

2019 CAPITOL CURRENTS

31st Alaska State Legislature ~ 1st Session

Tenth Edition – 3/18 to 3/24/19

– 22 Days to go to 90, but then... –

~ Issues are coming into focus. Budget still a tough sell for the Governor~

HIGHLIGHTS

Sunday is the 30th Anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the largest in history at the time. Most of the affected species have recovered and the spill led to positive changes including double hull tankers that must be escorted by two tugs. Radar also monitors the vessel's position and spots icebergs.

And he just keeps on ticking. Californian and former Alaska Senator Mike Gravel, 88, says he may run for President. Apparently, he was recruited by a couple of teenagers. His current plan is to join the first two debates, then drop out and endorse a progressive candidate. His stated goal is to provide a “critique of American Imperialism”.

API is losing its last three psychiatrists. And, “alarming” waiting lists are stacking up apparently leaving vulnerable, mentally ill folks stuck in jails or hospital emergency rooms. The future of this beleaguered institution is unclear.

A proposed \$84 million long term sole source contract with WellPath Recovery is under scrutiny and a possible alternative bidder, Providence Health Systems, also is interested. Providence has extensive experience with psychiatric care.

GOVERNOR'S CORNER

The governor's office will post press releases and other items of interest here:

<https://gov.alaska.gov/>

The Governor filled four judge seats but refused to fill a Palmer Superior Court vacancy this week under the established timeline because the list provided by the Alaska Judicial Council was “inadequate”.

He questioned whether the selection process was merit and qualifications based. He was particularly concerned about a candidate that wasn't nominated – even though he had been nominated before.

The chief justice of the Alaska Supreme Court released a statement on Friday informing Gov. Mike Dunleavy that he needs to follow the Constitution when it comes to appointing judges.

BUDGET ISSUES

The governor released a spending plan for the next decade. He says it represents a vision of a smaller government with more money in Alaskan's pockets and a vibrant economy. This includes a supersized PFD for the next three years and no new taxes.

He also lays out three alternative scenarios – status quo (or as he says ‘kick the can down the road’), reliance on savings, or taxes. Oil tax credits aren’t addressed. The plan was drafted using models produced by the Buckeye Institute, a conservative advocacy group from Ohio.

The Governor acknowledges the pain associated with big cuts but says it’s what we must do to get the economy moving again.

Medicaid is a focus of the governor’s biggest spending cuts. He has several approaches in mind that could provide \$95 million in reductions in FY20. The state also would lose about \$65 million in federal funding. Another \$16 million reduction is already planned based on Medicaid changes passed in 2016.

He also plans to eliminate \$8 million in state funding – and \$19 million federal dollars – for preventative dental care for adults. \$130 million left to go based on the state’s proposal to cut \$225 million. Details of the second phase are being worked out but will require special permission from the feds and changes to state law.

The proposal will maintain eligibility and patient access but reduce payments to doctors and hospitals with some exceptions for clinics, primary care, OB/GYN’s and hospitals that provide critical access, mostly in rural areas.

University of Alaska students gathered in front of the capitol to protest the Governor’s proposed budget. They are looking at a 41% reduction in state funds. Prepare for deep cuts, said University President Jim Johnson. Students saw this an opportunity to bring U of A students together to speak out.

Bill Hearings

House Finance is scheduled to discuss the budget subcommittees’ budget recommendations on **Monday and Tuesday at 1:30 pm**. You can watch the committee hearing online [HERE](#).

House Finance will take public comment on the FY20 Operating Budget **Monday and Tuesday nights starting at 5:30pm**. Testimony will be limited to 2 minutes per person.

Communities	Date	Time
Kodiak, Seward, Utqiagvik, Dillingham, Petersburg, Unalaska, Cordova, Kotzebue, Nome, Wrangell.	Monday (3/25)	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Mat-Su, Kenai, and Juneau (available for those unable to attend the community meetings held over the weekend).	Monday (3/25)	7:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Homer, Delta Junction, Glenallen, Tok, Valdez, Whittier, Healy.	Tuesday (3/26)	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Fairbanks, Anchorage, Ketchikan, Sitka areas (available for those unable to attend the community meetings held over the weekend).	Tuesday (3/26)	7:30 pm – 8:30 pm

You can provide public comment at your Legislative Information Office ([click HERE](#) for locations). Arrive at least 15 minutes early to sign-in, but no later than 30 minutes prior to the scheduled end time—if no one is there they will end the comment period early.

If you are not able to go to a LIO, you can provide testimony telephonically or in writing:

In Juneau dial 586-9085; in Anchorage dial 563-9085; all others dial (844) 586-9085. Hang-up as soon as you provide testimony to open-up lines.

Send written testimony to: house.finance@akleg.gov by 1:00pm on Wednesday the 27th.

[HB 31](#) Appropriations; Earnings Reserve to Permanent Fund sponsored by Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins receives its first hearing in **HSTA at 3pm on Tuesday**. The bill takes \$5.5 billion from the earnings reserve account to the principal of the Alaska permanent fund. The appropriation is for the capitalization of the fund and does not lapse.

