

2020 CAPITOL CURRENTS

31st Alaska State Legislature ~ 2nd Session

Fifth Edition

2/23/2020

~Rep. Lincoln announces he will not seek re-election ~

HIGHLIGHTS

Citing his desire to be present and provide for his young family, Rep. Lincoln announced he would not seek re-election. In early 2018, former Gov. Bill Walker appointed Lincoln to the Legislature. He was re-elected for a full term. He is a co-chair of the House Resources Committee.

Lincoln is an Independent from Kotzebue who represents House District 40, which includes the Northwest Arctic Borough and North Slope, as well as three communities in the Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area – Allakaket, Bettles and Hughes.

One term North Star Borough assembly member Mike Prax is the new Tammie Wilson. He will represent District 3, North Pole. Former Republican Rep. Wilson resigned to take a new job with the HSS Department. The Governor said Prax has decades of useful experience.

Red Flag laws got some attention as students, activists and lawmakers showed strong support for [SB 198](#) / [HB 62](#). It would allow law enforcement to ask a judge to temporarily relieve someone with domestic violence or mental health issues of their firearms and keep them from buying more.

Sunday was Elizabeth Peratrovich Day in Alaska. Her speech to the Alaska Territorial Legislature long ago is often cited as the impetus for the first anti-discrimination law in Alaska. It outlawed discriminatory practices against Alaska Natives.

Yet, Rep. Zulkosky of Bethel commented recently at a native leader conference that we've come a long way, but discrimination is still in the fabric of our state. For example, some folks including her colleagues continue to talk angrily about "those people who choose to live in rural Alaska".

U.S. Sen. Murkowski gave her yearly speech to the Legislature. She covered a wide variety of topics like telemedicine, prescription drug costs, census privacy and illegal drugs. Of Note: Full support for the Marine Highway System; large concerns about Real ID and missing and murdered Indigenous women.

She also encouraged lawmakers to be better and push past partisanship that cripples our nation. Time to work together on new, forward ideas. Do what's good for Alaska.

The Pro-Dunleavy folks dropped out of the recall appeal process to focus resources on what they see as an inevitable recall election. The show will go on. Oral arguments before the Alaska Supreme Court between Division of Elections and Recall Dunleavy are set for March 25.

In the meantime, recall organizers received their booklets and can start gathering signatures.

The Alaska Democratic Party will try a new voting system for the April 4 Presidential Primary. They dropped the caucus option used in 2016. Now they'll do "ranked choice/vote by mail". Registered Democrats will list candidates in order of preference. Smartphone voting was rejected.

BUDGET ISSUES

Governor Dunleavy still wants to pay us the rest of the 2019 dividend we should have received under the 1982 statutory formula - \$1304. He's introduced [HB 259](#) to make that happen. Last year, he requested funds to catch up on 2016, 2017 and 2018 PFD's.

Total price: \$3 billion. He says the law is the law.

Some House Legislators aren't so sure. Rep. Johnston said: "We owe it to our children and grandchildren to do everything we can to grow it (the Permanent Fund) to \$100 million by 2040". Finance Co-Chair Neal Foster also worried out loud about the impacts of a so-called full PFD.

So, [HCR 13](#) introduced Wednesday, looks at the bigger picture and pledges to safeguard the investment of oil and gas wealth accumulated in the Permanent Fund for many years.

Speaker Edgmon said they would not steal from future generations for the largest PFD in history.

Four days of public comment opportunity on the operating and mental health budgets ended Saturday with education funding, Medicaid, public safety, corrections, substance abuse treatment, prevention, ferries, public radio, agriculture, Pioneer Homes, and API being some of the items Alaskans supported.

Look here for snapshots of the 2021 budget recommendations from the House Finance Subcommittees: [HFIN Subcommittee Reports](#) Look under the Narrative Column for the department in which you're interested.

This week's House Finance hearings will focus on budget amendments and preparing the committee substitutes for the operating and mental health budgets that will go to the House Floor.

Budget Hearings for the week of February 24th

House Finance meets on Monday and Tuesday at 1:30pm then starts double meetings for the rest of the week starting at 9am and 1:30pm Wednesday through Friday with a possible meeting on Saturday at 10am.

SDPS FINSUB meets **Monday at 3:30pm** to review the VPSO program and on **Wednesday at 3:30pm** to discuss amendments & Intent language.

HEDC meets Wednesday at 8am to discuss [HB 236](#) Increase Base Student Allocation which increases the allocation by \$115 beginning July 1, 2020 and by another \$110 on July 1, 2021.

