

2017 CAPITOL CURRENTS

30th Alaska State Legislature ~ 1st Session

Seventh Edition – 2/27 to 3/5/17

– 41 Days to go! –

~ Session passes halfway mark-House Finance takes public testimony on budget bills ~

HIGHLIGHTS

Citizens took the opportunity to express appreciation or concern for budget items this week as the House Finance committee listened to public testimony on their FY 2018 operating and mental health budgets.

The committee will be taking up amendments starting Monday, the 6th and may be ready to pass both bills from committee by week's end.

The Key Campaign, celebrating “30 years of Unity in Action”, came to Juneau this week. Each year, the Key Coalition sends members and advocates to Juneau to speak with legislators about the importance of sustaining community-based services for people with disabilities and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). For more information – <http://keycoalitionofalaska.wordpress.com>

A project to preserve Yup'ik language and culture already has put more than 4,000 Southwest Alaska place names [on a digital map](#): fish camps and ancient settlements, sloughs and ponds, even sandbars and underwater channels. Embedded sound files guide pronunciation to spots previously unknown in the bigger world.

Now the effort is moving to a new level. A three-day workshop in Bethel last week drew teachers, a museum leader, curriculum specialists, technicians and those already involved in preserving the culture to explore how to add more features to the [Yup'ik Environmental Knowledge Project](#).

BUDGET ISSUES

Rep. Paul Seaton, co-chair of the House Finance Committee surprised people this past Monday by presenting a plan to take \$50 million out of the school bond debt reimbursement program. This in effect would reduce payments to communities by about 50 percent on top of what was already reduced and frozen for debt reimbursement last year.

The House Majority is proposing to use Permanent Fund investment earnings in place of the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR) to balance the state's budget. This move would require only a simple majority of 21 votes versus the 30 votes needed for the CBR.

Since the state has close to a \$3 billion shortfall, one of these two mechanisms will be required before the FY18 budget is passed.

The Senate State Affairs Committee finally released Senate Bill 21 with a caveat. A rare letter of intent will follow this Permanent Fund (PF) bill on to all subsequent committees of referral. Basically, it states that those committees strongly consider the following elements.

Protection of the corpus of the PF against inflation, a limit on the portion of earnings that can be drawn for government, and a “savings rule” which saves some peak revenue and roll it back into the corpus of the Fund.

EDUCATION ISSUES

The subcommittee on education wrapped up its work on the operating budget this week. They rejected proposals that would have negatively impacted early learning programs or Erin and Bree’s law implementation. They passed the following intent language:

“It is the intent of the legislature that the State Board of Education evaluate and make recommendations on strategies to secure access to quality early educational opportunities for all Alaskan children. Further, it is the intent of the Legislature that early learning be prioritized by the Department and State Board of Education as they set long term strategies to address Alaska’s educational challenges.”

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

Alaska's marijuana tax revenues decreased in January as supply shortages caused many shops to shut down temporarily or reduce their hours. Growers paid \$107,500 to the state in January, down about \$38,000 from December.

Senator Lisa Murkowski and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren are leading an effort to urge U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions not to crack down on marijuana use that is legal under state laws.

This is on the heels of statements by an embattled Trump administration to pursue “greater enforcement” of federal marijuana laws. By contrast, Obama had affirmed that they would not challenge state MJ laws, but focus on preventing drug related violence and keeping drugs out of the hands of children.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ryan Zinke, from a fifth-generation family in Montana has been confirmed as the new U. S. Secretary of Interior.

Zinke's will oversee about 500 million acres of U.S. soil. This includes the country's 59 national parks, millions of acres rich in coal, oil, timber and natural gas, and the management of land and services for 567 Native tribes.

GOVERNOR'S CORNER

<http://gov.alaska.gov>

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

Governor Walker issued the following comments after the bomb threat at the Lubavitch Jewish Center of Alaska. “Alaska's diversity is among its greatest strengths. I stand with our state's Jewish community in condemning these cowardly and unacceptable actions.”

IMPORTANT DATES

Constituent meetings:

Meet Speaker Bryce Edgmon at the Dillingham LIO, March 18th at 2pm

NEW BILLS OF INTEREST

<http://www.akleg.gov>

Health Care Issues

HB 151/ DHSS; CINA; Foster Care; Child Protection
SB 72 / Discrimination: Gender ID.; Sexual Orientation

Public Safety Issues

SB 73 / Sex Assault by Police Officers
SB 74 / Juveniles: Justice, Facilities, Treatment
SB 76 / Alcoholic Beverage Control; Alcohol Regulations

Education Issues

SB 75 / Limited Teacher Certificates; Languages

WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

Check “committee calendar” the day of scheduled hearing. A bill can be rescheduled last minute.

