



House Speaker Bryce Edgmon's *Legislative Update*



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Adjournment Package Coming Together

The principal components of an adjournment agreement are becoming evident as progress continued this week on several “big ticket” bills.



On Wednesday the House/Senate Conference Committee for SB 26—the Permanent Fund restructuring bill—released a draft committee substitute that is now being used as a basis for compromise discussions toward support for final passage.

On Thursday Governor Walker signed HB 287 into law. This bill fully funds K-12 Education for the coming school year, allowing schools to more efficiently plan their budgets and avoid the instability of forced teacher layoffs.



Governor Walker signing HB 287 at Juneau’s Harborview Elementary on Thursday.

Also on Thursday, the House passed HB 331. Arguably, this bill puts the whole oil tax credit controversy behind us once and for all. While I can’t say that I like the legislation, I do see that paying off the many millions in credits to the smaller explorers on the North Slope has the potential to create jobs and stimulate oil production. Doing this sooner rather than later, with no additional cost to the state, will be good for Alaska’s broader economy.



Meanwhile, there are signs of an impending agreement between the House and Senate on Capital Budget spending. On Monday, the House Finance Committee adopted a new version of that budget—HB 284—that is more or less identical to the committee substitute adopted by Senate Finance last week.

Both versions now incorporate several important infrastructure projects—including more than \$8 million for Bristol Bay Borough School major maintenance—that before were in the “contingent” capital bills, which would only be funded if accompanied by a new broad-based tax to pay for them. These projects put into in HB 284 (and its Senate companion SB 142) now have a good chance of being funded even if the contingent capital bill fails to pass.

Obviously, consensus on the Operating Budget is also an integral part of any adjournment package. While there were no meetings of that bill’s Conference Committee this week, progress on the other items described above is a good indication that we can soon expect continued collaboration and compromise in that arena too.

Stay tuned next week for what I anticipate will be significant progress on these and other bills.

Am I happy with every compromise that has made its way into these negotiations? No. But I’m confident we are working toward solutions that are genuinely in the interests of all Alaskans, and it’s important that we stay on track to finish the session within the Constitutional time limit.

HB 267—Tool for Local Government Revenues—Passes Legislature

On Tuesday, HB 267, my bill to help local governments make sure they’re receiving the revenues due to them, passed the Legislature with a 17-to-3 vote in the Senate. My thanks to Senator Lyman Hoffman (D-Bethel) for carrying the bill on the Senate floor.

HB 267 gives municipalities that levy taxes or fees on fish and game guiding access to records that hunting and sport fishing guides submit to state agencies. This gives local governments, such as the Lake & Peninsula Borough, a tool to help confirm that such activities subject to taxes within their jurisdictions are being accurately reported to them.

All information released to municipalities would remain confidential, with strict criminal consequences for any unlawful disclosure.

The bill also authorizes state agencies to charge the municipalities a reasonable fee for access to the records, to cover agency expenses.



Significant cutbacks in state funding in recent years have resulted in greater costs and responsibilities being borne by local governments. Our municipalities should be given every resource to ensure they are receiving the revenues due to them according to their local ordinances.

Dillingham's Andrew Berkoski Honored with BP Teaching Award

My congratulations to Dillingham Elementary School teacher Andrew Berkoski, who was named last week as a 2018 BP Teacher of Excellence.

Andrew is one of 29 winners from across Alaska recognized for their exceptional performance in the classroom, dedication to students, and contribution to the state's future. This year the program attracted more than 1,000 nominations from across Alaska.

This is a great achievement for Andrew and, in my view, a real honor for Dillingham Elementary School too.



Bi-Partisan Support:
Legislators look on
Thursday during Gov-
ernor Walker's sign-
ing of HB 287, to
early-fund K-12
Education.

Alexander "Lee" Smith, formerly of Aleknagik, was in Juneau this week—just days following his graduation from UAA—interviewing for a job in investments. My best wishes to Lee as he embarks on his career.



On Deck Next Week...

Working hard
toward
adjournment.

Keep in Contact

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