

# 2020 CAPITOL CURRENTS

31<sup>st</sup> Alaska State Legislature ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Session

Sixth Edition

2/29/2020

## Budget Progress!

~The Legislature & Governor are Starting to Struggle With How to Make Ends Meet ~

## HIGHLIGHTS

The House accepted the Governor's supplemental bill, [House Bill 234](#), passing it this week on a 35-2 vote. If approved, it would be one of the largest spending increases of its kind in state history.

The Governor's bill approves spending \$298.6 million of unrestricted general funds and an overall total of \$526.2 million of state and federal money.

See the Budget section below for spending highlights.

Prior to the vote, Rep. Eastman introduced an amendment that would have removed \$5,000 meant to go to a court settlement with Planned Parenthood. Rep. Eastman went on to discuss abortion rather than specific appropriations within the bill.

After an extended break, Speaker Edgmon called the House back to order and discussion of the bill ended with a near unanimous vote of approval.

Republicans have introduced several anti-abortions bills this session including three introduced Monday. One, [HB 302](#), by Rep. Vance, with 16 co-sponsors, would prohibit abortions after a heartbeat is detected. Other states have introduced similar bills that can ban abortions as early as six weeks into pregnancy.

[HB 283](#), the Born Alive Protection Act by Rasmussen, guarantees medical care to infants that are born alive due to a failed abortion. [HB 284](#) by Rep. Rasmussen, prohibits late term abortions.

Another, [SJR 13](#) by Senator Hughes, proposes an amendment to the Alaska constitution: "To protect 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 was taken this week and it's scheduled for its 2<sup>nd</sup> hearing and more **public testimony on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at 1:30pm in SHSS**.

None are expected to pass this year.

A poll by Planned Parenthood conducted in September with 500 Alaskan voters says that 59% identify as pro-choice, including 34% Republicans.

Nearly 8 in 10 don't want to see abortion bans. 58% say women should have access to all forms of reproductive health care options, including abortion.

83% said there should be access to birth control for those who want or need it, including 7 in 10 R's. Almost everybody supports Sex education.

UAA bit the bullet and proposed 19 programs for elimination or suspension in response to last year's big budget cuts. There will be opportunities to talk about it with students and others before the Board makes final decisions in June. Passionate concerns abound.

See the list here: [UAA expedited program review](#)

Corrections Commissioner Nancy Dahlstrom said earlier the State was seeking contracts to house up to 500 inmates outside Alaska, with a possible extension for up to 750. Followed by a big backlash. Since then, they appear to have found several in-state solutions to increase space.

Recall Election signature gathering has officially commenced pending the final judicial decision. Booklets have been delivered and supporters are on the streets.

## **BUDGET ISSUES**

The supplemental bill submitted by the Governor and approved by the House includes:

- \$120 million of state funds and \$143.4 million of federal funds for Medicaid provider payments, spending necessary due to the governor's unsuccessful attempt to implement drastic reductions to the Medicaid program;
- \$8.3 million to restore the Adult Preventive Dental Program, which the governor vetoed last year;
- \$6 million to help the Alaska Psychiatric Institute increase its capacity;
- \$8.6 million to restore Adult Public Assistance to ensure payments for low-income Alaskans, which the governor vetoed last year;
- \$150,000 to re-open the District Attorney's Office in Utqiagvik.
- \$6.7 million for the Department of Public Safety to address a shortfall within the Alaska State Troopers and Alaska Wildlife Troopers due to a lower than expected vacancy rate;
- \$3 million to address the severe damage caused in Anchorage, Kenai, and Mat-Su by the December 2018 earthquake;
- \$7.1 million for the Alaska Marine Highway System to avoid a reduction in the operating schedule for the spring and summer of this year;
- \$110.5 million to pay for wildland firefighting costs incurred last summer and fall;

Meanwhile, **the HFIN committee passed the operating and mental health budgets** from committee on Friday. Both bills may hit the Floor next week.

Goldman Sachs, and now JP Morgan Chase, are saying no to Arctic oil and gas investment citing support for low carbon, clean or cleaner energy. In response, the state dumped a \$1B plan to finance bonds through Goldman to pay off delinquent oil and gas tax credits.

## Budget Hearings for the week of February 24<sup>th</sup>

**SDOC FINSUB** meets **Monday at 7:45am** to discuss Inmate Health & Rehabilitation.

**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. *Public testimony will be taken.*

[HB 234](#) the supplemental/re-appropriations bill, passed the House this week and is scheduled for its first hearing in **SFIN** on **Wednesday at 9am**.

**SHSS FINSUB** meets on **Thursday at 7:45am** to discuss Behavioral Health; Behavioral Health Grants and the Medicaid 1115 Waiver.

The capital budget, [SB 154](#), is scheduled in **SFIN** on **Thursday at 9am**. The committee will also receive a deferred maintenance update.

**SEDC FINSUB** meets on **Thursday at 1pm** to discuss the department's budget.

**SHSS FINSUB** meets again on **Friday at 7:45am** to discuss Senior Health, Pioneer Homes, and Senior & Disabilities Services.

