

2018 CAPITOL CURRENTS

30th Alaska State Legislature ~ 2nd Session

Fourth Edition – 2/5 to 2/11/18

64 days to go

~ Governor Walker appoints Randal Kowalke to Senate ~

HIGHLIGHTS

Mr. Kowalke a Republican has served on the Mat-Su Borough Assembly since 2015. He is a retired businessman who worked in oilfield services and telecommunications.

By law, when a legislative seat is vacated, the Governor has the authority to choose any resident of that district as a replacement so long as they are a member of the same political party of the previous representative.

This replacement is subject to confirmation by a majority of members of the Senate who are in the same political party. We expect that to happen next week.

The House Finance Committee Room will officially be named after former State Rep. and Senator Al “Sikiagruk” Adams during a ceremony to be held in the room at 4:00pm on February 13th.

Al Adams was the last sole chairman of the House Finance Committee and one of Alaska’s most influential lawmakers.

[SR 7](#) passed the Senate on Friday and is on its way to the Governor for signature. SR7 dedicates the fourth floor Senate conference room of the Alaska State Capitol to the late Senate President Jan Faiks.

Faiks was the first woman in the history of the United States to be elected presiding officer of a state legislative body. She served as Senate President in 1987 and 1988.

The last day for individual legislators to introduce legislation is coming up fast—**February 19th!**

Bills can still be introduced, but only if introduced by a committee.

BUDGET ISSUES

Departmental Budget Overviews start to wind down this week. **Some** of the subcommittees will be taking amendments.

To find hearing times/dates click here: [Daily Schedule](#)

[HB 287](#) the education budget bill, sponsored by Rep. Seaton and co-sponsored by all the **House Majority**, passed and was transmitted to the Senate this past week.

The super majority vote needed to access funds from the CBR failed - more to come as the bill looks to get scheduled in the Senate finance over the next few weeks.

Rep. Claman's [HB 296](#), was heard and held in HHSS Thursday afternoon. In addition to an appropriation from the Marijuana Tax Fund to the Divisions of Public Health and Behavioral Health, HB 296 would allow an even distribution to go to the Alaska Children's Trust for grant distribution.

[HB 236](#), Rep. Kawasaki's bill to extend the Senior Benefits Payment program passed the House and was referred to FIN in the Senate. Sixteen senators signed on as cross-sponsors of the bill.

[SB 141](#) Biennial Budget will have its first hearing Feb. 13th at 3:30 pm in SSTA. Public Testimony will be taken. The bill would require the Legislature pass a budget by the 90th day of a session.

If not passed, starting with the 91st day, legislators would forfeit per diem and their salaries would be withheld until a budget was passed. The Governor's salary would be withheld for as long as she or he was late in submitting a budget bill after the December 15 statutory deadline.

Further, the legislation proposes changing Alaska's budget process from annual to biennial. The Governor would be required to introduce an operating, capital and mental health budget in the first session of each legislature that provides funding for two fiscal years.

The Legislature would pass a two-year budget by the 90th day of the first session.

[SJR 2](#), would cap the constitutional spending limit for the state's operating budget at four billion three hundred million dollars. The bill was heard and held in STA last March. It is scheduled for a hearing Thursday at 3:30pm.

To learn more about the proposed constitutional amendment click here: [SJR 2 Documents](#)

On Friday at 1:30pm, the HFIN committee will hear from Pat Pitney regarding the Governor's budget amendments for the operating, mental health and capital budgets.

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has calculated the federal contribution to the Alaska Reinsurance Program for calendar year 2018 will be approximately \$58.5 million.

The Alaska Legislature established the [Alaska Reinsurance Program](#) in 2016 to reinsure claims for Alaskans with high-cost medical conditions, which reduces the premiums for over 18,000 Alaskans in the individual market.

The Division of Insurance then pursued a [1332 innovation waiver](#) to pass the federal savings from reduced Affordable Care Act tax credits back to the state to offset the price of the reinsurance program.

When Alaska's innovation waiver was approved in July 2017, the estimated award was \$322.6 million over five years, with the exact amount to be calculated by the federal government each year.

The annual CMS calculation for 2018 is subject to final administrative determination by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

While none of the abortion bills introduced to date have received hearings, Rep. LeDoux has introduced another one. [HJR 32](#) proposes to amend Alaska's constitution by adding a new section stating the constitution does not prohibit the legislature or the people from requiring notice to and the consent of the parent or legal guardian of a minor before the minor's pregnancy is terminated. The resolution has been referred to HSS, STA and JUD.

