

2017 CAPITOL CURRENTS

30th Alaska State Legislature ~ 1st Session

Sixth Edition – 2/20 to 2/26/17

– 48 Days to go! –

~ *U.S. Senators briefed Legislature* ~

HIGHLIGHTS

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski delivered her annual speech to the Alaska Legislature this week. She announced that she would not vote to defund planned parenthood because she would not vote to deny Alaskans access to the health services that planned parenthood provides.

Murkowski said elements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) must be saved including mental health parity, the prohibition from discriminating against pre-existing conditions, and allowing youth under 26 to remain on their parents' insurance.

Murkowski also stated she would not vote to repeal Medicaid expansion. That was in sharp contrast from her GOP colleague, Senator Dan Sullivan who addressed the Legislature without mentioning the Affordable Care Act (ACA). He was also unwilling to hold a public meeting with Juneau residents.

Juneau People for Peace and Justice (JPPJ) is a group of citizens gathering on the capitol steps at least once a week to express solidarity with immigrants and refugees - including those who are not documented. Next gathering: Monday, the 27th at 7:30am.

JPPJ is also calling for Alaska's congressional delegation to hold Town Hall meetings on the issue. Here's a link to their e-petition: <https://goo.gl/forms/mTR86szKNKDmf0bF3>

Known as PACs, Political Action Committees are popping up in the state as a wave of controversial methods to skirt around laws preventing contributions during a legislative session.

SB 5 would prohibit lawmakers' PACs from accepting money during the session, would prohibit lobbyists from making contributions, and prohibit the PAC from spending money during the session.

The Legislature honored Laaree Hugonin Morton with a citation recognizing her thirty plus years of service in both the battered women's and rape crisis movements. The honor coincided with the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault's Juneau meeting.

BUDGET ISSUES

ISER published a new report entitled: [Effect of Alaska Fiscal Options on Children and Families](#)

One of the more sobering conclusions reached by the authors is that anything but a graduated income tax would cost households with children more of their per-person incomes than those without children.

As one opinion piece stated, the politics are complicated for the proposed state income tax and the Permanent Fund restructuring plan. After testimony from about 100 Alaskans during a public hearing on HB 115, there is no consensus among them on how to solve our \$3 billion dollar deficit.

People stated that the quality of life is important to our future and they want good schools, roads and public safety. Most recognize that failing to act now would damage the economy even further.

This past Friday, the **Senate Majority** introduced major components of its fiscal solution. Paired with budget reductions, SB 70 imposes a limit on government spending and allows a responsible annual draw from the Permanent Fund's earnings to help pay for reduced government and fund a dividend.

60 state legislators each draw an annual salary of \$50,400. In addition, they all receive daily per diem payments meant to help pay for their lodging and meals during the regular session in Juneau or even if a special session is conducted outside of the Capital city.

A proposal in the Legislature's own finance subcommittee would cut each non-Juneau lawmaker's per diem payment to \$4,800 for the standard 90-day session, down from \$19,170 they get at the current rate.

Juneau legislators per diem would be eliminated. The measure still goes before the full House Finance for consideration.

SB 21 and SB 26 are being held up in Senate State Affairs by its chair – Sen. Mike Dunleavy. These are two of the PF restructuring bills currently in the committee process. Instead of hearing them this week, Dunleavy reviewed his own version of a budget solution.

EDUCATION ISSUES

The House Finance subcommittee on Education had their closeout this past Friday. Only four amendments of twelve passed leaving Pre-K, Parents As Teachers and Best Beginnings funded at the governor's level.

The amendments involved reductions except for a \$197,200 increase in Alaska Student Loan Corporation receipts and an increase of just over \$10 million in federal receipts for the meal programs.

Educators and the public alike say you have to significantly reduce the percentage of school budgets spent on administration and other non-academic functions.

Financial resources must be reprioritized into the classroom to give us the best teachers as well as provide vocational education tracks and better pre-K schooling options.

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES

A legal battle over Alaska abortion restrictions has moved out of the courts and into the hands of the state medical board. Planned Parenthood sued the state this past November, arguing that the restrictions violated the privacy, equal protection and due process rights set out in the Alaska Constitution.

Both sides agreed to put the lawsuit on hold while the state medical board revised the regulations. The board has now released its proposed updates this past week for public comment.

Click on the following link -

<https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=184700>

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

Erika McConnell has been named as the new director of the Alcohol and Marijuana Control Office. She was extensively involved in crafting Anchorage's local marijuana land-use regulations and oversaw special land-use permits for alcohol. Her first day on the job will be March 20th.

