



House Speaker Bryce Edgmon's *Legislative Update*



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Operating Budget Progressing toward Full Vote of House



The Finance Committee adopted its amended versions of the FY18 Operating and Mental Health Budgets this morning. The FY18 Operating Budget reduces agency spending by \$61 million compared to FY17 spending. The bills likely will be debated on the House floor for passage early next week.

Budget amendments accepted by Finance this week included one by Rep. Les Gara (D-Anchorage) that eliminated a measure that would have cut by \$49 million the amount the state contributes to help school districts pay off their bonding debt. This would have shifted significant financial burdens to school districts and municipalities. Strong public testimony against the proposal convinced the committee's Majority Coalition members to restore the full amount of school debt reimbursement.

The Committee also supported an amendment by minority member Rep. Steve Thompson (R-Fairbanks) that is expected to save an estimated \$15 million annually by adding two new investment officers to the Department of Revenue.

The reductions made in the House strike me as very judicious. We can't fix our multi-billion budget deficit with cuts alone, and excessive additional cuts would likely send the state further into recession. A true long-term, sustainable fiscal plan that protects the PFD also requires additional revenues, careful use of some of the earnings of the permanent fund, and reforms in our unsustainable oil tax credit program. These are the proposals the House Majority Coalition has put forward this session.



On Wednesday many lawmakers in the House wore red in recognition of International Women's Day.

HB 8—on Protection Orders from Tribal Courts and Other States— Passes House

My bill to revise state statutes that conflict with a provision in the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) passed the House on Monday in a 38-to-2 vote.

Alaska has been following the federal law since we became subject to it in 2014. However, it's important to clean up the contradictory state statutes in order to remove any confusion. As long as ambiguities exist, they could create complications in prosecutions of people who violate protective orders.

The provision of VAWA that state statutes contradict is important for peoples' immediate safety and also underscores the valuable role of tribal courts in Alaska.

Under VAWA, there is no longer a requirement that a protective order issued by another state or a tribal court be registered with an Alaska court before law enforcement can act on it. This streamlining means people in danger can be protected sooner. If someone is in a threatening situation but hasn't yet registered their protection order with the state, law enforcement can still step up right away to help them.

HB 8 was read across the Senate Floor on Wednesday. Its Senate committees of referral include Community & Regional Affairs and Judiciary. I have already been granted a C&RA hearing for the bill scheduled for Thursday next week.

House Joint Resolution 14 Calls for Increase in FCC Rural Health Care Broadband Budget

Advancements telemedicine and its wider availability have brought real improvements to healthcare in rural areas of Alaska in recent years. As the technology continues to improve, more and more healthcare services will become available in parts of the state where only a few years ago even basic medical treatments required expensive travel far from home.

On Monday I introduced HJR 14, which supports an increase to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Health Care Universal Service Support Budget in order to ensure Alaska can continue to expand access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural communities. The resolution is scheduled to be heard in House Labor & Commerce this coming Wednesday.

The Rural Health Care Universal Services Support program enables providers in even the most remote corners of Alaska to offer telehealth services that dramatically improve access to care. These services can expand locally available treatment options, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, and help in avoiding unnecessary travel for care. Also through telehealth, local availability of mental and behavioral health care and substance abuse services has grown significantly in recent years.



Rep. Edgmon Wednesday chatting with Moriyah Lorentzen, of Port Alsworth. Moriyah was in Juneau representing the Tanalian School in the state finals for Poetry Out Loud.

The support budget that makes this possible has been capped at the same level since it was established in 1997. For most of its existence, the budget's \$400 million cap has been adequate to meet the demands of the program. However, following two decades of advances in technology, increases in demand, and the effects of inflation, the FCC expects that in 2017 demand may exceed the cap for the first time.

The State of Alaska has no funding obligation to the Rural Health Care Universal Service Support fund. The entirety of the program is funded through Universal Service charges.

HJR 14 urges the FCC to increase the Rural Health Care Universal Service Support Budget sufficiently to adjust for inflation, advances in technology and the services available with increased broadband, and the increase in demand for broadband-based services. Additionally, the resolution encourages the FCC to index the program budget for inflation and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. In doing so, the FCC will allow Alaska healthcare providers to continue improving access to care in rural parts of the state.

Some Observations from Our Naknek House Page

This week we asked Gabriella Hill, from Naknek, to say something for the newsletter about her experience so far as a page in the House of Representatives. We know firsthand how busy the pages are, so we definitely appreciate Gabriella taking the time to send a few words our way.



I am a graduate of Bristol Bay Borough High School and a resident of District 37, Speaker Edgmon's home turf. After a summer of commercial fishing and some world travel, I was fortunate enough to land a position working as a page for the Legislature in here in our State Capitol in Juneau. Some of my duties as a page are to work the floor while the representatives are in session, set up committee meetings, work in representatives' offices when they require extra help, and, as a Jill-of-all-trades, I'll complete anything else that needs doing.