## BILLS

[HB 29](#) by Rep. Spohnholz is now in Senate Rules, ready for a floor vote. It requires health insurers to cover telemedicine services in Alaska. Also good for the economy and should trigger investments in hardware and software by medical providers.

### Hearings for the week of March 2<sup>nd</sup>:

**Monday** we have **HJUD at 1pm** hearing [HB 198](#) Aggravating Factors at Sentencing, *Public testimony will be taken*; and, **HFIN at 1:30pm** hearing [HB 182](#) Sexual Assault Examination Kits; Testing.

**Tuesday morning at 8am** HCRA will here [HB 221](#) State Recognition of Tribes, *Public testimony will be taken.*

**Tuesday afternoon** is busy. HHSS, HSTA are meeting 3pm and SSTA starts at 3:30pm.

**HHSS** will hear [HB 183](#) Alaska Psychiatric Institute; [HB 86](#) Mental Health Hospital: Contracts/Bids; and [HB 184](#) Controlled Substances Data; Exempt Veterinarian.

**HSTA** will hear [HB 250](#) Voter Registration Age.

**SSTA** will hear [SJR 18](#) Women's Suffrage (celebrating 100 years); [HB 83](#) Prohibit Voting by Facsimile (*public testimony will be taken*); [SB 165](#) Prostitution/Trafficking; Vacate Convictions; and [SB 137](#) Extend Board of Parole.

**Wednesday at 9am HFIN** will hear [HJR 15](#) Constitutional Amend. Votes Needed for Veto Override; and at **3:15pm HL&C** will hear [HB 27](#) Regulation of Flame Retardant Chemicals.

**Thursday at 8am, HCRA** will hear [HCR 14](#) declaring March 2020 as Brain Injury Awareness Month.

**Thursday afternoon at 3:30pm, SSTA** will hear the Senate version of the sexual assault examination kits testing bill, [SB 133](#) and [SB 97](#) Art in Public Buildings & Facilities.

**Friday morning both S&HFIN will be meeting at 9am** and will be hearing several bills. HFIN will hear [HB 187](#) Restrict Out-of-State Correctional Facilities while SFIN hears [SB 30](#) College Credit for High School Students.

**HJUD meets at 1pm** to hear [HB 290](#) Alternative to Arrest; Mental Health Center for the first time.

**SHSS meets at 1:30pm** to hear [SB 120](#) Administration of Psychotropic Medication; [SB 179](#) Nursing; Licensure; Multistate Compact and [SJR 13](#) Constitutional Amendment Prohibit Abortion/Funding.

### **GOVERNOR'S CORNER**

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

The Governor announced his next Town Hall Meeting. It will be Monday, March 2 at Chugiak High School. The Governor's Conversations with Alaskans town hall event in Chugiak are open to the public. Location details are as follows.

**WHO:** Governor Mike Dunleavy, the people of Alaska  
**WHAT:** Conversations with Alaskans, town hall meeting  
**WHEN:** Monday, March 2, 2020 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Chugiak High School Auditorium, 16525 S Birchwood Loop Rd., Chugiak

The Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) was named a recipient of the 2019 Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award by Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilke.

The OVA was recognized for efforts made by the Alaska Coalition for Veterans & Military Families in Suicide Awareness and Prevention.

### **ITEMS OF INTEREST**

**HHSS** will hear a presentation on Addressing the Gaps in the Crisis Psychiatric Response System by DHSS and LAW, **Thursday at 3pm** and then hear [HB 183](#) Alaska Psychiatric Institute and [HB 86](#) Mental Health Hospital: Contracts/Bids. Both have *opportunities for public testimony*.

#### **Lunch and Learns**

**Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>** hear about Rural Tribal Broadband by Dana Shaffer, Deputy Bureau Chief of Wireless Telecommunications, FCC.

**Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>** hear about the challenges facing the workforce that helps seniors & people with disabilities, & the solutions the Mental Health Trust & partner organizations are implementing by Eric Boyer, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority; Kim Champney, Champney Consulting; April Kyle, Alaska Behavioral Health Association; and Michael Bailey, Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities.

**Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>** hear Shining a Light on Youth Mental Illness by Dr. Joanne Gartenberg, Bartlett Regional Hospital; Rachael Woods, Juneau Youth Services; Jason Lessard, Anchorage NAMI; and Natalie Fraser & Zoe Kaplan, Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling.

### **Confirmation Hearings**

**SEDC** meets on Tuesday at 9am to consider Keith Hamilton and Lorri Van Diest for the Board of Education & Early Development.

**SL&C** meets on Tuesday at 1pm to consider John Lloyd for the Board of Chiropractic Examiners; Hannah St. George for the Board of Direct-Entry Midwives; Emily Schubert and Wendy Monrad for the Board of Nursing; and Brandon Ercanbrack for the Board of Social Work Examiners.

**SL&C** will also discuss [SB 172](#), Extending the State Medical Board through June 30, 2025.

**SJUD** meets on Friday at 1:30pm to consider Leitoni “Lei” Tupou for the State Board of Parole and Robert Sheldon for the Commission on Judicial Conduct.

## **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 March 2-7, 2020

[Weekly 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 [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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