

# 2021 CAPITOL CURRENTS

32<sup>nd</sup> Alaska State Legislature ~ 1<sup>st</sup> Session

## Eleventh Edition

~ *Spring Break—Steady progress—Federal money complications* ~

### HIGHLIGHTS

The Legislature cancelled a few committee meetings at the end of the week to take a quick Easter break. They'll be in full swing again on Tuesday.

As we approach the 75th Day of the session, top priority issues have emerged. No surprises - coronavirus management going forward; what to do with new Federal COVID 19 relief and possibly infrastructure funds; resolving the growing tension between building a responsible budget and delivering a big PFD.

Plus, completing confirmation hearings on the governor's Boards & Commissions, Attorney General, and Commissioner appointments, so they can meet in joint session; and addressing legislators' top priority bills.

*Note: All legislation pending from this first session carries over and remains in play during the second session.*

The spring PFD idea is under separate scrutiny. Some ask: Do we really need state help now with all the stimulus provisions authorized under the American Rescue Plan, like the \$1,400 individual payments and child tax credits? Or, should we just have one Fall check?

In any event, right now they're mostly trying to figure out exactly how much new money is available and for what purpose, then they'll talk seriously about how best to handle. Nothing like a fresh hit of needed federal cash to stir things up. This could cause a late, end of May adjournment.

House and Senate COVID-19 bills are now in Senate Finance. We heard predictable public commentary on [HB 76](#), the likely vehicle for legislative action. Health care, business and municipal interests testified in favor and cited examples of why the disaster emergency declaration must be extended.

Opponents were primarily speaking for themselves. Generally, they felt the whole coronavirus effort was an over regulated and unjustified erosion of their constitutional rights. The discussion will resume this week.

Former Governor Palin tested positive for COVID-19 and is now urging people to guard against the disease. She endorsed wearing masks in public. Certainly, better than nothing to slow the spread, she said. Common sense should rule.

Former Commissioner of Administration Kelly Tshibaka is throwing her hat into the US Senate ring. She plans to challenge Lisa for the Republican nomination. She's seen as a conservative alternative to the more moderate Murkowski. Governor Dunleavy filled the leadership void by moving Amanda Holland up from Deputy Commissioner to Acting Admin Commissioner.

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson is leading on Police Reform. She calls her legislation “Turning Point Into Progress” with a focus on preventing police violence.

There are six bills:

[SB 1](#), a statewide ban on chokeholds;

[SB 2](#), requiring officers to intervene when they observe another officer breaking the rules, if it’s safe to do so;

[SB 3](#), requiring officers to follow de-escalation procedures and give verbal warnings before shooting a gun;

[SB 4](#), prohibiting officers from shooting at a moving vehicle unless the person is driving in a manner that poses an immediate threat of serious risk to the life of the officer or another person;

[SB 7](#), requiring the Department of Public Safety to publish their current policies and procedures related to the conduct of peace officers employed or regulated by the department on their website;

and, [SB 46](#), creating a statewide database that tracks use-of-force incident

Gray-Jackson says it’s time to stop talking and start acting. SB 2 and SB 7 have been heard and held in SSTA. All others are awaiting their first hearings in either SSTA or SCRA.

Canada is closed for leisure travel probably though the summer, more bad news for Alaska tourism. They want to keep down their COVID-19 numbers. In a last ditch try, the Legislature just asked Congress to let our BIG cruise ships skip the required Canadian stop and sail directly from Seattle this summer ([SJR 9](#)).

Budget. House Finance continues to go through the operating budget sub-committee reports. Public testimony will be taken Thursday, Friday and Saturday. GO bonds are still on hold in the Senate while they sort other things out. There are concerns that the new federal money may not get to the schools due to qualification issues.

The reinstated House Ways and Means Committee held its first hearing last week. Chair Rep. Ivy Spohnholz (Democrat, Anchorage) says they have three targets: limit government growth, find spending efficiencies and talk about new revenues. The Chair also wants to work on the PFD formula issue.

