

2017 CAPITOL CURRENTS

30th Alaska State Legislature ~ 1st Session

Second Edition – 1/23 to 1/29/17

– 76 Days to go! –

~ Medicaid Expansion and Reform update given by DHSS ~

HIGHLIGHTS

This past week saw quite a few overviews by various departments and their divisions to bring legislators and staff up to date on the services and programs that they provide. Numerous budget summaries also got top billing in the building.

A few bills were also heard, as in legislation (SB 23) to provide benefits to children and spouses of law enforcement and firefighters killed in the line of duty. This bill is currently in the House Finance Committee and scheduled to be heard again this week.

Rep. Tammie Wilson has begun a dialogue regarding the Office of Children Services (OCS), which is under the Dept. of Health & Social Services. She has scheduled meetings all over the state this session and summer to listen to public testimony about this particular agency. Coincidentally, the Alaska OCS is scheduled for a federal audit this year.

The number of children in Alaska's foster care system has risen dramatically in the past two years. More than 2,800 children were in the system at the start of 2016, up from 1,860 in 2012.

Divorce courts in Alaska will now treat pets more like children. HB 147 passed last year and just took effect last week. It makes us the first state in the country to require courts to take into consideration the well being of animals. Judges can now assign “joint custody” for a pet.

The former state-owned Matanuska Maid milk bottling plant in Palmer could soon be bottling beer. Matanuska Brewing Co. LLC has secured financing to buy the old building.

BUDGET ISSUES

The Dept. of Revenue's 2016 Fall Revenue Forecast is projecting an increase of \$177 million over the current fiscal year to \$1.6 billion.

The Alaska Senate Democrats have pitched their budget plan calling for reworking oil tax policy and implementing broad based taxes before moving to the potential use of earnings from the Permanent Fund and a state income tax.

Meanwhile, the Senate Republican majority is pursuing \$300 million more in cuts this year. They won't support any use of the Permanent Fund until there is a spending limit in place.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

An amendment (SJR 2) to our constitution was introduced to strengthen the constitutional appropriation limit enacted by voters in the past. According to a press release, it would lower the baseline for government spending to reflect the state's current fiscal reality and cap the spending limit in succeeding years. If passed, it wouldn't go to the voters until 2018.

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES

Updates on Medicaid expansion and reform, were presented in both House and Senate Health & Social Services Committee this past week. SB 74 (Medicaid reform) was passed last year to restructure and help save tens of millions of dollars over the next several years.

The Alaska Opioid Policy Task Force recommends collaborative prevention, treatment and recovery support strategies to reduce opioid misuse in Alaska. They have issued a broad set of recommendations to prevent, treat, and support recovery from opioid misuse and addiction. Access those recommendations here. <http://dhss.alaska.gov/AKOpioidTaskForce/Pages/default.aspx>

A bill signed into law on May 11th opened up new opportunities for disabled Alaskans late in 2016. HB 188 also known as the Alaska ABLE Plan allows people to invest money on behalf of young disabled people. Before the plan's start, those disabled faced strict limits on the amount they could save. Those who saved more than \$2,000 risked having their federal benefits revoked or reduced.

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

An overview of the implementation of Senate Bill 91 of the 29th Alaska Legislature had an exhaustive hearing this past Friday in Senate Judiciary. This was the omnibus crime legislation that rewrote law and rules of law throughout the Alaska Statutes. Hearings on this bill continue in the coming week.

Some people are already pressuring lawmakers to change the new law. The goal was to reduce prison overcrowding and reduce recidivism by giving low risk offenders treatment instead of time behind bars.

Earlier in the week, there was a presentation by the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission also given in Senate Judiciary. They will again be giving testimony this week in the same committee.

In a landmark agreement designed to combat crime in rural Alaska, the state and Anvik's tribal government have inked a deal giving the tribe the authority to prosecute low-level criminal offenses the state previously handled — as long as the offender agrees.

NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

The federal government has declared a fishery disaster for the low Pink Salmon harvests in the Gulf of Alaska for 2016. This, on the heels of the state's request for such a declaration. This action provides Congress with a basis to appropriate disaster relief funding for economic assistance to affected communities.

Alaska's proposed 3-fold tax hike for gasoline will still be lower than the US average. Matter of fact, it is the lowest in the nation. The gas tax in our state has not increased since 1970.

GOVERNOR'S CORNER

<http://gov.alaska.gov>

The governor's office posts' press releases and other items of interest at the website above.

The governor has introduced legislation that would bring the State of Alaska in compliance with the federal REAL ID Act, and prevent travel restrictions on residents with a REAL ID-compliant Alaska driver license. Passed by Congress in 2005, REAL ID establishes national standards on the manufacture and issuance of driver licenses and identification cards to improve security and limit the production of false ID's. Governor Walker's legislation would allow Alaskans to choose between REAL ID-compliant and regular, noncompliant identification cards and driver licenses.

