spent as designed and are reaching the maximum potential and benefit. Throwing money at a problem rarely solves the problem. Care planning and strategic implementation usually obtains the best result.

Kevin Meyer: I believe that state and local governments have an important role in supporting nonprofits. Through cooperation between state, local, and nonprofit organizations we can accomplish a lot. For the past few years, the State has been able to award capital grants to various nonprofits. These grants have assisted in constructing new buildings, providing funds for leasing property, improving modes of transportation, and providing additional programs for youth and families. I have had the great privilege of working with organizations such as Camp Fire, Boys and Girls Club, Covenant House, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and others in helping them secure funding to promote their programs.

Bob Buch: As I mentioned earlier, this state has many agencies with good intentions, both state and private. There is no one to co-ordinate the State, private, and non-profit. They often times are trying to accomplish the the same goals but do not communicate with each other.

Berta Gardner: If we are to continue using a grant system for funding, grants should be long term so that agencies can make some long term planning.

Bob Bird: The program needs to be eliminated, not "fixed."

11. Please share your top three priorities based upon the questions provided within this questionnaire.

Lynda Placek: Housing, Hunger, Energy
Bob Roses: Energy, Housing, Behavioral Health
Kevin Meyer: Hunger, Behavioral Health, Housing
Bob Buch: Health Care, Early Learning, Hunger
Berta Gardner: Family Support, Hunger, Housing

Bob Bird: These social problems can be better met by the state and private charities and industry. There is no Constitutional authorization for any of them. The American economy is at the breaking point because of endless welfare and endless warfare. To ask for increased funding at this time especially, when people's savings, investments and mortgages are at risk, is a guarantee to crush the independent resolve and spirit of society. Socialism punishes productivity and rewards failure. Such a despair eventually brought down the Soviet Union. We will be heading that way unless and until we accept several premises.

One, it is impossible to be generous and compassionate with other people's property and livelihood.

Two, the family unit is not supported but rather comes to be controlled, by government welfare.

Three, the 20th century saw an era where government elevated itself into a sort of godhood. We need to understand that some things government just cannot fix. A more humble government will bring about a healthier and happier society. But subsidies are an opiate. They give a short-term gain but a long-term loss. I offer the opposite: a short-term loss for a long-term gain. Such a long-term gain will do more for the poor, who are abused by government bureaucrats to justify, perpetuate and increase their careers.

"It's About Our Kids" - Candidate Forum Sponsors:

AARP, Pat Luby, www.aarp.org/states/ak/

Alaska Food Coalition, Kerri Burrows, www.alaskafood.org

All Alaska Pediatric Partnership, Mary Grisco, www.a2p2.com

Anchorage's Promise, Debbie Bogart, www.anchoragespromise.org

Anchorage Youth Development Coalition, Victoria Shaver, www.aydc.org

Best Beginnings, Melinda Myers, www.BestBeginningsAlaska.org

Boys & Girls Clubs Alaska, Chris Hall, www.bgcalaska.org

Camp Fire USA Alaska Council, Barbara Dubovich, www.campfireak.org

Child Care Connection, Stephanie Berglund, www.childcareconnection.org

Food Bank Alaska, Robin Stilwell, www.foodbankofalaska.org

Friends of Alaska CASA, Sallye Werner, www.friendsokcasa.org

Friends of the Alaska Children's Trust, Panu Lucier, www.friendsofact.org

Kids' Corps, Inc., Dirk Schumaker, www.kcialaska.org

Voices for Alaska's Children, Meghan Johnson, www.voicesak.org