

2016 CAPITOL CURRENTS

29th Alaska State Legislature ~ 2nd Session

Fourth Edition – 2/15 to 2/21/16

56 days to go

Alaska mourns the passing of Alaska Representative Max Gruenberg

Gov. Amended budget restores Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, Pre-K Education grants

HIGHLIGHTS

Max F. Gruenberg, Jr. was the senior member of the House. **HR 6** was quickly transmitted to the governor. It dedicates in his honor the Capitol's House Judiciary Committee Room.

In her Annual address, US Senator Lisa Murkowski said that Congress reauthorized a new federal highway-spending bill that will bring over one-half billion dollars to Alaska for the next five years.

Next year, an additional \$561 million is slated for the construction and maintenance of various military installations in Alaska.

Dept. of Natural Resources Commissioner Mark Myers has announced he's retiring March 1st. Deputy Commissioner Marty Rutherford will head the department on an acting basis.

The Lt. Governor has declined a request by Alaska Democrats to allow candidates not affiliated with a political party to run in the Democratic primary. State law requires a candidate seeking a party's nomination to be a registered voter of that party.

Alaska Native civil rights leader Elizabeth Peratrovich was honored at an event that featured Lt. Governor Mallott.

Most Alaskans are sold on the existence and seriousness of global warming, but far fewer are convinced it's caused by human activity, according to a recent poll.

A current senate bill prohibits the University of Alaska Board of Regents from abridging the right to keep and bear arms.

On the other hand, in the Capitol building visitors are greeted with a sign that says: "No weapons or firearms except law enforcement officers."

A project that aims to deliver high-speed Internet to Northern and Western Alaska will get underway this summer. Stretching from Prudhoe Bay to Nome, cable will be laid on the seafloor off Alaska's northern and western coasts.

This is the first leg in a broader plan to connect Asia and Europe via a fiber-optic cable that cuts through the Arctic Ocean.

BUDGET ISSUES

Use of Permanent Fund earnings to fill our multi-billion dollar budget gap will continue to be scrutinized by lawmakers. All of the proposals on the table are complex, and will require careful review to ensure the fund is protected for future generations.

Three major bills will be compared this coming week in House Finance. You may want to tune in, as it should be very informative.

Brewers, bar owners, restaurant owners, distillers, bartenders and distributors showed a popular opposition front as the Alaska Senate's Labor and Commerce Committee took public testimony on a bill to double the state's alcohol taxes.

A proposal to make Alaska's tobacco taxes the fifth highest in the United States met a mixed reception from the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee as **SB 131** received its first look.

The new implementation of a system that distributes court documents through emails to Alaska lawyers and other agencies will serve as a bridge to the state court system's digital future -- and hopefully save money along the way.

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES

A surprising spike in the number of Alaska children in foster care appears rooted both in a heroin epidemic and a more aggressive response by the Alaska Office of Children's Services to reports of endangered children.

SB 179 was introduced this past week requiring doctors to determine whether a fetus could survive outside the womb before performing an abortion.

The bill also would add viable fetuses to the state's Child in Need of Aid (CINA) laws and allow them to be surrendered to the doctor or hospital employees if the woman is not willing or able to care for the child.

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

Alaska has a rape problem. According to the FBI's 2014 Crime in the United States report, Alaska reported an average of 104.7 rapes per 100,000 inhabitants, nearly three times the national average.

In a new report, the Department of Corrections says it needs more than 100 new employees to function properly, but doesn't have the budget to support even a modest addition.

Alaskans will be able to fill out applications for the first commercial marijuana licenses beginning on Feb. 24th. The state will use the Internet to track where marijuana is grown, processed, and sold so people will only be able to apply online.

The amended FY17 budget restores one trooper position for drug investigation and enforcement.

For the first one-year period on record - Oct. 1, 2014, through the end of September 2015 - the Coast Guard recorded zero operations-related commercial fishing fatalities in Alaska.

Through much of the 1980s, an average of 31 fishermen died in Alaska each year, according to a federal report.

NATURAL RESOURCES

A lack of progress between the state's producer partners on major Alaska LNG Project agreements may throw things off schedule. They continue to face low oil prices that challenge bottom lines.

This past week, John Sturgeon testified before the Senate Resources Committee. He is an Alaskan hunter arguing a state's rights case before the U.S. Supreme Court – all navigable rivers within national parks in Alaska are state-owned lands and not subject to federal enforcement.