The University of Alaska will reopen 23 sexual assault and sexual harassment complaint files at its three campuses under an 18-page agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

The university will also complete a list of steps to improve its responses to such complaints in the future. This follows a nearly three-year review into the university system's handling of such complaints.

Anchorage's rates of stalking are slightly lower than the average for Alaska but still high, according to data drawn from a 2015 statewide victimization survey as well as local domestic-violence responders. The telephone survey included more than 3,000 Alaska women.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Alaska State Senate approved a resolution (SR 4) supporting an effort by U.S. Rep. Don Young to return management of fish and wildlife to the state.

It joins HJR 69 passed by the Alaska House last week.

These are measures to encourage overturning a 2016 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) rule which seized authority away from the state to manage fish and wildlife for both recreational and subsistence uses on 77-million acres of federal lands in Alaska.

IMPORTANT DATES

Community Discussion with Senator John Coghill

Feb. 27th at the *Fairbanks Legislative Information Office*, 1292 Sadler Way #308-5:00 p.m. to 6:00

League of Women Voters – Juneau Chapter / Policymakers' Fiscal Forum

Feb. 28th at the *Red Dog Saloon* – 5:30 p.m. to 8:00

Community Discussion with Rep. Geran Tarr and Sen. Tom Begich

March 11th at the *Clark Middle School*, 150 Bragaw Street- 2:00 p.m. to 4:00

NEW DOCUMENTS

~ Reports noted in House/Senate Journals are on file with the House Clerk or Senate Secretary ~

Dept. of Health & Social Services - Statewide Suicide Prevention Council 2016 Annual Implementation Report

Alaska Court System - Alaska Judicial Council 2015 - 2016 Biennial Report

Dept. of Education and Early Development - 2016 Annual Report

State Commission for Human Rights - 2016 Annual Report

NEW BILLS OF INTEREST

<http://www.akleg.gov>

Health Care Issues

HB 138 / Westlake – March: Sobriety Awareness Month

HB 139 / T. Wilson – Repealing DHSS Centralized Registry; Licensing

HB 140 / T. Wilson – Jury Trials for Termination of Rights; CINA Rules of Procedure

Education Issues

HB 146 / Claman – School Tax; PFD Payment for School Tax
SCR 5 / Gardner – Alaska Reads Day

Election/Voter Issues

HJR 11 / Tarr – Congress: Overturn Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission

Other Issues

SB 70 / Senate Finance – Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund

WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

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

Website-Daily Committee Hearings for Feb. 27 – Mar. 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

HB 1 / Election Registration and Voting

Heard and held in House State Affairs on 2/23. Next scheduled on 2/28.

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(STA) / Display of Photos of Marked Ballot

CS heard and moved from House C&RA on 2/18. Referred to House Rules.

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 moved from House State Affairs on 2/18. Scheduled Judiciary 3/3.

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

[CSHB 24\(FIN\)](#) / **List U-47700 as a Controlled Substance**

Moved CS from House Finance on 2/22. Referred to House Rules.

Companion to SB 20. Lists “Pink” as a controlled substance; the amendment adds tramadol to the list of controlled substances.

[HB 38](#) / **Workers’ Compensation: Death Benefits**

Heard and held in House Labor & Commerce on 2/24.

Provides compensation when a worker dies without a spouse or minor children, to either relatives who depended on that worker for support, or the worker’s estate; continues payment of a death benefit for five years after a child reaches legal adulthood; and, increases the amount of one-time payments for permanent, partial disability to off-set past inflation, and provides an annual adjustment based on the Anchorage Consumer Price Index.

[CS SSB 44\(JUD\)](#) / **Legislative Ethics: Voting and Conflicts**

Heard and held in House State Affairs on 2/21. Scheduled again for 3/2.

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

<http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/30?Root=HB%20%2079>

Heard and held in House Labor & Commerce on 2/20. Next scheduled on 3/1.

The bill aimed at streamlining procedures and bearing down on employers who attempt to delay prescribed medical treatments and fail to provide coverage, which is required by law. Among other changes the bill takes aim at employers’ misclassification of employees and “deceptive” leasing practices, but also strengthens requirements for employees to report wages they receive while receiving workers’ compensation benefits.

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

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

Heard and held in House State Affairs on 2/21. Scheduled again for 3/2.