April is Child Abuse Awareness Month. Based on recent data published by Nolan Klouda and the Alaska Children’s Trust, we spend over \$700 million a year on addressing the rates. They suggest that increased needs will require more spending on criminal justice, special ed, health care and child welfare. Read the report here: [Economic Costs of Child Abuse](#)

The University of Alaska is going public with a fundraising challenge for scholarships, research, and other priorities. It’s called the “for Alaska” campaign. The goal of the campaign is to raise \$200 million by 2024. To date, more than \$135 million has been raised from more than 16,000 donors since the quiet phase of the campaign began in 2016. The public phase of the challenge kicked off March 25. Read more here: [UAA For Alaska Campaign](#)

Did you know? Beginning April 24<sup>th</sup>, Alaskans are encouraged to start using 10-digit dialing for local numbers (907 plus 7 digit number). Ten-digit dialing will be mandatory starting in October. The reason for the change is a new federal law that will designate 9-8-8 as an abbreviated number to reach the National Suicide Prevention

Lifeline. Look here for more information:

[Regulatory Commission of Alaska 10 digit dialing begins](#)

## **BUDGET**

The House Finance Committee will take public testimony on their version of the operating and mental health budgets this week. Call-in at least 30 minutes before the end of your community's allotted time or the testimony may close early.

Testimony is limited to **2 minutes per person**. Hang-up after you testify to help keep the lines open. You can continue to access the meeting through [akleg.gov](http://akleg.gov).

### **All Public Testimony Conducted via Telephone**

Juneau (907) 586-9085  
Anchorage (907) 563-9085  
Elsewhere (844) 586-9085

### **Written Testimony Will Be Accepted at**

[house.finance@akleg.gov](mailto:house.finance@akleg.gov)

#### **Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup>**

**2:00-3:30pm**

Juneau, Sitka, Petersburg, Delta Junction, Dillingham, Glenallen, Valdez, Homer, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Seward

#### **Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>**

**1:30-3:30pm**

Fairbanks, Kenai, Mat-Su, Anchorage, Bethel, Cordova, Kotzebue, Nome, Utqiagvik

#### **Saturday, April 10<sup>th</sup>**

**10:00-2:00pm**

Statewide

### **Budget Hearings for the week of April 5<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Mon, April 5<sup>th</sup>**

**1pm**

**HJUD [HB 57](#)** Funds Subject to CBR Sweep Provision

#### **Tues, April 6<sup>th</sup>**

**9am**

**SFIN [HB 76](#)**, Extending Covid Disaster Emergency

**11:30am**

**(H)Ways & Means** Alaska's Fiscal Positions & Projections

**1:30pm**

**HFIN [HB 69](#)** Operating Budget and **[HB 71](#)** Mental Health Budget Subcommittee Closeout Reports

#### **Wed, April 7<sup>th</sup>**

**1pm**

**HJUD [HB 57](#)** Funds Subject to CBR Sweep Provision

**1:30pm**

**HFIN [HB 69](#)** Operating Budget and **[HB 71](#)** Mental Health Budget Subcommittee Closeout Reports

**1:30pm**

**SJUD [SJR 1](#)** Constitutional Amendment: Guarantee Permanent Fund Dividend

#### **Thurs, April 8<sup>th</sup>**

**11:30am**

**(H)Ways & Means** Alaska's Economic & Labor Demographics

**Fri, April 9<sup>th</sup>**

**1:30pm** SJUD [SJR 1](#) Constitutional Amendment: Guarantee Permanent Fund Dividend *Public testimony will be taken*

**Sat, April 10<sup>th</sup>**

**11:30am** (H) Ways & Means Economic Impact of Fiscal Solutions

\* Both House and Senate Finance committees show “bills previously heard/scheduled” in the daily calendar. Look at the Daily Calendar on the day of the hearing to see which, if any, bills are listed on the day.