Website-Daily Committee Hearings for March 6 – March 11, 2017

[Hearing Schedule](#)

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

HB 1 / Election Registration and Voting

Heard and held in House State Affairs on 2/28. Next scheduled on 3/7.

Allows qualified voters to register to vote within 30 days or on the day of an election to vote a questioned ballot; enhances online voter registration with electronic signatures to make the registration process quicker and easier; ensures the same early voting locations are available during every election;

creates an option for permanent absentee voting for individuals that plan to vote by mail every year; and clarifies terminology for early voting to remove confusion between early voting and absentee in-person voting.

CSHB 7(CRA) / Display of Photos of Marked Ballot

<Passed House on 3/1>

Transmitted to the Senate on 3/1-referred to CRA, STA

During the hours the polls are open a person who is in the polling place or within 200 feet of any entrance to the polling place may not physically display a photo, video, or other image of the person's marked ballot in an attempt to persuade a person to vote for or against a candidate, proposition, or question.

CSHB 20 (STA) / Solemnize Marriage: Elected Officials

Heard and held in House Judiciary on 3/3.

Allows marriages to be solemnized by an individual holding an elective public office in the state.

HB 25 / Insurance Coverage for Contraceptives

Heard and held in House HSS on 2/28. Scheduled on 3/9 for public testimony.

Requires insurers that cover prescription drugs to provide coverage of FDA-approved prescription contraceptive drugs and devices; requires coverage for voluntary sterilization procedures; and requires coverage for consultations, exams, procedures and medical services necessary to prescribe, dispense, insert, deliver, distribute, administer, or remove the drugs, devices, and other products or services covered; allows exemptions for certain religious organizations and requires the Department of Health and Social Services to amend the state's Medicaid plan to include the enumerated coverage.

HB 43 / New Drugs for the Terminally Ill

Heard and held in House HSS on 3/2. Next scheduled on 3/7.

Allows terminally ill patients who have exhausted other available treatments and do not qualify for clinical trials to gain faster access to safe, but experimental drugs. By providing certain immunities to prescribing physicians, manufacturers and distributors acting in good faith, this bill would allow terminal patients, in consultation with their doctor, the freedom to try new treatments without the burden of waiting for federal approval.

CS SSHB 44(JUD) / Legislative Ethics: Voting and Conflicts

Heard and held in House State Affairs on 3/2. Next scheduled on 3/7.

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".

HB 79 / Omnibus Workers' Compensation

Heard and held in House L&C on 3/1. Next scheduled on 3/6 and 3/8.

The bill streamlines procedures and bears down on employers who attempt to delay prescribed medical treatments and fail to provide coverage, required by law. It takes aim at employers' misclassification of employees and "deceptive" leasing practices; and, strengthens requirements for employees to report wages they receive while receiving workers' compensation benefits.

The bill also expands personal liability among employers who are shown to be evading workers' compensation requirements. The bill reduces administrative costs by allowing employers to pay benefits electronically and allows the Division of Workers' Compensation to mandate electronic filing of certain reports from employers and insurers.

[HB 86](#) / **Student Loan Default/Occupational License Renewal**

Heard and moved from House Education on 3/1. Next referral is House L&C.

House Bill 86 repeals current statutes that allow the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) to threaten nonrenewal of occupational licenses for individuals who have defaulted on their student loans. **Affected occupations include licenses for nurses, pharmacists, social workers, veterinarians, dentists, attorneys, teachers (k12), EMS workers, and correctional officers.**

[HB 90](#) / **Occupational Licensing Fees; Investigation Costs**

Heard and moved from House L&C on 3/1. Awaiting House Finance.

Spreads the total cost of investigation charges across all licensees regardless of profession. This new investigative surcharge would be in lieu of the current amount that licensees pay in their overall license fee.

[HB 102](#) / **Limited Teacher Certificates; Languages**

Heard and held in House Education on 3/1.

HB 102 expands the existing “Type M” and “Type I” teacher certificates, tackling one of the biggest challenges facing Alaska’s immersion programs: finding fully certified teachers also fluent in a Native or foreign language. The bill provides districts and charter schools case-by-case flexibility to hire language teachers they know are qualified to lead a classroom but who – for reasons such as limited English proficiency, advanced age, or familial responsibilities – are unable at the time to get a full teacher certification.

[HB 123](#) / **Disclosure of Health Care Costs**

Heard and held in House HSS on 3/2. Next scheduled on 3/9.

