

2019 CAPITOL CURRENTS

31st Alaska State Legislature ~ 1st Session

Twelfth Edition – 4/1 to 4/7/19

– 8 Days to go to 90, and then 30 more? –

~ We got a long way to go and a short time to get there ~

HIGHLIGHTS

Margaret Brodie, Director of Health Care Services (HCS/Medicaid), is no longer with the Department as of this week. The division oversees managing Medicaid and Health Care Facility Licensing and Certification. Brodie had been in the position as director since 2012.

Renee Gayhart has been appointed Acting Director of the Division of Health Care Services.

[HB 12](#) sponsored by Rep. Kopp allowing victims of stalking, sexual assault, or domestic violence to seek extensions of protective orders unanimously cleared the House and is the first crime bill to pass either body this year. On to the Senate.

Senator Gray-Jackson, joined by 17 other Senators, sponsored [SCR 2](#) declaring April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The resolution passed to the House on Friday.

Some members of two House committees are questioning why the state didn't consider Providence Hospital when it awarded a sole source contract for API management to WellPath.

Read about it here: [Representatives' Letter](#)

They also questioned whether the contractor - that faces lawsuits under a different name – was properly vetted. Deputy Commissioner Albert Wall stood by the Department's decision.

API has been under even more scrutiny, when the state's ombudsman [released an 85-page report](#) affirming concerns about API ranging from use of force in dealing with resistant patients to alleged ignorance of a patient's rape by another patient.

Senate HSS took up Senator Wilson's [SB 93](#) and House HSS took up [HB 114](#). SHARP 3 builds on the 10 year success of a loan repayment and direct monetary incentive program that helps fill vacant health care positions in underserved areas. These versions would be entirely funded by health care providers. Currently, the state pitches in.

Good news for a change. Alaska schools are doing well according to the Alaska Council of School Administrators – our students scored at or above national scores on the ACT and SAT; graduation rates have increased from 61.4 percent in 1963 to 78.2 percent in 2017, and the number of funds reaching instruction is 76 percent.

The federal [Violence Against Women Act 2019](#) allows Alaska tribes jurisdiction in their villages to prosecute domestic abuse and other crimes whether the accused is a tribal member or not.

Congressman Young supports this pilot project pointing out that Alaska Native women in villages suffer the highest sexual assault rates in the nation.

Similarly, murder is the third leading cause of death among Alaska Native women. Senator Murkowski and others have introduced a bill – The [Not Invisible Act 2019](#)– that would improve coordination across federal agencies by engaging law enforcement, tribal leaders, federal partners and service providers to identify and combat violent crime within Indian lands and of Indians.

Public Defender Quinlan Steiner has resigned. He will stay with the agency until the Judicial Council names a replacement. He started with the Public Defender Agency in 1998 and was appointed head in 2005. Reasons for his departure are unclear.

Lt. Governor Meyer approved a proposed ballot measure for 2020 that would **permanently** move legislative sessions to Anchorage. Supporters can now start gathering signatures.

GOVERNOR'S CORNER

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

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

The first bill to receive the Governor's signature is [SB 38](#) the \$141 million disaster supplemental bill to assist certain response, recovery and relief efforts following the 7.1 earthquake that struck Southcentral Alaska on November 30, 2018.

The bill, signed on April 5th, authorizes special appropriations to aid in recovery efforts associated with the Southcentral Earthquake, including state funding for federal match requirements, authority to receive federal disaster relief funding and capitalization of the Disaster Relief Fund.

SB 38 includes \$73.5 million (\$65 million federal and \$8.5 million state) for the Alaska Department of Transportation for response, repair and rebuilding state facilities and surface transportation; \$58.9 million (\$37 million federal and 21.9 million state) to recapitalize the disaster relief fund; \$7.9 million to the Department of Natural Resources for fire suppression activity; and \$1 million to the Department of Labor for disaster unemployment assistance benefit payments.

BUDGET ISSUES

House Finance worked steadily and cooperatively through over 100 amendments to the more generous subcommittee drafts of the operating budget. They passed it out Friday, 7 to 4 with a total cut of around \$257 million. It should be on the House Floor this week for debate and amendments.

See the FY20 House Finance Operating Budget Reports here: [Leg Finance House Budget Reports](#)

Ocean Rangers, AmeriCorps and diary inspection programs are out along with reimbursement to local governments for school construction bond debt, a \$140 million item.