IMPORTANT DATES

15th Legislative Day (Jan. 31, 2017) Deadline for Governor's Supplemental budget requests.

30th Legislative Day (Feb. 15, 2017) Deadline for Governor to submit budget Amendments.

Energy Council Meeting (March 3-6, 2017 Washington, D.C.

Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend – Filing Deadline: March 31, 2017

NEW DOCUMENTS

~ Reports below are on file with either the House Clerk or Senate Secretary ~

Dept. Health & Social Services reports below:

FY 2017 Operating Grants

FY 2017 Grants Made to Community Health Facilities

NEW BILLS OF INTEREST

<http://www.akleg.gov>

Budget Bills / FY18

HB 57 / SB 22 – Operating Budget

HB 58 / SB 23 – Capital Budget

HB 59 / SB 24 – Mental Health Budget

Health Care Issues

HCR 2 / Tarr – Respond to Adverse Childhood Experiences

HCR 3 / Tarr – April 2017: Child Abuse Prevention Month

SB 32 / Hughes – Prescriptions for Biological Products

SB 37 / Giessel – Pharmacy Board/Employees; Drug Supply Chain Security; Executive Administrator

SB 38 / Giessel – Pharmacy Benefits Managers (PBM's)

SB 41 / Giessel – List Tramadol and related Substances as IVA Controlled Substances

Public Safety Issues

HB 75 / Tarr – Gun Violence Protective Orders

HB 79 & SB 40 / Governor – Omnibus Workers' Compensation

Constitutional Issues

HJR 7 / Tilton – Proposing an Amendment relating for an Appropriation Limit

SJR 2 / Sen. State Affairs – Proposing an Amendment for an Appropriation Limit (not companion)

Election/Voter Issues

HCR 1 / Grenn – Amend Uniform Rules: Abstain from Voting

Employee/Retirement Issues

HB 83 / Kito – Teachers and Public Employee Retirement Plans

Other Issues

HB 74 & SB 34 / Governor – Driver’s License and ID Cards and Real ID Act

HB 78 / Westlake – Establish Indigenous Peoples Day for October every year

SB 42 / Giessel – Drivers’ License Requirements; Disability: ID Training

WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

Check the committee calendar the day of the scheduled hearing as sometimes a bill is rescheduled at the last minute

Website-Daily Committee Hearings for Jan. 30 – Feb. 4, 2017

[Committee Hearings](#)

Gavel to Gavel: Most committee hearings can be seen and heard on Gavel Alaska. It is broadcast on both local access TV and on the internet at www.360north.org

Streaming Video:

<http://alaskalegislature.tv>

Testifying:

Legislative Information Office (LIO) Find your LIO here: <http://akleg.gov/lios.php>

In Juneau: See committee hearing list for room numbers

Call-in: Available with prior approval from the committee chair

1-855-463-5009 or in Juneau 907-463-5009

BILLS ON THE MOVE

~ Below are pertinent bills that had hearings or other action this past week ~

HOUSE COMMITTEE OR FLOOR ACTION-BILLS

HB 3 / National Guard Leave/Reemployment Rights

<http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=HB%20%20%203>

Version 30-LS0073\A-Heard and held in House Military/Veterans’ Affairs on 1/26.

The bill requires an employer to grant a leave of absence for a person who is called into service with the National Guard of another state. The employee is entitled to return to the former position, or a comparable position, at the pay, seniority, and benefit level the employee would have had if the employee had not been absent as a result of active National Guard service in another state.

HB 23 / Insurance for Dependents of Deceased Fire/Police

<http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=hb23#>

Version 30-LS0258\A-Heard and held in House Finance on 1/26. Next hearing 2/1.

The bill establishes a police officer and firefighter survivors’ fund in the Department of Public Safety and parameters for its use to pay the health insurance premiums for eligible survivors.

HB 44 / Legislative Ethics: Voting and Conflicts

http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=hb44#tab6_4

Version 30-LS0208\O -Sponsor substitute heard and held in Judiciary on 1/27. Next hearing 1/30. The bill lists relationships and situations which if exists would prohibit a legislator from taking or withholding official action or exert official influence that could substantially benefit or harm the financial interest of those involved. The bill defines the phrase “substantially benefit or harm”.

HCR 1 / Amend Uniform Rules: Abstain from Voting

http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=hcr1#tab6_4

Version 30-LS0209\J - Heard and held in Judiciary on 1/27. Next hearing 1/30. The bill would change the standard from *unanimous consent* to a *majority vote* when a member seeks to abstain from voting due to a substantial conflict of interest.

