

# 2018 CAPITOL CURRENTS

30<sup>th</sup> Alaska State Legislature ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Session

Sixth Edition – 2/19 – 2/25

**50 days to go**

*~ A sigh of relief ...and then... an eye roll~*

## HIGHLIGHTS

Monday was the last day for individual legislators to introduce bills. Floor sessions came and went and several of us let out a sigh of relief—a few bills had been added to the list, but not that many. Then came Wednesday and in the House alone, 36 bills and 8 resolutions were dropped!

What happened? The deadline for bill introduction was 5pm Monday, so the first opportunity for those bills submitted after the Monday Floor Sessions to be introduced was Wednesday's Session.

Governor Walker appointed Mike Shower of Wasilla to represent District E in the Alaska Senate. Senate Republicans confirmed Shower's appointment on Thursday.

Mr. Shower is a Republican who rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel during two decades of service as a pilot in the United States Air Force, and he currently flies for FedEx.

Walker also appointed Tiffany Zulkosky to fill the vacant District 38 seat in the House of Representatives. The House Democrats confirmed Zulkosky's appointment on Friday.

Ms. Zulkosky is currently vice president of communications for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Previously, she served as Bethel's mayor, was a director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Western Alaska, and worked as rural director for former U.S. Sen. Mark Begich.

Reps Tarr and Millett introduced legislation this week to create a Commission for Women and Girls to identify legal problems that prevent women from earning equal pay for equal work in Alaska.

[HB 392](#) calls for the commission to determine best practices to promote economic, social, legal, and political justice for women and to create a report to be presented to the Governor and the Legislature every two years.

House and Senate legislators sent [a letter](#) to the Governor urging him to sign an executive order to prohibit state agencies from entering into contracts with internet service providers (ISPs) that violate the principles of net neutrality. The governors of Montana and New York recently signed similar executive orders.

Lawmakers requested the executive order state that to receive a state contract, an ISP shall not, with respect to any consumer in the state: block content, degrade internet traffic, engage in paid prioritization, or interfere with a user's ability to access content.

### **A Look Ahead:**

The Key Campaign will be in Juneau March 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. There will be a Key Campaign "March to the Steps" on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. All who wish to participate should meet at the Four Points Hotel at 11:30am.

**Key Coalition of Alaska** educates legislators about the importance of sustaining community-based services for people with disabilities and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) through their annual statewide Key Campaign advocacy efforts.

Click here to find out about Rallies in your area on March 2<sup>nd</sup>: [Community Rallies](#)

## **BUDGET ISSUES**

Check here to find Senate Budget Subcommittee meeting dates and times for the coming week:  
[Daily Schedule](#)

The House Finance Committee will accept FY 2019 budget reports from each of the finance subcommittees on **Tuesday at 1:30 pm.**

**Public Comment** on the operating and mental health budgets will be taken Thursday, Friday and Saturday in House Finance. *Testimony is limited to two minutes per person.*

If testifying in person, try and arrive 15 minutes early for the sign-in process and definitely arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the end of the allotted time to testify in your community.

All callers must hang up immediately after testifying to help keep open lines available.  
Call (907) 465-4648 to obtain the call-in number for budget comments.

You can send in written comments to [housefinance@akleg.gov](mailto:housefinance@akleg.gov) before March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00pm.

## **House Finance Committee Operating and Mental Health Budgets Public Comment Schedule**

### **Thursday, March 1<sup>st</sup>**

1:00-3:00pm Homer, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Mat-Su and Seward  
3:15-4:45pm Utqiagvik, Dillingham and Fairbanks  
4:15-4:45pm Off Net sites (places that are not specifically listed on the comment schedule)

### **Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

1:00-2:30pm Juneau  
2:45-3:45pm Sitka, Petersburg, Delta Junction, Unalaska, Glennallen and Tok  
4:00-5:00pm Bethel, Cordova, Kotzebue, Nome, Valdez, Wrangell  
5:00-6:00pm Off Net sites

### **Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

9:00-10:00am Off Net sites  
10:15-11:45am Anchorage  
12:00-1:00pm Off Net sites

## HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES

The Department of Health and Social Services has released a regulations package regarding changes to the OCS Foster Care Licensing and OCS Payment regulations for Public Comment on the Online Public Notices site at: [OCS Regulations Package](#).

Written comments should be sent to: Tracy Spartz-Campbell at [tracy.spartz-campbell@alaska.gov](mailto:tracy.spartz-campbell@alaska.gov) or P.O. Box 110630, Attn. Tracy Spartz-Campbell, Juneau, AK 99811-0630.

*The comments must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on April 6, 2018.*

Oral or written comments also may be submitted at a hearing to be held on **March 9, 2018**, at the Frontier Building, Room 880, 3601 C Street, Anchorage, Alaska.

The hearing will be held from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. and might be extended to accommodate those present before 2 p.m. who did not have an opportunity to comment.

If you are unable to attend in person, but would like to comment during the oral public hearing, you can call **the teleconference number at 800-897-3316**.

### **So, what are some of those new bills?**

Two bills requiring able-bodied recipients of Medicaid to pursue employment, volunteer service or subsistence activities, as a condition of eligibility were introduced this week.

[HB 356](#) sponsored by Rep. Kopp and [SB 193](#) sponsored by Sen. Kelly direct the Department of Health and Social Services to apply for a section 1115 Waiver to establish work requirements for eligible adults. These bills may get hearings.

Medicaid recipients would be required to work, enroll in educational or training programs, volunteer, or engage in subsistence activities, for a minimum of 20 hours each week.

