



House Speaker Bryce Edgmon's *Legislative Update*



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House Finance Progresses on Major Components of Fiscal Plan; Personal Legislation on the Move

The Finance Committee in the House held back-to-back hearings all week on two cornerstones of the House Majority Coalition's solution to Alaska's fiscal crisis.

HB 115 protects PFDs, restructures the Permanent Fund in a way that helps pay for vital government services, assures that the multi-billion-dollar endowment continues to grow, and diversifies revenues with a modest income tax.

HB 111 reforms our oil tax credit system to reduce unsustainable state subsidies to oil companies. At the same time, the bill creates a durable tax and credit structure that continues to stimulate exploration and development and provides industry the certainty it needs to move forward with confidence.



Speaker Edgmon presiding over the House Floor earlier this week.

In combination with the millions in spending reductions in the Operating Budget the House passed earlier this week, these bills close our nearly \$3 billion fiscal gap and establish a stable and sustainable way forward for Alaska. They help preserve the quality of the education we provide for our kids, end the cuts to Public Safety that threaten the wellbeing of our communities, and provide for a future that can include infrastructure investments to bolster economies large and small across the state.

With the Finance Committee hard at work on these bills, I anticipate them reaching the House Floor soon.

You can offer the committee your views on HB 111 tomorrow, beginning at 10:00 a.m. If you are an "Off-Net" caller without an LIO, call 465-4648 to get a call-in number. Testimony will be limited to two minutes for each person.

Other Bills on the Move

Meanwhile, following last week's extended debate on the budget, standing and special committees have resumed hearing personal legislation as well as bills introduced on behalf of the governor. Several of note passed the House this week.

On Monday the House voted unanimously to pass **SB 91**, Governor Walker's bill to, in effect, extend until 2021 the governor's emergency declaration regarding the opioid epidemic. Provided with this authorization, the Department of Health and Social Services can proceed with a statewide, coordinated response to the drug scourge. This includes an overdose response program that features statewide distribution of naloxone, a life-saving medication that can reverse an opioid or heroin overdose.

SB 91 can be regarded as a companion to **HB 159**, which is currently being heard in the House Health and Social Services Committee, on which I serve. HB 159's provisions include limiting an initial prescription for an opioid to not more than a seven-day supply. For a prescription to a minor, a doctor would first need to discuss the risks of opioid use with a parent or guardian.

The bill also gives patients the option of establishing a medical directive to make it clear that they do not want to be administered or prescribed opioid painkillers. They would be able to revoke their directive at any time, and exceptions are allowed in emergency circumstances.



Speaker Edgmon with Governor Walker moments after the governor signed SB 91 into law on Tuesday.

Another section of the bill allows a person to ask their pharmacist to dispense less than the prescribed amount of a schedule II or III controlled substance, to help keep use of such drugs to a bare minimum, and the bill also makes the most of the controlled substance prescription database by requiring pharmacists to update it daily rather than weekly. This will improve the accuracy and rigorosity of the monitoring the database provides.

As you can see, many of HB 159's provisions are designed to prevent people from ever becoming addicted to opioids in the first place. Introduced by the governor, the bill is a high priority for the House Majority Coalition this session. We will be hearing it again in House HSS tomorrow.

Today several constructive bills were calendared for the House Floor. **HB 81**, introduced by Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins (D-Sitka), passed 35 to 1. This legislation makes non-profit organizations and Alaska tribal entities eligible for loans from the Alaska Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund.

The fund was created in 2010 to provide low interest loans for energy efficiency improvements to school districts and municipalities. This loan program has been under-used for years, so allowing a wider variety of borrowers to apply to the fund makes sense.

Another bill considered by the full House today might be familiar to some readers. **HB 106**, by Rep. Zach Fansler (D-Bethel), sets up an option for more stable funding for the Alaska Legal Services Corporation. This is similar to legislation that I and others have introduced in recent years.

For many lower-income Alaskans, the help of Legal Services attorneys is the only chance they have for fair access to the civil justice system. The bill will allow the Legislature to appropriate up to 25 percent of filing fees paid to the Alaska Court System during the previous fiscal year into the already existing Civil Legal Services Fund. The state can then contribute to Legal Service's work through the fund.