This has been an amazing opportunity to work with many incredible people from around our great state. In addition to getting paid, I am also earning nine college credits from UAS. While employed here I am also able to find time to carry an additional nine credits, a big load, but well worth the effort. I wasn't sure what I was getting myself into when I became a page, but I'm so glad that I chose to move to Juneau and work amongst Alaska's lawmakers. There is so much to learn about the governmental process and it is exciting being a part of what is happening inside the walls of the Capitol.

House Page Gabriella Hill with her grandmother, BJ Hill, and Speaker Edgmon.

It's Official: New Ferry Named by Port Alsworth Student

Last year Governor Walker and Lieutenant Governor Mallot held an essay contest to determine the names of two new state ferries. One of the winners was none other than Port Alsworth student Malea Voran, at the time a 7th-grader at the Tanalian School.



A conceptual drawing of the Tazlina, courtesy of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

State ferries are traditionally named for Alaska glaciers, and Malea selected Tazlina Glacier, a beauty that spills into a lake about 40 miles north of Prince William Sound.

"Imagine stepping out of your car amidst many other parked vehicles," Malea wrote in her essay, "Your heart rapidly beats with excitement. You are on a dock looking at a beautiful ferry in which you will be riding from Skagway all the way to Juneau. Your anxiety and excitement overwhelms you as you breathlessly whisper, 'The Tazlina... I will be riding on the Tazlina.'"

The other new ferry will be named for the Hubbard Glacier. Eagle River 10th grader Taylor Thompson proposed the Hubbard. Malea's and Taylor's winning essays were among nearly 450 submissions.

Today SB 33, the governor's bill to make the names official, passed the Legislature in a unanimous vote. The new ferries will go into service next year. Malea and Taylor should be very proud of their accomplishments.

COMING UP NEXT WEEK!

JOIN SPEAKER EDGMON AT A
COMMUNITY MEETING ON
SATURDAY, MARCH 18TH,
2:00 P.M.
AT THE DILLINGHAM LIO

On Deck Next Week...

(H)RESOURCES Standing Committee
Mar 13 **Monday** 1:00 PM BARNES 124
HB 87 CONFLICT OF INTEREST: BD FISHERIES/GAME
HJR 12 OPPOSING GEN. ENGINEERED SALMON
HB 32 LABEL GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

(S)RESOURCES Standing Committee
Mar 13 **Monday** 3:30 PM
Consideration of Governor's Appointees:
Board of Fisheries:
- Fritz Johnson
- Reed Morisky
- John Jensen

(H)FINANCE Standing Committee
Mar 14 **Tuesday** 8:30 AM
HB 115 INCOME TAX; PFD CREDIT; PERM FUND INCOME

(H)FISHERIES Special Committee
Mar 14 **Tuesday** 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
HCR 8 KODIAK SEAFOOD & MARINE SCIENCE CENTER
HB 76 MARICULTURE REVOLVING LOAN FUND

HB 128 SHELLFISH ENHANCE. PROJECTS; HATCHERIES

(H)ENERGY Special Committee
Mar 14 **Tuesday** 10:15 AM CAPITOL 17
Overview: AK Center for Energy & Power (ACEP)

(H)HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES Standing Committee
Mar 14 **Tuesday** 3:00 PM
HB 103 OPTOMETRY & OPTOMETRISTS
HB 54 VOLUNTARY TERMINATION OF LIFE
HCR 2 RESPOND TO ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES
HB 174 EXTEND DISASTER EMERGENCY: OPIOID EPIDEMIC

(S)MISCELLANEOUS MEETING
Mar 15 **Wednesday** 12:00 PM
Lunch & Learn:
Addressing Opioid Addiction One Reentrant at aTime Presented by Cathleen McLaughlin and Dr. Jyll Green

(H)RESOURCES Standing Committee
Mar 15 **Wednesday** 1:00 PM
HB 46 PROCURE AK FISH/AG PROD.; ALASKA GROWN
HB 172 INDUSTRIAL HEMP PRODUCTION LICENSES

(H)LABOR & COMMERCE Standing Committee
Mar 15 **Wednesday** 3:15 PM

HB 79 OMNIBUS WORKERS' COMPENSATION
HJR 14 FCC: INCREASE RURAL HEALTH CARE BUDGET

(H)FISHERIES Special Committee
Mar 16 **Thursday** 10:00 AM
HJR 9 CANADIAN MINES ON TRANS-BOUNDARY RIVERS

(H)FINANCE Standing Committee
Mar 16 **Thursday** 1:30 PM
HB 56 COMMERCIAL FISHING LOANS
HB 81 AK ENERGY EFFICIENCY LOANS: ELIGIBILITY
HB 106 CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUND
HB 141 AK WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD; FUNDS

(S)COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS Standing Committee
Mar 16 **Thursday** 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
HB 8 ENFORCEMENT OF FOREIGN PROTECTIVE ORDERS
SB 77 SECOND CLASS BOROUGH SERVICE AREAS

(H)FINANCE Standing Committee
Mar 17 **Friday** 1:30 PM
SB 30 APPROVAL: ROYALTY OIL SALE TO PETRO STAR
HB 115 INCOME TAX; PFD CREDIT; PERM FUND INCOME

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