Recipients under 18 or over 65 years of age; those who are unable to work for medical reasons; pregnant women; and, other members of vulnerable groups are exempt from the requirements.

The bill further specifies that the work requirement does not prevent a recipient with a substance abuse disorder from obtaining appropriate treatment.

[HB 362](#) sponsored by Rep. Eastman is almost a companion to the above bills, but instead of requiring work to receive Medicaid, the bill requires a person to work to receive Food Stamps. I do not see this bill going anywhere.

[HB 364](#) Prohibit State Funded Sex Change Operations will not go anywhere either. The bill sponsored by Rep. Rauscher, would prohibit the Department of Corrections to pay for gender reassignment medical procedures for inmates; prohibit the Department of Administration to pay for gender reassignment medical procedures for state employees; and prohibit the Department of Health and Social Services to pay for the procedures through Medicaid.

On a more helpful note, [HB 358](#) Insurance Coverage for Telehealth sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz broadens health insurance coverage for telehealth services from just mental health to primary care and mental health care.

## Reproductive Rights

### Introduced this week:

[SB 198](#) UAA Long Acting Contraception Study sponsored by Sen. Kelly, requires the UAA Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies to conduct a study to evaluate the effectiveness of providing long-acting reversible contraception to women with substance abuse disorders who are at high risk for unintended pregnancies that may result in prenatal drug or alcohol exposure.

[SJR 14](#) is *already scheduled for a hearing next Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:30pm in SJUD*. Sponsored by Sen. Olson, the resolution proposes an amendment to Alaska's Constitution which would clarify that the constitution doesn't 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.

### Heard this week:

[SB 124](#) Abortion Procedures, Child Surrender, sponsored by Sen. Giessel passed from SHSS last week. Its next committee of referral is Jud. And a finance referral was added.

## GOVERNOR'S CORNER

On Friday, Governor Walker was joined by Ohio Governor John Kasich and Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper in announcing a framework to help guide future discussions on improving the nation's health care system.

The blueprint is the culmination of months of engagement and collaboration among the three governors' offices.

The bipartisan blueprint outlines multiple strategies for improving health system performance and lowering costs, informed by a set of key guiding principles and core beliefs. Click here to read the document: ["A Bipartisan Blueprint for Improving our Nation's Health System Performance"](#)

## WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

*Check the committee calendar the day of the scheduled hearing as sometimes a bill is rescheduled.*

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.*

The Legislature will meet in **joint session 11:00am Monday** to hear from Senator Dan Sullivan.

Also on Monday, SHSS will hear a presentation at **1:30pm** from the DHSS Office of Children's Services Citizen Review Panel and then hear [SB 122](#) which would move the Citizen's Review Panel from DHSS to the Ombudsman's Office.

### **Tuesday is a BUSY day!**

The Sexual and Other Workplace Harassment subcommittee will meet at 7am; there will be a presentation on Arts & Culture and Its Importance to Our Economy by Dr. Rosita Worl in HCRA; [SB 105](#) Marital and Family Therapists License and Services will be heard in SFIN at 9am; and it's expected that [HB 268](#) Opioid Prescription Information will pass from HHSS during the 3pm hearing.

Both STA committees have a full plate Tuesday afternoon. HSTA will hear [HCR 22](#) Sexual Assault Awareness Month; [HB 184](#) Discrimination; Gender ID; Sexual Orientation; and, [HJR 1](#), Constitutional Amendment to Repeal Marriage Section.

SSTA will hear the Senate version of the Sexual Assault Awareness Month resolution- [SCR 17](#); [SB 204](#); special license plates for disabled Veterans; and, [SB 192](#), Voting; Address Confidentiality; Fees.

**Commissioner Valerie Davidson** will be highlighted in two hearings this week. At 3:15pm on Tuesday, HSTA will hold a confirmation hearing to approve her as the successor to the Lt. Governor if such an appointment were to become necessary.

On Thursday at 3:00pm in HHSS [HB 290](#) Criminal Justice Commission: Membership will be heard. The bill will give voting rights to the **DHSS commissioner** and allow a resident of the state who has been the **victim of a felony crime** under AS 11 to be appointed by the governor to serve on the Commission for a three-year term.

[HB 339](#), Increase the Base Student Allocation is scheduled in HEDC and [HB 214](#), Bree's Law will be in SEDC on Wednesday. Both hearings start at 8am.

[HB 75](#), Rep. Tarr's Gun Violence Protective Orders receives its first hearing in HJUD, Wednesday at 1:00pm.

[HB 43](#), New Drugs for the Terminally Ill is in its last committee of referral and is scheduled for a hearing in SJUD at 1:30pm Wednesday afternoon.

The bill would allow terminally ill patients who have exhausted other available treatments and do not qualify for clinical trials to gain faster access to safe, but experimental.

By providing certain immunities to prescribing physicians, manufacturers and distributors acting in good faith, this bill would allow terminal patients, in consultation with their doctor, the freedom to try new treatments without the burden of waiting for federal approval.

There will be a **Key Campaign** presentation before HHSS Thursday afternoon at 3pm and SHSS on Friday at 1:30pm.

SJUD wraps up the week considering the appointment of Dennis “Skip” Cook to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics.

Then the first hearing on [SJR 14](#) Constitutional Amendment: Parental Consent to Abortion.

The last bill to be heard on Friday is [HB 312](#) Crimes Against Medical Professionals. SJUD is the only committee of referral HB 312.

### **LINKS OF INTEREST**

[2018 Legislative Contacts](#)

[Toll-free Numbers for Legislators](#)

**~ End of Report ~**

**Contact: Caren Robinson ([carenr@gci.net](mailto:carenr@gci.net))**