2019 CAPITOL CURRENTS

31st Alaska State Legislature ~ 1st Session

Fifth Edition – 2/11 to 2/17/19

– 57 Days to go! –

~ We have a Speaker!
The Governor's new budget arrived.
Now for the hard part ~

HIGHLIGHTS

Rep. Bryce Edgmon of Dillingham was elected House Speaker after two more Republicans crossed the line (Reps Kopp and Johnston). Since then, three new R's have joined the Coalition Majority giving it a total of 25 members and some room to run.

This is Speaker Edgmon's second time at the helm.

Reps. Wilson and Foster will chair House Finance. Rep. Thompson is the Majority Leader. Rep. Kopp got Rules. Rep. Lance Pruitt will chair the 15-member GOP minority caucus.

The Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional a state law and regulations that attempt to define what is a "medically necessary" abortion for Medicaid purposes.

GOVERNOR'S CORNER

The governor's office will post press releases and other items of interest here:
https://gov.alaska.gov/

Governor Dunleavy ordered United States and Alaska state flags to fly at half-staff in honor of former Lt. Governor Coghill who passed away on Feb. 14th at the age of 93. The flags will stay at half-staff until sunrise the day following his memorial service.

BUDGET ISSUES

Governor Dunleavy launched his plan to deeply cut state spending, overhaul major government functions and eliminate programs. FY 2020 Amended Budget Proposal - scroll down to review particular items.

Health care, education, marine highways, pioneer homes, senior and children's programs, homeless support, the arts and public media are in the cut mix, among other things. New budget documents say that about 420 full time positions would be cut.

Public Education takes a big hit – 23% to the base student allocation (per-student school funding). The University loses 41%. Medicaid expansion still alive but there may be benefit adjustments. Medicaid overall lost $714 million 30%. Ferries may be privatized.

Corrections budget is about what it was in 2018. But there are plans to save more by shipping 500 inmates outside.

Several programs are targeted for elimination including: Head Start ($ 6,853 million); Parents as Teachers ($474.7); Early Childhood grants ($1,200 million); Best Beginnings ($320.0); Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families ($17 million); the Senior Benefits Program ($20 million) providing small monthly stipends to seniors living at 75% to 150% of the federal poverty level; Community Initiative Grants (homeless shelter, food bank, grants etc.) ($861.0); the PFD Hold Harmless for those on public assistance-meaning they may lose benefits for the PFD month of October ($15 million); Human Services Community Matching Grants (food, shelter, domestic violence grants to municipalities) ($1.3 million); Medicaid Preventative Dental ($8.2 million); Public Broadcasting ($3.5 million); and Alaska Legal Services ($750.0).

The amended budget also reduces Adult Public Assistance ($14.7 million, or 23%) that provides financial assistance for basic living expenses to needy elderly, blind, or disabled Alaska as well as burial assistance per indigent recipient ($600.0).

Public Health Nursing, the backbone of Alaska's public health system, is reduced by $2 million. It raises Pioneer Home rates residents must pay - $34.0 million reduction to the general fund subsidy. This will be offset by a $15.0 million safety net program to assure those currently in Pioneer homes are not thrown out.

There may be up to 25 accompanying pieces of legislation that must be enacted for all the Governors budget plans to fall into place. Proposed revenue increases include $400 million now collected by boroughs and cities through property taxes on oil and gas infrastructure that would be diverted to state coffers. The North Slope Borough uses this money for most of its budget.

Angst abounds in the halls and on the streets. But the conversation has just begun.

Detailed budget presentations are scheduled at 9:00am in SFIN each morning next week. DHSS is on the docket for Friday.

Senate budget subcommittees are also scheduled:

Tuesday	1:00pm DEED
Tuesday	2:00pm University
Wednesday	3:30pm Judiciary
Wednesday	5:15pm Corrections

BILLS ON THE MOVE

Crime bills continue front and center:

SB 12 Assault; Sex Offenses; Sentencing Credit sponsored by Sen. Micciche and SB 35 Crimes; Sex Crimes; Sentencing; Parole-Gov's bill - are being heard at **1:30pm on Monday and Friday in SJUD**

SB 33 Arrest; Release; Sentencing; Probation and SB 34 Probation; Parole; Sentences; Credits, both Gov's bills, are being heard at **3:30pm on Tuesday and Thursday in SSTA** - *public testimony will start at approx. 6pm on Tuesday*

SB 7 Medical Assistance Work Requirement, sponsored by Sen. Micciche, receives its second hearing in **SHSS on Wednesday at 1:30pm**

SB 53 University Reporting Requirements for Accreditation, sponsored by Sen. Stevens, will be heard in **SEDC on Thursday at 9:00am** The bill requires the Board of Regents to prepare and

present to the legislative committees having jurisdiction over education a biennial report, not later than the 30th legislative day of the first regular session of each legislature, that indicates the national, regional, and programmatic accreditation status of the university and describes the efforts the university has made to achieve and maintain accreditation.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Senators Murkowski and Sullivan will make their annual addresses before joint sessions next week. Lisa on Tuesday at 11 am. Dan on Thursday at 11:00 am.

Alaska's Chief Justice Bolger is slated to give the State of the Judiciary address Wednesday at 11am.

SEDC will hear from Dr. Larry Hinzman, UAF Chancellor of Research, **Tuesday at 9:00am**, on "The Power of University Research"

SL&C will be hearing about "Innovation in Alaska" from Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld & Asta Kristin SigurJonsdottiron **Tuesday at 1:30pm**

Rep. Hannan sponsors a Lunch & Learn on **Wednesday at noon** discussing the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact with guest speakers - Melanie Bahnke, President/CEO, Kawerak; Nicole Borromeo, Exec. Vice President & General Counsel, AFN; Lynn Biggs, Senior Director & Strategic Consultant, Casey Family Programs; and Natalie Norberg, Director, Office of Children's Services

Suzanne DiPietro will present on the Alaska Judicial Council and Kathy Monfreda will update **SJUD** on the Uniform Crime Reporting Annual Report on **Wednesday at 1:30pm**

SSTA on Thursday at 3:30pm will hold a confirmation hearing for Commissioner-Designee Tshibaka with the Department of Administration

WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

Website-Daily Committee Hearings for February 18-23, 2019
Hearing Calendar

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 360 North

Streaming Video
alaskalegislaturetv

Testifying
Legislative Information Office (LIO) LIO Offices
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

~ End of Report ~

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