HOUSE COMMITTEE OR FLOOR ACTION-BUDGET

HB 57 / Operating Budget – HB 59 / Mental Health Budget **Overviews: FY18 Budget**

Dept. Education/Early Development - Dept. Public Safety - Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

<http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=hb57#>

Version 30-GH1855\A

<http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=HB%20%2059>

Version 30-GH1856\A

Heard and held in House Finance on 1/27/17.

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

MONDAY – Jan. 30

(HOUSE) Miscellaneous Meeting

12:00 PM Capitol Room 106

Lunch & Learn – Equal Pay for Women in Alaska

Review Report on efforts on this topic by Hilary Morgan, Exec. Director, YWCA

Sponsored by Rep. Tarr

(HOUSE) JUDICIARY Committee

1:30 PM Gruenberg Room 120

HB 44 / Legislative Ethics: Voting and Conflicts

HCR 1 / Amend Uniform Rules: Abstain from Voting

(SENATE) JUDICIARY Committee

1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)

Presentation of Criminal Justice Commission Recommendations

TUESDAY – Jan. 31

(HOUSE) C&RA Committee

8:00 AM Barnes Room 124

HB 8 / Enforcement of Foreign Protective Orders

HB 78 / Indigenous Peoples Day

(HOUSE) Miscellaneous Meeting

12:00 PM Butrovich Room 205

Brown Bag Lunch – Overview by Uniform Law Commission

- Uniform Rules - Procedures -History -Membership -Uniform Law Drafting Process

Sponsored by Rep. Claman

(HOUSE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee
3:00 PM Gruenberg Room 120
HB 7 / Display of Photos of Marked Ballot
HB 31 / Sexual Assault Examination Kits

(HOUSE) Health & Social Services Finance Sub-committee
3:30 PM Capitol Room 106
Behavioral Health: Effectiveness, Capacity --Testimony <Invitation Only>

(SENATE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee
3:30 PM Butrovich Room 205
SB 5 / Political Contribution Limits/Prohibition

WEDNESDAY – Feb. 1

(HOUSE) Judiciary Committee
1:30 PM Gruenberg Room 120
HB 24 / List U-47700 As a Controlled Substance

(SENATE) Judiciary Committee
1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
Implementation Overviews of Senate Bill 91 (29th Legislature)
Law Enforcement – Lt. Kris Sell
Dept. of Law – Jahna Lindemuth, Attorney General
Dept. of Corrections – Dean Williams, Commissioner
Carrie Belden, Director, Div. of Probation and Parole
Geri Miller-Fox, Director, Div. of Pretrial Services

(HOUSE) Finance Committee
1:30 PM H. Finance Room 519
HB 23 / Insurance for Dependents of Deceased Fire/Police (Bill hearing starts about 2:30)

(HOUSE) LABOR & COMMERCE Committee
3:15 PM Barnes Room 124
HB 49 / Extend Board of Direct-Entry Midwives

THURSDAY – Feb. 2

(HOUSE) Public Safety Finance Sub-committee
9:00 AM Barnes Room 124
Overview: Alaska State Troopers --Testimony <Invitation Only>
Overview: Alaska Wildlife Troopers
Overview: Council of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

(HOUSE) HSS Committee
3:00 PM Capitol Room 106
Presentation: FASD and Autism Disability Support Initiatives the Governor Council on Disabilities & Special Education

(HOUSE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee
3:00 PM Gruenberg Room 120
HB 44 / Legislative Ethics: Voting and Conflicts <pending referral>

(HOUSE) HSS Finance Sub-committee
3:30 PM Capitol Room 106
OCS: Capacity to Protect Children, Effectiveness

FRIDAY – Feb. 3

(HOUSE) Education Finance Sub-committee
8:00 AM Capitol Room 106

Overview: DEED Budget Components

--Testimony <Invitation Only>

Education Support Services

- Executive Administration
- Administrative Services
- Information Services
- School Finance and Facilities

Teaching and Learning Support

- Student and School Achievement
- State System of Support
- Teacher Certification
- **Child Nutrition**
- **Early Learning Coordination**
- **Pre-Kindergarten Grants**

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

2017 Legislators contact information

<http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/whoswho.pdf>

<http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/800numbers.pdf>

2017 1st Session Staff contact list *(Not posted yet)*

2017 House & Senate Committees <http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/commlist.pdf>

2017 House Finance Sub-committee Members <http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/HFINSubcmte.pdf>

Legislative Publications List <http://akleg.gov/publications.php>

Legislative Finance Division <http://www.legfin.akleg.gov>

View specifics for the Capital and Operating Budgets.

FY 2018 Governor's budget overview <http://www.legfin.state.ak.us/Overview/Overview2018.pdf>

OMB FY 2018 budget proposal

<https://www.omb.alaska.gov/html/budget-report/fy2018-budget/proposed.html>

~ End of Report ~

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