The bill will require health care providers to publish health care price information in public spaces and on their websites and to submit that price information to the Department of Health and Social Services. Individual providers will be required to disclose the total undiscounted costs of their 25 most commonly provided health care services and procedures. Larger medical facilities would provide the same price information for their 50 most common health care services and procedures.

[HCR 1](#) / **Amend Uniform Rules: Abstain from Voting**

Heard and held in House State Affairs on 3/2. Next scheduled on 3/7.

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.

SENATE COMMITTEE OR FLOOR ACTION

[SB 15](#) / **E-Cigs: Sale to and Possession by Minors**

Heard and moved from Senate Labor & Commerce on 3/2.

Prohibits a person under the age of nineteen from knowingly possessing an electronic smoking product, or a product containing nicotine—doing so will be a criminal violation. Prohibits selling of such products to persons under nineteen—the penalty is a fine not less than \$300 and under certain circumstances may result in business license revocation.

[SB 48](#) / **Insurance for Dependents of Deceased Fire/Police**

Heard and held in Senate State Affairs on 3/2.

Provides major medical insurance coverage under the Public Employees' Retirement System of Alaska for certain surviving spouses and dependent children of peace officers and firefighters.

[SB 54](#) / **Crime and Sentencing**

Heard and held in Senate Judiciary on 3/1 and 3/3. Next scheduled on 3/6.

The bill incorporates 2017 recommendations of the Criminal Justice Commission to the overall criminal justice reform statutes amended through last year's SB91. See the recommendations here: [Criminal Justice Commission Recommendations](#)

SB 63 / Regulation of Smoking

Heard and moved from Senate HSS on 3/1. Await transmittal to Finance.

Prohibits smoking in certain places, including specified enclosed areas and at or near specified outdoor areas; provides limited exceptions to the smoking prohibitions for retail tobacco and e-cigarette stores, for enclosed, marked, and vented transit areas, for private residences, for specified vehicles and vessels, for stand-alone shelters and for licensed marijuana establishments; requires notices of smoking prohibitions and fines; prohibits employers and building owners or managers from permitting smoking or supplying smoking accessories in place where it is prohibited; prohibits an employer, or owner or operator of a vehicle from retaliating for initiating or cooperating with enforcement of the Act; allows a municipality to impose additional smoking restrictions and duties.

SCR 2 / Sexual Assault Awareness Month: April 2017

Heard and moved from Senate HSS on 3/1. Awaiting next.

Proclaims April 2017 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

SJR 2 / Constitutional Amendment: Appropriation Limit

Heard and held in Senate State Affairs on 3/2.

Proposes an amendment to Alaska's Constitution to cap certain appropriations made for a fiscal year to not exceed four billion two hundred fifty million dollars by more than fifty percent of the cumulative change in population and inflation since July 1, 2020 derived from federal indices as prescribed by law. If the resolution passes, the amendment will be placed before the voters of the state at the next general election.

SR 3 / February 2017: Black History Month

<Passed Senate on 2/27>

Awaiting transmittal to the Governor on 2/27.

Proclaims February 2017 as Black History Month

HB 78 / Indigenous Peoples Day

<Passed House on 2/3>

Heard and from Senate C&RA on 2/28. Referred to Senate State Affairs.

Establishes the second Monday of October of each year as Indigenous Peoples Day

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

MONDAY – March 6

(JOINT) House and Senate EDUCATION Committees

8:00 AM Capitol Room 106

Presentation by Mark Foster of Commonwealth North

Budget Report: K-12 Funding

– Testimony <Invitation Only>

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee

9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532

SB 21 / Permanent Fund: Income; POMV; Dividends

SB 26 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings

SB 70 / Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee
1:30 PM H. Finance Room 519
HB 81 / Alaska Energy Efficiency Loans: Eligibility
HB 106 / Civil Legal Services Fund

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee
4:00 PM S. Finance Room 532
SB 21 / Permanent Fund: Income; POMV; Dividends <Public Testimony>
SB 26 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings <Public Testimony>
SB 70 / Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund <Public Testimony>
<Must be signed up by 6:00 to testify>

(SENATE) JUDICIARY Committee
1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
HB 54 / Crime and Sentencing

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee
4:00 PM S. Finance Room 532
SB 21 / Permanent Fund: Income; POMV; Dividends <Public Testimony>
SB 26 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings <Public Testimony>
SB 70 / Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund <Public Testimony>
<Must be signed up by 6:00 to testify>

TUESDAY – March 7

(SENATE) Education & Early Development Finance Subcommittee
7:30 AM Butrovich Room 205
Agenda: TBA (Last checked the hearing schedule on 3/3 at 7:00 PM)

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee
9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532
HB 80 / Muni Energy Improvement: Assessments/Bonds