GOVERNOR'S CORNER

<http://gov.alaska.gov>

Governor Bill Walker ordered all Alaska state flags to be lowered in honor of Representative Max Gruenberg who passed away last Sunday Feb. 14th.

This order ran concurrently with the previous order for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

IMPORTANT DATES

Feb. 29th – Senator Dan Sullivan will give his Annual Address before the Legislature.

March 8th – Nominations deadline for the 2016 Alaska First Lady's Volunteer of the Year Awards.

NEW DOCUMENTS

~ Report below is on file with both the House Clerk and Senate Secretary ~

- Dept. of Education & Early Development Annual Report, dated Feb. 15, 2016

NEW BILLS OF INTEREST

<http://www.akleg.gov>

BUGET ISSUES:

SB 183 / Sen. Wielechowski – Municipal Senior and Veteran Property Tax Exemption

HEALTH CARE ISSUES:

HB 315 / Rep. Vazquez – Electronic Visit Verification: Medicaid

BILLS ON THE MOVE

~ Below are pertinent bills that had hearings or other action this past week ~

SENATE COMMITTEE OR FLOOR ACTION

SB 72 / Designated Caregivers for Patients

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB72

Version 29-LS0047\F - CS scheduled for hearing in Senate Labor & Commerce on 2/23.

SB 74 / Medicaid Reform/PFD/HSAS/ER Use/Studies

http://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB74

Version 29-LS0692\F - CS scheduled for hearing in Senate Finance on 2/25.

SB 78 / Medicaid Expansion/Reform

http://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB78

Version 29-GS1055\A - Hearings continued last week in a special Senate Medicaid Subcommittee.

SB 91 / Omnibus Criminal Law & Procedure; Corrections

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB91

Version 29-LS0541\N - Heard in Senate State Affairs on 2/18. Scheduled again on 2/25.

SB 114 / Permanent Fund: Earnings, Deposits, Accounts

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB114

Version 29-LS0883\F - Heard twice and held in Senate State Affairs on 2/16. Next hearing on 2/23.

SB 131 / Electronic Tax Returns and Alcohol Tax

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB131

Version 29-GS2911\A - Heard and held in Senate Labor & Commerce on 2/16.

SB 133 / Electronic Tax Returns; Tobacco and E-Cigs Tax

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB133

Version 29-GS2914\A - Heard and held in Senate Labor & Commerce on 2/16.

SB 134 / Individual Income Tax: Credits; Returns

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB134

Version 29-GS2920\A - Scheduled in Senate Labor & Commerce on 2/23 and 2/25.

SCR 4 / US Countermand Convention Delegates (No change)

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SCR4

Version 29-LS0548\A - Moved out of Senate Judiciary on 2/8. Referred to Finance.

HOUSE COMMITTEE OR FLOOR ACTION

HB 224 / Permanent Fund: Income; Distribution; PFD

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=HB224

Version 29-LS1071\N - Heard and held in House Finance on 2/17. Next hearing on 2/22.

HB 227 / Medical Assistance Reform

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=HB227

Version 29-LS1096\H - Scheduled in HSS for 2/23 and 2/25 with public testimony.

HB 245 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=HB245

Version 29-GH2859\A - Heard and held on 2/15. Further scheduled for 2/22 in House Finance.

HB 303 / Permanent Fund: Earnings, Deposits, Accounts

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=HB303

Version 29-LS1426\A - Heard and held in House Finance on 2/16. Next hearing on 2/22.

SB 23 / Immunity for Providing Opioid OD Drug

http://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_complete_bill.asp?session=29&bill=SB23

Version 29-LS0058\N - Moved a House CS out of Judiciary on 2/12. Referred to Rules on 2/15.

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Remember: The " 24 - hour-Rule" for notice of House hearings is still in effect. Please check the schedule every night for changes to the list below. Remember, the Senate didn't follow suit and is still under the 5-day rule for notice of committee hearings.