Thursday morning at 9am, SFIN will hear an OMB Review of Governor's FY20 and 21 Supplemental Amendments bringing all budget bills before them: [SB 152](#) Operating Budget; [SB 153](#) Mental Health Budget; [SB 154](#) Capital Budget; and [SB 174](#) Supplemental/Reapprop.

Friday at 7:45am, SHSS FINSUB will review the Division of Public Assistance

BILLS

Bills were being read across the floor during each session last week - 28 were introduced Friday! This is in anticipation of Monday the 24th, the last day for legislation to be introduced by individual legislators.

Here are a few of them:

[HB 250](#) Voter Registration Age sponsored by Rep. Hopkins was referred to STA, JUD. The bill would allow Alaskans who are 16 years old to pre-register to vote. The Division of Elections would officially register participants in the program as an active voter 90 days before they turn 18. Voter pre-registration is common across the United States. 23 states and the District of Columbia offer some form of preregistration before an individual reaches 18.

[HB 255](#) Food Stamps; Work Requirements; Time Limits sponsored by Rep. Josephson and referred to HSS. The bill requires DHSS to request, accept, and attempt to renew or extend a waiver under U.S.C. 2015(o)(4) of the work requirements and time limits applicable to an able-bodied adult without dependents to the maximum extent allowed under federal law and regulations for each area of the state.

If the waiver is granted, the department shall implement the waiver and may not establish a more stringent work requirement or time limit than allowed under the waiver.

[HB 260](#) State Education Policy; Early Childhood sponsored by Rep. Tarr and referred to EDC, HSS. The bill adds a section to AS 14.03.015 State Education Policy to acknowledge and take into account the principles of early childhood and youth brain development and, whenever possible, consider the concepts of early adversity, toxic stress, childhood trauma, and the promotion of resilience through protective relationships, supports, self-regulation, and services.

[HB 261](#) Mental Health Screening; Foster Care sponsored by Rep. Tarr and referred to HSS, FIN adds providing mental health screening to the requirements of foster parents for the children in their care.

[HB 262](#) Municipal Elections in October or November sponsored by Rep. Rasmussen and referred to CRA, STA allows elections to be held the first Tuesday of October or November as provided by ordinance or charter.

[HB 265](#) Insulin Coverage; Insurance; Medicaid sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz and referred to HSS, L&C prohibits an insurer from charging an insured a combined total of more than \$100 in cost sharing, deductibles, and copayments for coverage of a 30-day supply of a prescription drug containing insulin that is used to treat diabetes, except as necessary to qualify a plan as a high deductible health plan eligible for a health savings account tax deduction under 26 U.S.C. 223 (Internal 2 Revenue Code).

[HB 266](#) Foster Care Bill of Rights sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz and referred to HSS, FIN amends the uncodified laws of the state to enumerate a bill of rights for children in state foster care.

[HB 267](#) Short-term Health Insurance sponsored by Rep. Zulkosky and referred to HSS, L&C lists the types of services/conditions an insurer must cover if offering short-term limited-duration insurance; when an insurer may offer the coverage; to whom it may not be offered; outlines how the annual maximum cost sharing shall be adjusted; and, provides definitions of terms

[HB 269](#) School Employee Breaks; Nursing Mothers sponsored by Rep. Hopkins and referred to EDC, L&C requires school districts with more the 50 employees to provide breaks and a place other than a bathroom for nursing mothers to express milk.

[HCR 14](#) sponsored by Rep. Tuck and referred to CRA proclaims March 2020 as Brain Injury Awareness Month

[SB 199](#) Nonpartisan Elections for Legislature sponsored by Sen. Begich and referred to STA, JUD requires the division of elections to prepare and provide a nonpartisan primary election ballot and allows a voter, regardless of party affiliation, to vote a nonpartisan primary election ballot for legislative races. Candidates for governor, Lt. governor and national legislative office will still have party affiliations designated after their names.

[SB 213](#) Coercion; Marriage sponsored by Sen. Begich and referred to JUD, STA adds *compels or induces another person to enter into a marriage without consent* to the crime of coercion; defines marriage as a civil contract entered into by two natural persons (deletes one man and one woman) and requires each person to be either 18, emancipated, or active duty military.

Further, the bill repeals AS 25.05.171. Persons Capable of Consenting to Marriage: Minimum Ages, and Consent of Parents or Guardian which currently allows a 16 year old to marry with consent of their parents.

