March 13, 2020

It’s been quite a week. So much has happened, from coronavirus to oil prices, and the stock market, all of which combined has led to reduced state revenue of $500 million or more, it’s a challenge not to be overwhelmed by all the information right now. As leaders of the state, we are maintaining our focus and will attend to our responsibility to address the burgeoning public health crisis, pass a budget, and adjourn the legislative session. A few quick updates on the current situation.

- Both the House and Senate voted today to authorize the Chair of the Legislative Council to decide if the Capitol should be closed to visitors, lobbyists, and any others besides legislators, staff, and support services. The Chair of the Legislative Council, in consultation with leadership, has done so effective immediately. This is in response to the COVID-19 virus which is spreading rapidly. In an effort to “flatten the curve” of the spread, we are taking measures to ensure the health and safety of our legislative family and the public at large. You can always access the legislature by phone, email, and by watching hearings on 360north.org. You can also call your legislative information office, which you can find here, to telephonically testify on bills and other matters. We look forward to welcoming all back to the Capitol when this virus is contained.

- Alaska’s first COVID-19 case was announced yesterday. I have full confidence in the administration and public health officials across Alaska who are responding to the outbreak. The spread of the virus in Alaska, while currently contained to one cargo pilot in Anchorage who has had minimal contact with others, will continue. For this reason, we are asking you to please wash your hands often, practice social distancing techniques, and stay home should you feel symptoms. Please find the State of Alaska’s Department of Health and Social Services website dedicated to providing the public with information about COVID-19 here.

- The stock market and oil price crash of the past two weeks is cause for grave concern regarding the Alaska budget. Alaska is funded by
both investment and oil revenue. This market crash has deeply affected both of our revenue sources. Thankfully due to wise fiscal management at the Permanent Fund Corporation, as well as a system designed to smooth out market shocks, our investment revenue should remain stable. Our oil revenue, however, will see an immediate effect from this drop in oil prices. As of today, Alaska North Slope crude is priced at about $33.47/barrel. Our revenue forecast was designed with $63.54/barrel and $59/barrel for FY20 and FY21 respectively. This drop in oil prices, has already damaged our oil revenue stream, but the effects will be magnified should low prices persist. We are monitoring the situation closely and will update you as more information becomes available.

While there is cause for concern, I want to assure you that we in Juneau are taking necessary steps to ensure Alaskans will be ready to face down this outbreak. We will also deal with this fiscal crisis, made worse the past two weeks, and come together as Alaskans do in times of hardship.

Please don’t hesitate to get in touch with any issues or concerns and remember, I work for you.

All the best,

Pam Elgren

Office Phone: 907-465-4451 or toll free at 800-898-445

On Deck Next Week…

Monday, March 16
House & Senate Joint Education – 8:30 AM
Presentation: “The State of Alaska K-12 Schools” by Alaska Council of School Administrators
House Finance – 9:30 AM
HB 24 – Limited Teacher Certificates; Languages
HB 185 – Registration of Boats: Exemption
HJR 15 – Constitutional Amendment: Votes Needed for Veto Override
HB 181 – Public Schools: Mental Health Education
House Judiciary – 1:00 PM
HB 287 – Village Public Safety Officers
HB 174 – Minimum Age to Possess Nicotine/Ecig Product
House Resources – 1:00 PM
HB 240 – Regulate PFAS Use; Fire/Water Safety
HB 280 – Invasive Species in State Water; Council
House Finance – 1:30 PM
HB 235 – Alaska Workforce Investment Board: Allocations
House Labor & Commerce – 3:15 PM
SB 52 – Alcoholic Beverage Control; Alcohol Regulations
Consideration of Governor’s Appointees

Tuesday, March 17
House Community & Regional Affairs – 8:00 AM
Presentation: Climate Change Action Plan & Policy
House Tribal Affairs – 8:00 AM
HJR 29 – Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945

House Finance – 9:30 AM
HB 121 – Repeal State Agency Performance Audits
HB 209 – Establish Dept of Management of Budget

House Fisheries – 11:00 AM
HB 247 – Sport Fishing Enhancement Surcharge

House Arctic Policy, Economic Development, & Tourism – 11:00 AM
HJR 27 – Federal Investment in Port of Alaska

House Military & Veterans’ Affairs – 1:00 PM
Presentation: COVID-19 Update

House Transportation – 1:00 PM
HB 273 – Abandoned Vehicles; Private Property

House Finance – 1:30 PM
HB 79 – Peace Officer/Firefighter Retire Benefits
HB 268 – Muni Bond Bank: UA, Loan and Bond Limits

House State Affairs – 3:00 PM
HJR 31 – Constitutional Amendment: Permanent Fund; POMV; Earnings
HB 253 – Sale, Transfer, or Disposal of Ferries
HB 274 – Property Insurance Surcharge; Fire Standards
HB 190 – PFD Allowable Absences

House Health & Social Services – 3:00 PM
HB 183 – Alaska Psychiatric Institute
HB 86 – Mental Health Hospital: Contracts/Bids

Wednesday, March 18

House Education – 8:00 AM
Presentation: “Educator Retention & Turnover in Alaska: Magnitudes & Related Factors”

House Finance – 1:30 PM
HB 155 – Alaska Performance Scholarship; Eligibility
HB 201 – Defense of Public Officer: Ethics Complaint

House Labor & Commerce – 3:15 PM
HB 257 – Financial Institutions; Liability
SB 195 – Board of Directors: Domestic Insurers
HB 146 – Motor Vehicle Dealers: Application; Insurance
SB 52 – Alcoholic Beverage Control; Alcohol Regulations

Thursday, March 19

House Tribal Affairs – 8:00 AM
Presentation: Real ID Implementation

House Finance – 9:30 AM
HB 23 – Snowmobile Registration Fees
HB 187 – Restrict Out-of-State Correctional Facilities

House Fisheries / Community & Regional Affairs Joint – 10:00 AM
Presentation: Ocean Acidification & Increasing Ocean & River Temperatures

House Finance – 1:30 PM
HB 131 – Appropriation Limit

House Health & Social Services – 3:00 PM
HB 242 – Prescription of Opioids; Database
HB 184 – Controlled Substances Data: Exempt Veterinarian
Consideration of Governor’s Appointees: State Medical Board

House State Affairs – 3:00 PM
HB 253 – Sale, Transfer, or Disposal of Ferries
HB 274 – Property Insurance Surcharge; Fire Standards
Friday, March 20

House Education – 8:00 AM
Presentation & Discussion: Coronavirus – Implications for Alaska Schools

House Finance – 9:30 AM
HB 102 – Rental Vehicle by Private Owner
SB 115 – Motor Fuel Tax; Ev Registration Fees

House Judiciary – 1:00 PM
HJR 31 – Constitutional Amendment: Permanent Fund; POMV; Earnings

House Resources – 1:00 PM
Presentation: Wildfires in Alaska with a Changing Climate
HB 280 – Invasive Species in State Water; Council

House Finance – 1:30 PM
HB 207 – Appropriation: Capital; Supplemental; Other Appropriation

House Labor & Commerce – 3:15 PM
SB 195 – Board of Directors: Domestic Insurers
HB 94 – Electronic Smoking Products Excise Tax
Consideration of Governor’s Appointees