

Tough budget choices and how to keep getting *Trends*



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Commissioner

Valued readers, welcome to the last two full free print runs of *Alaska Economic Trends*. As part of our continued efforts to cut costs, we will no longer be distributing free copies of *Trends* as we have in the past. Instead, we will continue to distribute free copies electronically, and a new, full color print subscription option is now available through Assets, Inc.

Assets is an Anchorage nonprofit that has printed *Trends* for nearly 30 years and employs more than 280 people with developmental disabilities or mental illnesses. All proceeds from the \$49.95 yearly subscription will go to Assets. You can sign up now at subscribe-trends.com. To receive *Trends* electronically, go to labor.alaska.gov/trends and hit “subscribe” or send your email address to trends@alaska.gov.

This decision did not come easily. For decades, policy makers and business leaders have relied on *Trends* to help make informed decisions about everything from hiring decisions to legislative policy. Providing apolitical, unbiased economic research has been good for our state’s businesses and our economy as a whole. I made this decision reluctantly and with a heavy heart. Unfortunately, in this budgetary environment we can no longer maintain even the very small cost of free distribution of *Trends*.

This is neither the first nor last budget cut our department has absorbed. We have eliminated more than 37 percent of our unrestricted general fund budget compared to the day that Governor Walker took office. We’ve accomplished this by eliminating positions, merging divisions to reduce administrative costs, consolidating leased office space, and making the painful decisions to close multiple job centers. At a time when unemployment

and underemployment are growing, we have fewer resources to help Alaskans get retrained and back to work.

Compared to the challenges faced by an individual who’s been laid off, changing *Trends* printing policy can seem like a minor issue. Yet I believe *Trends* content is important for the state, and for individual workers.

Consider the exhaustive research in this month’s edition, which addresses the gender pay gap. We can’t possibly address and ultimately fix the gender pay gap without understanding what that gap is, how it differs across occupations and sectors, and how it has changed over time. Understanding these complex forces is important — when breadwinners are underpaid, families suffer from economic insecurity and in many cases cannot provide the opportunities their children deserve.

This is just one important issue *Trends* has addressed and will continue to illuminate in the future. We also rely on research published in *Trends* to inform our Alaska Hire, apprenticeship, and other training priorities. Robust data help us make efficient and productive investments in training programs, and contribute to Alaska’s high median wages and low inequality. To be good stewards of public money, we must rely on sound research.

Thank you to everyone who reads and relies on *Trends*. I’m proud this publication can help spur statewide conversations about important issues, and inform sound public policies. Our Research and Analysis Section will continue producing high quality research for this magazine, which you can access for free online or in hard copy for a small subscription fee.



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