### **BILLS On the Move**

**Tues, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 8am HCRA**

[HJR 14](#) Resolution: Fed Safe Banking Act/Cannabis

**Tues, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 8am H Tribal Affairs**

[HB 47](#) Council for Alaska Native Languages sponsored by Rep. Story renames the Alaska Native Preservation and Advisory Council as the Council for Alaska Native Languages and adds 2 voting members bringing the number of voting members to 7 and the total members to 9. The bill will also be heard on **Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup>** and *Public testimony will be taken*

**Tues, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm SHSS**

[SB 80](#) Public Schools: Mental Health Education

**Wed, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 9am SEDC**

[SB 111](#) Early Education: Reading Intervention—the bill will also be heard on **Friday the 9<sup>th</sup>** and **Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> (10am)**. *Public testimony will be taken at each hearing*

**Wed, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm SJUD**

[SB 9](#) Alcohol Beverage Control; Alcohol Reg

### **GOVERNOR’S CORNER**

The Governor introduced the Consumer Data Privacy Act ([HB 159](#)/[SB 116](#)) this week. It creates a new set of consumer privacy rights to protect personal and sensitive information.

It generally applies to businesses with gross revenues of \$25,000,000 or more, those that bought or disclosed personal information of 100,000 or more persons or households, or that sold the personal information of a consumer, household, or device in the last year.

The bill prevents businesses from disclosing the personal information of minors under the age of 13 to a third party and from disclosing or selling the personal information of a minor older than 13 without the consent of a parent or guardian.

The bill also requires data brokers to register with the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development and to provide consumers a clear online link by which they can exercise their rights under the bill.

Governor Dunleavy proclaimed April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month. Read the proclamations here: [Sexual Assault Awareness Month](#)  
Child Abuse Prevention Month

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

The **House Arctic Policy, Economic Development, and Tourism** committee will hear a presentation on The New Frontier of the Last Frontier - Economic Development in Modern Alaska on **Tuesday, the 6<sup>th</sup> at 11am**

**HHSS** will hear an Overview of the Tribal Child Welfare Compact with invited testimony from the Alaska Federation of Natives; the Association of Village Council Presidents; and the Tanana Chiefs Conference on **Tuesday, the 6<sup>th</sup> at 3pm**

**HHSS** will hear from the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership on the Alaska Early Childhood Environmental Scan with overviews from My House Mat-Su Homeless Youth Center; and, OCS reviewing Child Welfare in Alaska on **Thursday, the 8<sup>th</sup> at 3pm**

### **Confirmation Hearings**

For a list of the Governor's appointees released March 1<sup>st</sup> click here:

[Boards and Commissions Appointments](#)

**Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm**

**HF**IN will consider Attorney General Treg Taylor

**Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1pm**

**HJ**UD will consider Todd Fletcher, Donald McClintock III, Robert Sheldon, & Karla Taylor-Welch for the Commission on Judicial Conduct

**Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm**

**SL**&**C** will consider Tammy Lindemuth, Pharmacy Board

**Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 3:15pm**

**HL**&**C** among a long list will consider Lena Lafferty, Wendy Monrad, & Michael Wilcher for the Board of Nursing; Richard Holt & Justin Ruffridge for the Pharmacy Board; Casey Dschaak, Christopher Jaime, & Bruce Schult for the Marijuana Control Board

**Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1pm**

**HJ**UD will consider Aldean Kilbourn & Jane Mores for the Commission on Judicial Conduct

**Saturday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 3:30pm**

**HHSS** is scheduled to consider nominees to the State Medical Board and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority—names of nominees have not been listed—please see the Daily Schedule on Saturday (might be available on Friday)

## WAYS TO FOLLOW HEARINGS

**Website:** Daily Committee Hearings for April 5-10, 2021: [Weekly Schedule](#)

**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 [Gavel Alaska Schedule - KTOO](#)

**Streaming Video** [alaskalegislaturetv](#)

Click here for legislators' email addresses: [Legislator Email Address List](#)

Click here for legislative staff contacts: [Staff List](#)

~ **End of Report** ~

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