Hearings for the week of the 24th:

[SB 47](#) Physical/Occupational Therapy Bd/Practice will be heard **Monday at 9am in SFIN**

Public testimony will be taken.

[SB 179](#) Nursing; Licensure; Multistate Compact will be heard **Friday at 1:30pm in SHSS.**

SSTA will be busy **Tuesday afternoon at 3:30pm** they'll be hearing [SJR 14](#) Constitutional Amend. Votes Needed for Veto Override; [SB 101](#) Establishing March 12 as Ashley Johnson-Barr Day; and [SJR 18](#) Women's Suffrage (celebrating 100 years).

[SB 6](#) Pre-K/Elementary ED Programs/Funding/Reading sponsored by Sen. Begich passed from SEDC on the 17th and is scheduled in **SFIN on Wednesday at 9am.**

Wednesday at 1:30pm SHSS will hear [SJR 13](#) Constitutional Amendment Prohibit Abortion/Funding sponsored by Sen. Hughes. The bill calls for a resolution to be placed before the voters to amend the state constitution: Section 26. Abortion. To protect human life, nothing in this constitution may be construed to secure or protect a right to an abortion or require the State to fund an abortion. *Public testimony will be taken*

[HB 27](#) Regulation of Flame Retardant Chemicals will be heard in **HL&C on Wednesday at 3:15pm.**

Thursday at 8am, HCRA will hear [HB 221](#) State Recognition of Tribes and at **9am, SEDC** will hear [SB 136](#) State-Tribal Education Compact Schools.

HHSS has a heavy load on **Thursday at 3pm** hearing [HB 242](#) Prescription of Opioids; Database; [HB 189](#) Child in Need of Aid; Notice of Placement; [HB 184](#) Controlled Substances Data; Exempt Veterinarian.

HEDC takes a turn on **Friday at 8am** hearing [HB 181](#) Public Schools; Mental Health Education; [HB 155](#) AK Performance Scholarship: Eligibility; [HB 136](#) Public Schools; Social/Emotional Learning (*public testimony will be taken*); [HB 260](#) State Education Policy; Early Childhood.

[SB 120](#) Administration of Psychotropic Medication will be heard in **SHSS at 1:30pm on Friday.**

HL&C finishes out the week *taking public testimony at 3:15pm* on [HB 24](#) Limited Teacher Certificates; Languages and [HB 91](#) Naturopaths; Licensing; Practice.

GOVERNOR'S CORNER

The governor's office will post press releases and other items of interest here: [Press Releases](#)

The Governor appointed a working group on the Alaska Marine Highway System: [AMHS working group](#). The work group is tasked with providing recommendations on the future finances and services levels of the AMHS.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Tuesday at 8am HTribalAffairs will hear a presentation on the Indian Self-Determination Act and **HCRA** will hear a presentation on The Community Services Fund by Nils Andraessen, Alaska Municipal League.

Tuesday at 3pm HHSS will hear a presentation on Alaska Health Care: A Changing Landscape with representatives from the Alaska State Hospital & Nursing Home Association and the Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness.

Thursday at 8am HTribalAffairs will hear a presentation on Equity in Rural Alaska.

Thursday at 3pm HSTA will hear a presentation about Alaska's Rehabilitation & Reentry.

And finally, on **Thursday at 5:15pm the Children's Caucus** will hear from the Alaska Early Childhood Education Advocacy Group.

Lunch and Learn

Tuesday 1) "To Keep as One" a film screening of one family's story of the Newtok relocation followed by Q&A with filmmakers & the Newtok Village Council.

2) How the Alaska Permanent Fund works, how the PFD formula functions & the new POMV & PFD laws by Ed King, King Economics Group (this will be repeated as a lunch and learn on Wednesday).

Thursday Early Childhood Education with representatives from the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership; Thread; Best Beginnings and RurAL CAP.

Friday History & Operations of Gavel Alaska by Bill Legere & Jeremy Hsieh.

Confirmation Hearings

Monday at 9am SFIN will hear from Anita Halterman and Rhonda Boyles-Alaska Mental Health Trust Board of Trustees.

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 February 24-29, 2020

[Weekly 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 [Gavel](#)

Streaming Video

[Live Now](#)

Testifying

Legislative Information Office (LIO) [LIO Offices](#)

In Juneau: see committee hearing list for room numbers

NEW CALL-IN NUMBERS

- From Anchorage: 907-563-9085
- From Juneau: 907-586-9085
- From Anywhere Else: 844-586-9085

~ End of Report ~

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