MONDAY – Feb 22nd

(HOUSE) HSS Finance Subcommittee

8:30 AM H. Finance Room 519

FY2017 DHS Governor’s Amended Budget

(JOINT) MISC Meeting with House and Senate Education Members

8:30 AM Butrovich Room 205

Informal Round Table Discussion with Alaska Superintendents Fly-in

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee

1:30 PM H. Finance Room 519

HB 224 / Permanent Fund: Income; Distribution; PFD

HB 245 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings

HB 303 / Permanent Fund: Earnings, Deposits, Accounts

(SENATE) MEDICAID REFORM Finance Subcommittee

1:30 PM Senate Finance Room 532

SB 74 / Medicaid Reform/PFD/HSAS/ER Use/Studies

SB 78 / Medical Assistance Coverage; Reform

TUESDAY – Feb. 23rd

(SENATE) EDUCATION Committee

7:30 AM Butrovich Room 205

Dept. of Education FY17 Operating Budget

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee

9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532

FY17 Budget Amendments

(SENATE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee

9:00 AM Butrovich Room 205

SB 128 / Permanent Fund: Deposits; Dividend; Earnings

SB 114 / Permanent Fund: Earnings, Deposits, Accounts

SJR 1 / Constitutional Amendment: Guarantee Permanent Fund Dividend

(SENATE) LABOR & COMMERCE Committee

1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)

SB 72 / Designated Caregivers for Patients

SB 165 / Alcohol Beverage Control Board; Minors; Alcohol

SB 134 / Individual Income Tax: Credits; Returns

(HOUSE) HSS Committee

3:15 PM Capitol Room 106

HB 227 / Medical Assistance Reform - Introduction of Amendments

(HOUSE) EDUCATION Finance Subcommittee

6:00 PM Barnes Room 124

Department Budget Closeout

(SENATE) LABOR & COMMERCE Committee
6:00 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
SB 134 / Individual Income Tax: Credits; Returns

WEDNESDAY – Feb. 24th

(SENATE) RULES Committee
8:00 AM Butrovich Room 205
HB 75 / Marijuana Registration; Clubs; Muni’s; Local Option Elections
SB 89 / Parent Rights: Education; School Absence

(HOUSE) HSS Finance Subcommittee
8:30 AM H. Finance Room 519
Budget Discussion – Closeout Draft

(HOUSE) FINANCE Committee
1:30 PM H. Finance Room 519
HB 256 / Operating Budget
Presentation: Investments and Structure of the Permanent Fund
by Angela Rodell, Ex. Director, Alaska Permanent Fund Corp.

(SENATE) JUDICIARY Committee
1:30 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
SB 180 / Parent-Guardian/Child: Temporary Power of Attorney
SJR 9 / Call Federal Constitutional Convention: Term Limits

(SENATE) HSS Committee
1:30 PM Butrovich Room 205
SB 113 / New Drugs for the Terminally Ill
SB 156 / Insurance Coverage for Contraceptives

(SENATE) MEDICAID REFORM Finance Subcommittee
1:30 PM Senate Finance Room 532
SB 74 / Medicaid Reform/PFD/HSAS/ER Use/Studies
SB 78 / Medical Assistance Coverage; Reform

THURSDAY – Feb. 25th

(SENATE) FINANCE Committee
9:00 AM S. Finance Room 532
SB 74 / Medicaid Reform/PFD/HSAS/ER Use/Studies

(SENATE) STATE AFFAIRS Committee
9:00 AM Butrovich Room 205
SB 91 / Omnibus Criminal Law and Procedure; Corrections

(HOUSE) HSS Committee
3:15 PM Capitol Room 106
HB 227 / Medical Assistance Reform - Provider Roundtable

(SENATE) EDUCATION Committee
3:30 PM Butrovich Room 205
SB 103 / Residential Psychiatric Education Funding

(SENATE) LABOR & COMMERCE Committee
6:00 PM Beltz Room 105 (TSBldg)
SB 134 / Individual Income Tax: Credits; Returns

FRIDAY – Feb. 26th

(HOUSE) HSS Finance Subcommittee
8:30 AM H. Finance Room 519
Closeout Final

(SENATE) HSS Finance Subcommittee
11:00 AM Butrovich Room 205
Dept. of Health & Social Services - Office of Children's Services

WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

Website – Daily Committee Hearings

For: Feb. 22 – Feb. 28, 2016

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_hearing.asp?session=29&Chamb=B&Date1=02%2F22%2F2016&Date2=02%2F28%2F2016&Comty=&Root=&Sel=1&Button=Display

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

2016 2nd Session List of Legislators and staff

http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/session_phone_list.pdf

2016 House / Senate – Standing and Special Committees

<http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/commlist.pdf>

2016 House / Senate – Finance Sub-committee Members

<http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/HFINSubcmte.pdf>

<http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/SFINSubcmte.pdf>

~ End of Report ~

Contact: Caren Robinson (Carenr@gci.net)