[HCR 2](#) Respond to Adverse Childhood Experiences sponsored by Rep. Tarr moved from HSTA last week. It's on its way to RLS.

[SB 105](#) sponsored by Senator Wilson moved from SL&C. It was amended to extend the effective date from January 1, 2018 to January 1, 2019. The bill will allow Marital & Family Therapists to bill Medicaid for certain services. It's next committee is FIN.

Crimes Against Medical Professionals, [HB 312](#), sponsored by Rep. Claman moved from HJUD. The bill allows peace officers to make warrantless arrests for certain 4th degree assaults committed at health care facilities and adds an aggravating factor for consideration at sentencing if certain felony crimes are committed at health care facilities against health care professionals. It's on its way to RLS.

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

[HB 214](#) sponsored by Rep. Drummond moved from EDC. The bill will name a section of the Safe Children's Act after Bree Moore. It's on its way to RLS.

GOVERNOR'S CORNER

Nominations have opened for the 2018 First Lady's Volunteer of the Year Awards. First Lady Bella Hammond started the tradition of recognizing Alaska volunteers who have displayed an extraordinary personal commitment to volunteer service, and have made a major impact on their community or state in 1975.

Nominations are due by Monday, March 5th. They may be submitted online at [First Lady Volunteer Awards](#) or hard copies are available for pick up at the Governor's Offices in Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks, and Palmer. The First Lady's Volunteer of the Year Executive Committee will review the nominations, and recipients will be announced in late May.

WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

Check the committee calendar the day of the scheduled hearing as sometimes a bill is rescheduled at the last minute

Daily Committee Hearings for 2018 [Meetings](#)

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 Gavel](#)

Streaming Video: [Live Now](#)

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

From Anchorage: (907) 563-9085; From Juneau: (907) 586-9085; all others: (844)586-9085

HEARINGS OF INTEREST

If you want to share your opinions/concerns about a particular piece of legislation, look for hearings where the committees list public testimony being taken. That's your chance!

Comments are usually time-limited (between 2-3 minutes). Written comments are taken too and can be of any length.

Board extensions hearings continue this week with [HB 302](#) the **Board of Professional Counselors**, [HB 318](#) the **Board of Social Work Examiners** and [HB 323](#) the **Board of Pharmacy** in HFIN at 1:30pm on Monday; and [HB 273](#) the **Marijuana Control Board**, [HB 274](#) the **Board of Psychologists/Psych Assoc.**, [HB 275](#) the **Board of Massage Therapists** and [HB 280](#) the **Board of Marital & Family Therapy** in HFIN on Tuesday at 1:30pm.

[SB 171](#) Child Abuse; Training Programs; Bree's Law, is scheduled for a hearing in SEDC, Monday the 12th at 8:00am. The bill is sponsored by request of the Governor and names Bree's Law; expands both the list of people required to be trained to recognize child abuse and the training contents; and also addresses general crisis response training for school personnel.

The Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force is giving a report to the SJUD committee on Monday at 1:30pm and to the HHSS committee Tuesday afternoon at 3:00pm Jared Parish and BJ Coopes are scheduled to present.

[HB 264](#) introduced by Rep. Josephson would institute a 20 cent per disposable bag fee on disposable shopping bags. It would also require retailers to setup a place for patrons to recycle their disposable bags. Its first hearing is scheduled for Tuesday at 8:00am in HCRA.

A joint Resources committee will be held Tuesday over the noon hour for members to hear an update on Alaska's Mining Industry & Projects.

Wednesday morning at 8am a joint EDC committee meeting will be held to receive the State Board of Education & Early Development's annual report to the Legislature.

[HB 240](#) Pharmacy Benefits Managers is scheduled for a hearing in HFIN on Wednesday at 1:30pm. Public testimony will be taken. Learn more about PBMs and the need for parameters on their practices under the bill's document tab here: [HB 240 documents](#)

Tune in to a presentation by the Office of Children's Services on the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact at 1:30pm Wednesday in SHSS.

HHSS will be hearing [HB 268](#) Opioid Prescription Warnings on Thursday at 3:00pm.

Friday morning at 9am, SFIN will take up [SB 15](#) E-Cigarettes: Sale to and Possession by Minors.

LINKS OF INTEREST

[2018 Legislative Contacts](#)

[Toll-free Numbers for Legislators](#)

[Summary of Alaska Legislation 2017](#)

~ End of Report ~

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