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 6](#) / **Industrial Hemp Production related to Controlled Substances**

Heard and held in Senate Judiciary on 2/20 and 2/22

Classifies Industrial Hemp as an agricultural crop in Alaska; lists criteria under which a person may register to produce it; lists conditions under which hemp seeds and reconditioned hemp may be kept; authorizes the Division of Agriculture to create regulations; defines industrial hemp to mean the plant Cannabis Sativa L containing less than 0.3 percent delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC); removes it from the list of controlled substances and removes it from marijuana definitions

SB 7 / Museum Construction Grant Program

Heard and moved from Senate C&RA on 2/23. Next referral is Sen. Finance.

Establishes a matching grant program in the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development for museum construction, expansion, and major renovation projects and defines eligible museums.

SB 15 / E-Cigs: Sale to and Possession by Minors

Heard and held in Senate Labor & Commerce on 2/21. Next hearing on 2/28.

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 20 / List U-47700 as a Controlled Substance

Heard and held in Senate Judiciary on 2/20.

Lists “Pink” as a controlled substance; the amendment adds tramadol to the list of controlled substances

SB 34 / Driver’s License and ID Cards and Real ID Act

Heard and held in Senate State Affairs on 2/23.

Allows for the creation of regulations for the issuance of identification (ID) cards and driver’s licenses that comply with the REAL ID Act of 2005’ clarifies the DMV will still issue noncompliant cards and licenses, giving Alaskans a choice; clarifies that all state, borough, and city governments shall treat the noncompliant cards and licenses the same as complaint ones. The bill also changes the duration of a driver’s license or state identification card to eight years instead of five; removes requirement to display color photograph on licenses and ID cards; and removes the statutory prohibition on expenditure of state funds to become REAL ID compliant

SR 3 / February 2017: Black History Month

Heard and moved from Senate State Affairs on 2/21. Rules to calendar 2/27.

Proclaims February 2017 as Black History Month

HB 78 / Indigenous Peoples Day (Passed House on 2/3)

Heard and held in Senate C&RA on 2/21 and 2/23. Next scheduled on 2/28.

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

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

MONDAY – Feb. 27

(SENATE) EDUCATION Committee

8:00 AM Butrovich Room 205 – Testimony <Invitation Only>

Preparing Teachers and Administrators for a Virtual Education Setting

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee

9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532

SB 70 / Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee

1:00 PM H. Finance Room 519 <Note time change>

HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget and HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget

Subcommittee Reports and Amendments

(HOUSE) JUDICIARY Committee
1:00 PM Gruenberg Room 120
HB 69 / Repeal Workers' Comp Appeals Commission

(SENATE) HSS Committee
1:30 PM Butrovich Room 205
SCR 2 / Sexual Assault Awareness Month: April 2017 <Public testimony>

TUESDAY – Feb. 28

(SENATE) Education & Early Development Finance Subcommittee
7:30 AM Butrovich Room 205
Agenda: TBA

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee
9:00 AM H. Finance Room 519 <Note time change>
HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget and **HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget**
Subcommittee Reports and Amendments

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee
9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532
SB 22 / FY18 Operating Budget and **SB 24 / FY18 Mental Health Budget**
FY18 Operating Amendments; Pat Pitney, Director, OMB

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

(SENATE) Health & Social Services Finance Subcommittee
1:30 PM Senate Finance 532
Public Health Nursing
Alaska Community Health Center System

(SENATE) LABOR & COMMERCE Committee
1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
SB 15 / E-Cigs: Sale to and Possession by Minors <Public Testimony>

(HOUSE) HSS Committee
3:00 PM Capitol Room 106
HB 25 / Insurance Coverage for Contraceptives – Testimony <Invitation Only>
HB 43 / New Drugs for the Terminally Ill – Testimony <Invitation Only>

Presentation: Reducing Use of Emergency Dept. Services – Follow up on a component of SB74/Medicaid Reform (29th Legislature) by Anne Zink, MD, Alaska ACEP President; Ben Zaniello, MD, VP of Collective Medical Technologies, and Connie Beemer, MBA, Alaska State Hospital & Nursing Home Assoc. (ASHNHA)

(HOUSE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee
3:00 PM Gruenberg Room 120
HB 1 / Election Registration and Voting <Public testimony>
HB 91 / APOC Registration Fees; Lobbyist Tax

(SENATE) C&RA Committee
3:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
HB 78 / Indigenous Peoples Day