As Alaska Legal Services itself has put it: "We need civil legal aid to ensure that the very principle our founding fathers envisioned remains alive: Justice for all, not the few who can afford it." HB 106 passed the House 33 to 3.

An important Fish & Game bill also reached the floor today. **HB 87**, put forward by Rep. Louise Stutes (R-Kodiak), takes a practical step to enhance Board of Fisheries and Board of Game decision making.

In current statute, when a board member has a conflict of interest in a matter under consideration by the board, they are barred not only from voting on the issue but also from participating in discussion. For example, a board member who is also a salmon seiner in Kodiak would not be able to take part in discussions on a proposal related to that fishery. This means that often the board will miss out on a lot of local knowledge and expertise on a given issue.

HB 87 simply allows a person with a conflict to participate in board deliberations, offering their insights and expertise. However, the member is still prohibited from voting on the issue under consideration. This should result in better informed board decisions and improved fish & game management. HB 87 will be brought up on the floor again Monday for a full vote.



Rep. Edgmon
with other
lawmakers
in the House
on Monday.



Students from Kalskag Schools in on Thursday, L to R: William Peterson, Jared Thorson, Marissa Abarca, and Excel Alaska Instructor Christa Wilson.



It was nearly a full house last Saturday for Rep. Edgmon's meeting at the Dillingham LIO.

On Deck Next Week...

(H)EDUCATION

Mar 27 **Monday** 8:00 AM

HB 102 LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES

HB 52 PRE-ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS/PLANS

HB 146 SCHOOL TAX; PFD PAYMENT FOR SCHOOL TAX

(H)JUDICIARY Standing Committee

Mar 27 **Monday** 1:00 PM

HB 123 DISCLOSURE OF HEALTH CARE COSTS

HB 42 FORFEITURE & SEIZURE: PROCEDURE; LIMITS

(H)FISHERIES Special Committee

Mar 28 **Tuesday** 10:00 AM

Confirmation Hearings:

- Board of Fisheries

- Fishermen's Fund Advisory Panel

HCR 8 KODIAK SEAFOOD & MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

HB 76 MARICULTURE REVOLVING LOAN FUND

HB 128 SHELLFISH ENHANCE. PRO-

JECTS; HATCHERIES

HJR 9 CANADIAN MINES ON TRANS-BOUNDARY RIVERS

(H)TRANSPORTATION Standing Committee

Mar 28 **Tuesday** 1:00 PM

HB 82 RESTRICTED OFF HWY DRIVER'S LICENSE

(S)COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS Standing Committee

Mar 28 **Tuesday** 3:30 PM

HB 18 RACE CLASSICS

SJR 4 AK LEGALLY ACQUIRED IVORY USE EXEMPTION

(H)EDUCATION Standing Committee

Mar 29 **Wednesday** 8:00 AM

Joint With Senate EDC

Presentation: State Board of Education

(H)FISHERIES Special Committee

Mar 30 **Thursday** 10:00 AM

HJR 9 CANADIAN MINES ON TRANS-BOUNDARY RIVERS

(H)ENERGY Special Committee*

Mar 30 **Thursday** 10:15 AM

Presentation: Energy Solutions for AK

Innovative Technology, Policy, & Economic Development Strategies to Support our Communities & Industries by Gwen Holdmann, AK Center for Energy & Power (ACEP)

(S)TRANSPORTATION Standing Committee

Mar 30 **Thursday** 1:30 PM

Overview: Ports & Harbors

(H)HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES Standing Committee

Mar 30 **Thursday** 3:00 PM

HB 100 POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY AWARENESS DAY

HB159 OPIOIDS PRESCRIPTIONS;DATABASE

HB 164 PROTECT: VULNERABLE

ADULTS/LONG TERM CARE

HB 186 FOOD DONATIONS

(H)EDUCATION Standing Committee

Mar 31 **Friday** 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

Presentation: Early Education

(H)LABOR & COMMERCE

Mar 31 **Friday** 3:15 PM

SB 14 TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES

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