They also voted to cut Alaska's \$2.5 billion Medicaid program by \$58 million instead of the Governor's proposed reduction of \$249 million. The cut also is less than the revised \$90 million cut proposed by DHSS after it was disclosed that Dunleavy's proposal would be impossible to implement in one year.

The University took a hit but nothing like the Governor's proposal. Speaking of which, University President Jim Johnson announced this week he's recommending they close the UAA School of Education that recently lost national accreditation. The Board of Regents will make the final call.

Senate Finance just introduced two bills. [SB 103](#) splits revenue from the annual draw of the Permanent Fund's earnings reserve equally between dividends and expenses.

[SB 104](#) caps state government spending at 5 billion for fiscal year 2021 and allows for a growth rate based on inflation over the past five years. Both bills are scheduled to be heard in **SFIN on Wednesday at 9:00am.**

The Feds and Governor Dunleavy want Alaska to be the first state to fund Medicaid through a block grant. The state would receive a fixed amount of federal money instead of the current, more open-ended approach.

In exchange for limiting the amount of Medicaid funds coming to Alaska, the state would have more operating flexibility.

Bill Hearings:

[HB 96](#) Pioneers' Homes and Veterans' Home Rates sponsored by Rep. Fields passed from STA and has hearings in **HSS this week on Tuesday and Thursday at 3:00pm.**
Public testimony will be taken on Thursday.

[HB 106](#) School Bond Debt Reimbursement sponsored by Rep. Wilson will be heard in **HFIN on Monday at 1:30pm.** The Department of Education and Early Development will present on this issue.

[SB 58](#) Repeal Senior Benefits Program sponsored by the Governor will be heard in **SHSS on Monday at 1:30pm. Public testimony will be taken.**

[SB 92](#) PFD Contributions to the General Fund sponsored by Senator Wilson is scheduled to be heard for a second time in **SSTA Tuesday at 3:30pm.** The bill would give Alaskans the option of donating all or a portion of their Permanent Fund dividends (PFDs) directly to the state's general fund by adding the General Fund to the Pick. Click. Give options on the PFD application.

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[SJR 5](#) Constitutional Amendment; Permanent Fund & Dividend sponsored by the Governor passed from STA this week and will be heard in **SJUD on Monday at 1:30pm and 6pm.**
Public testimony will be taken at the 6pm hearing.

[SJR 9](#) Const. Amendment: Appropriation Bill for Public Education sponsored by Senator Costello moved from SEDC and is scheduled to be heard in **SJUD on Wednesday at 1:30pm.** The resolution would require, if approved by the Legislature and the voters, a separate appropriation bill funding K-12 education to be passed by the 45th day of each regular session. This change occurs within Article 9, Section 12 of the Alaska Constitution.

Budget Hearings:

- Monday:** 7:45am SHSS Subcommittee-Medicaid Tribal Reclaiming, Senior & Disabilities Services
9:00am SFIN Medicaid Cost Containment-DHSS
- Tuesday:** 1:00pm SEDC Subcommittee-FY20 DEED Budget
- Wednesday** 1:30pm HFIN Spring Revenue Forecast by Department of Revenue
- Thursday** 1:30pm HFIN State Contracts by Department of Administration
- Friday** 7:45am SHSS Subcommittee-Wrap-up

Senate Finance will take public comment on [SB 20](#), the FY20 Operating Budget, **Thursday and Friday**. Testimony may be limited to **2 minutes per person**.

Communities	Date	Time
Mat-Su & Fairbanks LIO-sign up by 10am	Thursday (4/11)	9:00am
Juneau- sign up by 1:45pm	Thursday(4/11)	1-2:15pm
Nome, Bethel, Kotzebue& Unalaska LIOs- sign-up by 2:30pm	Thursday (4/11)	2:15-2:45pm
Anchorage LIO-sign up by 3:45pm	Thursday (4/11)	2:45-4:45pm
Kenai, Kodiak, Dillingham LIOs- sign up by 9:30am	Friday (4/12)	9-9:45am
Glennallen, Seward, Homer LIOs- sign up by 10:15am	Friday (4/12)	9:45-10:30am
Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg- sign up by 1:30pm	Friday (4/12)	1-2:00pm
Utqiagvik, Tok, Delta Junction- sign up by 2:15pm	Friday (4/12)	2-2:30pm
Sitka, Cordova, Valdez- sign up by 3pm	Friday (4/12)	2:30-3:30pm
Offnets- sign up by 4:15pm	Friday (4/12)	3:30-5:00pm

You can provide public comment at your Legislative Information Office ([click HERE](#) for locations). Pay attention to the **sign up by times**—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 during the *OFFNET* time Friday from 3:30-5pm. 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.

