

# **2019 CAPITOL CURRENTS**

*31<sup>st</sup> Alaska State Legislature ~ 1<sup>st</sup> Session*

**Eleventh Edition – 3/25 to 4/1/19**

– 15 Days to go to 90, but then... –

*~ Don't forget to file for your PFD – deadline tonight, Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup> ~*

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

Senator Kiehl sponsored a Lunch & Learn with the National Alliance against Mental Illness this week. The presenters told powerful stories of the struggles of dealing with mental illness, and how comprehensive services and supports can be lifesaving.

You can watch the **presentation here**.

Senator Olson introduced **SB 101** establishing March 12 as Ashley Johnson-Barr Day. On September 6, 2018, 10-year-old Ashley Johnson-Barr of Kotzebue went missing. "People across the state wore purple on March 12, which would have been Ashley Johnson-Barr's 11th birthday to celebrate her life," said Senator Olson. "Continuing that tradition and remembering her is one way we can bring attention to child safety, community involvement, and solidarity."

The Senate rolled back some of last year's ethics changes that some legislators feel are too broad and unduly restrictive. Senator Costello called it a "return to common sense" so they can do their jobs. All Senate Democrats voted no.

## **GOVERNOR'S CORNER**

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

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

The Governor met with Chief Justice Bolger to discuss a variety of issues surrounding the process to fill a vacancy on the Palmer Superior Court. As a result, he intends to interview the two Palmer Superior Court nominees and will soon fill this vacancy from the judicial council's nominees.

The Governor's request to extend the disaster assistance registration period for individuals or households impacted by the November 30th Cook Inlet Earthquake has been approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The State Individual Assistance Program has received 14,594 applications. The federal program has received 6,653 registrations.

The extension means survivors now have until May 31, 2019 to submit their application to FEMA or the Small Business Administration.

Anyone impacted by the earthquake may register at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or online at [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov)

## BUDGET ISSUES

The Governor's budget road shows had a few bumps including the arrest of a protester (but no charges filed) and a forceful dialogue with a Nome tribal leader who criticized the tickets only, limited testimony, private meetings. At House Finance public hearings on his budget, testimony was 5 to 1 opposed, according to Co-Chair Foster.

So, the House Finance Committee is doing it their way with a \$10.45 billion draft proposal that is relatively flat compared to last year's \$10.49 billion. The Governor's cuts to K-12 Education, the University, and Marine Highway system are no more.

The draft also dropped Dunleavy provisions that would stop sharing oil property taxes and some fisheries taxes with municipalities. The University's budget subcommittee rejected the Governor's cuts and added \$10 million. Medicaid cuts are absent but still on the table.

A series of political and legal obstacles could prevent a big chunk of Governor Dunleavy's budget cut proposal from happening this year. The Governor proposed a \$299 million reduction in school funding. This is about one-fifth of his budget plan to close the gap.

But, a new law signed last year said that schools must receive a similar amount as this year for FY 2020 – as well as a an additional \$30 million statewide. This law applies unless the Legislature revises.

Permanent Fund Dividend discussions will come later. The House budget reserves about \$600 million for it, a starting point of about \$900 per person. More cuts mean a higher dividend. The Committee did not include new revenues or spending from the CBR - our main savings account.

Amendments will be taken up in House Finance next week. After the final vote, on to the Floor around the second week of April, then the Senate. More cuts are expected along the way.

In the meantime, Senate Finance Co-Chair Senator Von Imhoff told the Juneau Chamber that the Governor's proposal is an opener, but she expects many changes. Protection of the permanent fund, realistic reductions in state spending and measures of cost versus value are Senate priorities.

Fast tracked disaster relief funds to assist victims of the November 30 Southcentral earthquake passed both bodies and is now ready for the Governor's signature. The bill would provide \$6.5 million to match a federal grant of \$46 million. It also would add another \$21.9 million to the fund to cover additional damage.

Senate Democrats have a [Budget here](#) on their website that shows the Governor's proposed budget broken down by the issues. It also gives links for emailing Finance members and posting thoughts on social media. Link Here: <https://aksenatedems.com/get-involved/>

### **Bill Hearings:**

**[HB 96](#) Pioneers' Homes and Veterans' Home Rates sponsored by Rep. Fields will be heard again in HSTA at 4pm on Tuesday.**

**[SJR 4](#) Constitutional Amendment; State Tax; Initiative sponsored by the Governor passed from SSTA and will be heard at 1:30pm on Monday in SJUD. Public testimony will be taken Wednesday at 6pm.**

[SJR 5](#) Constitutional Amendment; Permanent Fund & Dividend sponsored by the Governor will be heard **Tuesday at 3:30pm in SSTA**. *If it passes* from SSTA, it is scheduled in **SJUD on Wednesday at 1:30pm and 6pm**. Public testimony will be taken at the 6pm hearing.