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee
10:00 AM H. Finance Room 519
HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget
HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget <Amendments>

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee
1:30 PM H. Finance Room 519
HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget
HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget <Amendments for both>

(SENATE) LABOR & COMMERCE Committee
1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
SB 32 / Prescriptions for Biological Products <Public Testimony>

(SENATE) Health & Social Services Finance Subcommittee
1:30 PM Senate Finance 532
Medicaid Optional Services Review

(HOUSE) HSS Committee

3:00 PM Capitol Room 106

Presentation: Substance Abuse Treatment System in Alaska

By Kate Burkhart, ED, Alaska Mental Health Board and Alaska Board on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse

By Tom Chard, ED, Alaska Behavioral Health Assoc. – Testimony <Invitation Only>

HB 138 / March: Sobriety Awareness Month – Testimony <Invitation Only>

HB 43 / New Drugs for the Terminally Ill

(HOUSE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee

3:00 PM Gruenberg Room 120

HB 127 / Criminal Conviction Overturned: Receive Past PFD

HB 112 / Sexual Assault by Peace Officers

HB 1 / Election Registration and Voting

(SENATE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee

3:30 PM Butrovich Room 205

SJR 1 / Constitutional Amendment: Guarantee Permanent Fund Dividend <Public Testimony>

SCR 1 / Uniform Rules: Abstain from Voting

(HOUSE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee

5:30PM Gruenberg Room 120

HB 44 / Legislative Ethics: Voting and Conflicts

HCR 1 / Amend Uniform Rules: Abstain from Voting

WEDNESDAY – March 8

(JOINT) House and Senate EDUCATION Committees

8:00 AM Capitol Room 106

Presentation by Joel Lathrop of Microsoft Imagine Academy – Testimony <Invitation Only>

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee

8:30 AM H. Finance Room 519

HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget

HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget <Amendments for both>

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee

9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532

SB 21 / Permanent Fund: Income; POMV; Dividends

SB 26 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings

SB 70 / Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund

(HOUSE) Misc. Meeting – Lunch & Learn <Sponsored by Rep. Parish>

12:00 PM Capitol Room 106

“Resilience” Film Presentation and Discussion

– Joy Lyon, ED, Assoc. for the Education of Young Children

– Patrick Sidmore, Principal Researcher, Alaska Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE)

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee

1:30 PM H. Finance Room 519

HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget

HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget <Amendments for both>

(SENATE) HSS Committee
1:30 PM Butrovich Room 205
Presentation: Alaska Opioid Policy Task Force

(SENATE) JUDICIARY Committee
1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
Confirmation Hearings: Jahna Lindemuth for AG and Walt Monegan, Dept. of Public Safety

(SENATE) Public Safety Finance Subcommittee
3:45 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
Tentative Closeout

THURSDAY – March 9

(SENATE) Education & Early Development Finance Subcommittee
7:30 AM Butrovich Room 205
Tentative FY18 Subcommittee Budget Closeout

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee
9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532
SB 22 / FY18 Operating Budget
SB 24 / FY18 Mental Health Budget
SB 21 / Permanent Fund: Income; POMV; Dividends
SB 26 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings
SB 70 / Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee
1:30 PM H. Finance Room 519
HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget
HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget

(SENATE) LABOR & COMMERCE Committee
1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
Board Appointments: Board of Pharmacy

(SENATE) HSS Finance Subcommittee
1:30 PM Senate Finance 532
Medicaid Rates

(HOUSE) HSS Committee
3:00 PM Capitol Room 106
HB 25 / Insurance Coverage for Contraceptives <Public testimony>
HB 123 / Disclosure of Health Care Costs <Public testimony>
HCR 3 / April 2017: Child Abuse Prevention Month – Testimony <Invited/Public>

FRIDAY – March 10

(HOUSE) EDUCATION Committee
8:00 AM Capitol Room 106
HB 64 / Reading Proficiency Task Force; Dyslexia
HB 135 / School Construction Grant Program – Testimony <Invitation Only>
HB 137 / State Council on the Arts: Public Corp. <Public Testimony>

(SENATE) EDUCATION Committee

8:00 AM Butrovich Room 205

SB 66 / State Council on the Arts: Public Corporation <Public Testimony>

SB 17 / Stevens/Inouye University Exchange Program <Public Testimony>

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee

9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532

SB 21 / Permanent Fund: Income; POMV; Dividends

SB 26 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings

SB 70 / Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund

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 http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/session_phone_list.pdf

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

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

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

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

View specifics for the Capital and Operating Budgets.

~ End of Report ~

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