If you are not able to go to a LIO or call-in, you may provide written testimony. Send written testimony to: Finance.Committee@akleg.gov

BILLS ON THE MOVE

Hearings:

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

[HB 91](#) Naturopaths; Licensing; Practice sponsored by Rep. Johnston will be heard again in **HL&C Monday at 3:15pm.**

The SHARP support for service bill ([SB 93](#)) sponsored by Senator Wilson, passed from SHSS will be heard **Tuesday at 9am in SFIN.** The House companion [HB 114](#) sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz will be heard again in **HHSS at 3pm on Thursday.**

[SB 44](#) Telehealth; Physician Assistants; Drugs sponsored by Senator Giessel is scheduled to be heard in **SFIN on Tuesday at 9am.**

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

[HB 22](#) Extend the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council sponsored by Rep. Tarr which extends the sunset of the Council through June 30, 2027 is scheduled in **HFIN on Tuesday at 1:30pm.** The Senate companion [SB 10](#) sponsored by Senator Kawasaki will be heard in **SSTA on Tuesday at 3:30pm. Public testimony will be taken.**

HHSS will hear [HB 89](#) Opioid Prescription Information sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz again on **Tuesday at 3pm** along with [SB 37](#) Renewal of Vaccine Assessment Program sponsored by Senator Giessel. SB 37 will also be heard on **Thursday at 3pm.**

[HB 29](#) Insurance Coverage for Telehealth sponsored by Rep. Spohnholz and [HB 97](#) Telehealth; Physician Assistants; Drugs sponsored by Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins (companion to SB 44) will be heard in **HL&C Friday at 3:15pm.**

Crime Bills:

[HB 98](#) Property Crime; Motor Vehicle Theft Tools sponsored by Rep. Claman passed from STA and will be heard in **HJUD on Monday at 1pm.** The bill would allow prosecutors to aggregate crimes under theft in the second degree if they occur within 180 days, the amount is more than \$750 and less than \$25,000, and the property or services are taken from commercial establishments.

The bill also updates statutes related to fraudulent use of an access device to include an identification document, which clarifies a gap in the statute identified by the Alaska Court of Appeals in *Kankanton v. State*, 342 P.3d (Alaska Ct. App. 2015). Finally, HB 98 establishes the crime of possession of motor vehicle theft tools as a class A misdemeanor, that will give law enforcement an additional option to prosecute auto theft.

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

[HB 10](#) Controlled Substance Possession; Sentence sponsored by Rep. Kopp will be heard in **HSTA at 3pm on Tuesday.** [HB 118](#) Offender Reentry Planning by Corrections sponsored by Rep. Fields will also be heard. **Public testimony will be taken on these two bills.**

Finally, the committee will hear [SSHB 20](#) Sexual Assault Examination Kits sponsored by Rep. Tarr.

[SB 32](#) Crimes; Sentencing; Mental Illness; Evidence sponsored by the Governor is set for another hearing in **SSTA Tuesday and Thursday at 3:30pm. Public testimony will start on Thursday at 6pm.**

HSTA will hear [HB 33](#) Sexual Assault; Sex Offender Registration sponsored by Rep. Claman and [HB 51](#) Probation; Parole; Sentences; Credits sponsored by the Governor **on Thursday at 3pm.**

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Monday at 8am, HEDC will hear a presentation on Strategies for Making A Difference in Student Achievement by the Alaska Association of School Boards.

Tuesday at 8am, HCRA will hear a presentation on the Community Services Block Grant Program by the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development.

Wednesday at 3:30pm, SJUD Fin Sub will hear a presentation on Therapeutic Courts.

Confirmation hearings:

Tuesday	3:00pm	HHSS Health and Social Services Commissioner Designee Adam Crum
Thursday	3:00pm	Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees, HHSS Health and Social Services Commissioner Designee Adam Crum
Saturday	1:30pm	HHSS Health and Social Services Commissioner Designee Adam Crum

WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

Website-Daily Committee Hearings for April 8-14, 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 ~

Contact: [Caren Robinson \(carenr@gci.net\)](#)