[HB 96](#) Pioneers' Homes and Veterans' Home Rates sponsored by Rep. Fields will also be heard for the first time in **HSTA at 3pm on Tuesday and again on Thursday**. The bill sets monthly and daily rates for services and staying in the Homes.

[SB 23](#) Approp. Supp. Payments of Prior Year's Dividend and [SB 24](#) PFD Supplemental Payments, both sponsored by the Governor will be heard in **SJUD Wednesday at 6:00pm public testimony will be taken**.

[SJR 4](#) Constitutional Amendment; State Tax; Initiative sponsored by the Governor will be heard at **1:30pm on Tuesday, Wednesday at 6:00pm and Thursday at 3:30pm in SSTA - public testimony will be taken during the Wednesday hearing**. The proposed amendment would provide that any law to establish or increase a State tax – any tax – will not take effect without an affirmative vote of the people. Additionally, the proposed amendment would require any initiative passed by the voters that would establish or increase a state tax would not take effect unless approved by the legislature.

[SJR 5](#) Constitutional Amendment; Permanent Fund & Dividend sponsored by the Governor will be heard **Thursday at 3:30pm in SSTA**. The proposed amendment requires voter approval for any changes to the existing dividend program in the future.

Budget Hearings

Monday:	7:45am	SHSS Subcommittee-Division of Juvenile Justice; OCS
Tuesday:	9:00am 1:00pm 1:30pm	SFIN-K-12 Education Funding Considerations SEDC Subcommittee-FY20 DEED Budget HFIN-operating and mental health budget subcommittees' reports
Wednesday:	9:00am 1:30pm	SFIN-3 rd on list-discussion of permanent fund dividend calculation HFIN- Overview: Medicaid Phase One by DHSS and response by David Teal
Thursday	1:30pm	HFIN-adopt new CS for the operating and mental health budgets
Friday:	7:45am	SHSS Subcommittee-Healthcare Services; Medicaid

BILLS ON THE MOVE

The SHARP support for service bill ([SB 93](#)) has bipartisan support. Sponsored by Sen. Wilson, the bill receives its first hearing on **Monday at 1:30pm in SHSS-public testimony will be taken**. Another hearing is set for **Friday at 1:30pm**. A House companion is in the works.

[HB 72](#) February as Black History Month sponsored by Rep. Story receives its first hearing on **Tuesday at 8:00am in HCRA.**

[SB 44](#) Telehealth; Physician Assistants; Drugs sponsored by Sen. Giessel will be heard on **Tuesday at 1:30pm in SL&C.**

HHSS has a full plate on both **Tuesday and Thursday at 3:00pm.** They'll be hearing:

[HB 22](#), Extend the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council sponsored by Rep. Tarr which extends the sunset of the Council through June 30, 2027;

[HB 29](#) Insurance Coverage for Telehealth sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz ensures primary health care is covered;

[HB 97](#) Telehealth; Physician Assistants; Drugs sponsored by Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins (companion to SB 44) and only on **Tuesday**

[HB 86](#) Mental Health Hospital; Contract; Bids sponsored by Rep. Fields requires DHSS to operate, an inpatient mental health treatment hospital in the state and prohibits DHSS from contracting for the operation of the inpatient mental health treatment hospital; including a prohibition against using the single source procurement procedures or emergency procurement procedures.

[SB 1](#) Repeal Certificate of Need (CON) Program sponsored by Sen. Wilson will be heard in SHSS at **1:30pm on both Wednesday and Friday.**

[HB 82](#) Discrimination; Gender ID; Sexual Orientation sponsored by Rep. Josephson receives its first hearing on **Thursday at 3:00pm in HSTA.** The bill adds sexual orientation, gender identity or expression to the list of anti-discrimination classes throughout the statutes.

Crime Bills

Most crime bills are at rest this week only one -SB 33- has a hearing!

[SB 33](#) Arrest; Release; Sentencing; Probation, Governor sponsored moved from SSTA and is scheduled to be heard at **1:30pm on Monday in SJUD.**

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The **House Tribal Affairs** committee will hear a case study Tuesday morning at **8:00am on Tribal Partnerships in Rural Alaska.**

Tuesday at Noon join one of two interesting Lunch and Learns: Talk Saves Lives-Suicide Prevention or Building Great Brains in Alaska's Children.

Wednesday at Noon join the Lunch and Learn: Sharing Hope-Stories from Alaskans Affected by Mental Illness sponsored by the Board of Directors of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

HJUD will hear from DOC's Deputy Director, Laura Brooks, on Alaska Recidivism and Reentry at **1:00pm on Wednesday.**

Thursday at 9:00am, the House and Senate Education Committee will meet together to receive the Annual Report from the State Board of Education and Early Development.

Also on Thursday, the House and Senate Select Committee on Legislative Ethics organize at **10:15am** and then the **House subcommittee holds a meeting at 1:00pm.**

Confirmation hearings:

Friday 1:30pm HFIN will hear from appointees of the Mental Health Trust

3:15pm HL&C will hear from appointees of the Board of Nursing

WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

Website-Daily Committee Hearings for March 25-31, 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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