### **Budget Hearings:**

<b>Monday:</b>	7:45am	SHSS Subcommittee-Medicaid Services
<b>Tuesday:</b>	1:00pm 1:30pm	SEDC Subcommittee-FY20 DEED Budget HFIN Capital budget overview
<b>Wednesday:</b>	9:00am 1:30pm	HFIN Amendments to the operating/mental health budgets HFIN Amendments to the operating/mental health budgets
<b>Thursday</b>	9:00am 1:30pm	HFIN Amendments to the operating/mental health budgets HFIN Amendments to the operating/mental health budgets
<b>Friday:</b>	7:45am 9:00am 1:30pm 5:15pm	SHSS Subcommittee-Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) HFIN operating/mental health budgets HFIN operating/mental health budgets SDOC Subcommittee-FY20 DOC Budget

### **BILLS ON THE MOVE**

#### **Hearings:**

The SHARP support for service bill ([SB 93](#)) sponsored by Sen. Wilson, will be heard **Monday at 1:30pm in SHSS**. The House companion [HB 114](#) sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz was introduced and receives its first hearing in **HHSS at 3pm on Thursday**.

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

[HB 93](#) Military Spouse Courtesy License sponsored by Rep. Tuck will be heard in HMVA at **1pm on Tuesday and Thursday**

[HB 115](#) Absentee Voting sponsored by Rep. Tuck will be heard in **HSTA on Tuesday at 4pm**. The bill provides the option for any Alaskan to receive absentee ballots by mail for future state elections. Currently, the Permanent Absentee Voter List is limited to Alaskans that reside in remote areas without reasonable access to an in-person polling place, disabled voters who ask to be designated a permanent absentee voter, and voters whose permanent residence is an institution serving the aged or persons with a disability.

HB 115 would keep the Division of Elections from requiring a voter who chooses to receive an absentee ballot for all future elections to reapply unless the voter has not voted an absentee ballot for a period of four years or the voter's previous absentee ballot was returned to the division as undeliverable.

[HB 91](#) Naturopaths; Licensing; Practice sponsored by Rep. Johnston receives its first hearing in **HL&C Wednesday at 3:15pm**.

[HB 60](#) Repealing Senior Benefits Payment Program sponsored by the Governor receives its first hearing **Thursday 8am in HCRA. Public testimony will be taken.**

In addition to SHARP on **Thursday at 3pm, HHSS** will also hear [HB 89](#) Opioid Prescription Information sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz which requires nurses, pharmacists, dentists, physicians, osteopaths, optometrists and podiatrists to notify patients orally and in writing of the dangers of opioids and available alternative prescriptions.

**Passed from Committee:**

[HB 72](#) February as Black History Month sponsored by Rep. Story moved from CRA and is in RLS waiting to be scheduled for the Floor.

[SB 44](#) Telehealth; Physician Assistants; Drugs sponsored by Sen. Giessel moved from L&C and is waiting to be heard in SFIN.

[HB 22](#) Extend the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council sponsored by Rep. Tarr, which extends the sunset of the Council through June 30, 2027, moved from HSS and has been referred to FIN.

[HB 29](#) Insurance Coverage for Telehealth sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz moved from HSS and has been referred to L&C.

[HB 97](#) Telehealth; Physician Assistants; Drugs sponsored by Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins (companion to SB 44) moved from HSS and was referred to L&C. It also picked up a FIN referral.

**Crime Bills:**

[SB 35](#) Crimes; Sex Crimes; Sentencing; Parole sponsored by the Governor will be heard in **SJUD Monday at 1:30pm**

[HB 10](#) Controlled Substance Possession; Sentence sponsored by Rep. Kopp and [HB 98](#) Property Crime; Motor Vehicle Theft Tools sponsored by Rep. Claman both receive their first hearings this week in **HSTA at 4pm on Tuesday.**

[SB 32](#) Crimes; Sentencing; Mental Illness; Evidence sponsored by the Governor is set for another hearing in **SSTA Thursday at 1:30pm**

**ITEMS OF INTEREST**

HHSS will join HSTA on **Tuesday at 3pm** to hear a presentation on Procurement Process & Contracts for Services for the Alaska Psychiatric Institute by the Shared Services Division of the Dept of Administration and API.

HJUD will hear a presentation on Reentry's Role in Reducing Crime on **Wednesday at 1pm.**

**Confirmation hearings:**

**Monday 3:15pm** HL&C Board of Nursing, Board of Marital and Family Therapy

**Tuesday 9:00am** SEDC University of Alaska Board of Regents, State Board of Education and Early Development-public testimony will be taken

	<b>3:30pm</b>	SSTA Alaska Police Standards Council, Chief Administrative Law Judge, Alaska Public Offices Commission and the Parole Board
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>8:00am</b>	HEDC University of Alaska Board of Regents
	<b>3:15pm</b>	HL&C Board of Pharmacy, Board of Social Work Examiners, Board of Nursing
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>1:30pm</b>	SSTA Alaska Police Standards Council, Chief Administrative Law Judge, Alaska Public Offices Commission and the Parole Board
	<b>3:00pm</b>	HSTA Public Safety Commissioner Designee Amanda Price

### **WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS**

**Website**-Daily Committee Hearings for April 1-7, 2019  
[Daily 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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