WEDNESDAY – March 1

(HOUSE) EDUCATION Committee
8:00 AM Capitol Room 106
HB 102 / Limited Teacher Certificates; Languages <Public testimony>
HB 86 / Student Loan Default/Occupational License Renewal <Public Testimony>

(SENATE) EDUCATION Committee
8:00 AM Butrovich Room 205
Academic Results in Alaska’s Schools – Testimony <Invitation Only>
Michael Johnson, Commissioner, DEED

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee
9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532
SB 70 / Appropriation Limit/Budget Process/Permanent Fund

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

(SENATE) HSS Committee
1:30 PM Butrovich Room 205
SB 63 / Regulation of Smoking <Public testimony>

(SENATE) JUDICIARY Committee
1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
SB 54 / Crime and Sentencing <Public testimony>
Invited testimony from: Dept. of Corrections, Dept. of Law, Public Defender, and Court System

(HOUSE) L&C Committee
3:15 PM Barnes Room 124
HB 90 / Occupational Licensing Fees; Investigation Costs <Public testimony>

(SENATE) Public Safety Finance Subcommittee
3:45 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
Departmental Overview

THURSDAY – March 2

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee
1:00 PM H. Finance Room 519 <Note time change>
HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget

HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget <Public Testimony>
1:00 – 3:30 PM / Homer, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Matsu, and Seward
3:45 – 6:00 PM / Barrow, Dillingham, and Fairbanks

Notes: If you are an Off Net caller without an LIO, only call during designated Off Net times on March 3 and March 4. Call 465-4648 by 5:00 PM 3/1/17 thru 3/3/17 to obtain the call-in number.

<See all notes on BASIS>

In case of postponement of this meeting, public testimony will be rescheduled to the following:

<3/4/17> 3:00 – 5:00 PM / Homer, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Matsu, and Seward

<3/6/17> 1:30 – 3:45 PM / Barrow, Dillingham, and Fairbanks

(SENATE) HSS Committee

1:30 PM Butrovich Room 205

Update on SB74/Medicaid Reform (29th Legislature)

(HOUSE) HSS Committee

3:00 PM Capitol Room 106

HB 123 / Disclosure of Health Care Costs – Testimony <Invitation Only>

HB 43 / New Drugs for the Terminally Ill – Testimony <Public/Invited>

Presentation: Key Coalition of Alaska – 2017 Legislative Priorities

(HOUSE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee

3:00 PM Gruenberg Room 120

HB 44 / Legislative Ethics: Voting and Conflicts

HCR 1 Amend Uniform Rules: Abstain from Voting

(SENATE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee

3:30 PM Butrovich Room 205

SJR 2 / Constitutional Amendment: Appropriation Limit – Testimony <Invitation Only>

FRIDAY – March 3

(SENATE) EDUCATION Committee

8:00 AM Butrovich Room 205

Broadband Access in Alaska's School Districts – Testimony <Invitation Only>

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

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee

1:00 PM H. Finance Room 519 <Note time change>

HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget

HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget <Public Testimony>

1:00 – 3:00 PM / Anchorage

3:15 – 4:45 PM / Sitka, Petersburg, Delta Junction, Unalaska, Glennallen, and Tok

5:00 – 6:00 PM / Off Net Sites

<See all notes on BASIS>

Notes: If you are an Off Net caller without an LIO, only call during designated Off Net times on March 3 and March 4. Call 465-4648 by 5:00 PM 3/1/17 thru 3/3/17 to obtain the call-in number.

(HOUSE) JUDICIARY Committee

1:00 PM Gruenberg Room 120

HB 20 / Solemnize Marriage: Elected Officias

SATURDAY – March 4

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee

9:00 AM H. Finance Room 519 <Note time change>

=====
HB 57 / FY18 Operating Budget

HB 59 / FY18 Mental Health Budget <Public Testimony>

9:00 – 10:00 AM / Bethel, Cordova, Kotzebue, Nome, Valdez, and Wrangell

10:00 – 11:00 AM / Off Net Sites

1:00 – 3:00 PM / Juneau

3:00 – 5:00 PM / Overflow Public Testimony as needed

Bills previously heard/scheduled

<See all notes on BASIS>

Notes: If you are an Off Net caller without an LIO, only call during designated Off Net times on March 4th. Call 465-4648 by 5:00 PM 3/1/17 thru 3/3/17 to obtain the call-in number.

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 ~

Contact: Caren Robinson (carenr@gci.net)