



# House Speaker Bryce Edgmon's *Legislative Update*



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## With Day 121 Approaching, Legislature Likely to Require More Time



With just five days left before we hit the May 17 endpoint of the Constitutionally authorized 121-day legislative session, and with several major pieces of legislation still the subject of hearings or conference committee negotiations, it is clear that work in Juneau will continue into another stage of overtime. Whether it will take the form of the House and Senate deciding on an extension of some agreed-upon duration, or whether the Legislature will gavel out, only to be brought back into special session by Governor Walker, we shall see.



In the meantime, here is an update on events of the week.

### **HB 57 Conference Committee Appointed; 24-Hour Rule in Effect**

On Wednesday this week the Senate declined to withdraw from its changes to [HB 57](#), the Operating Budget. Subsequently, both the Senate and House appointed three members each to a conference committee that will now negotiate compromises regarding the many differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

## Speaker Edgmon during Monday's session on the House Floor.

This activates what's known as the 24-Hour Rule. Bills can now move more quickly through the committee process, since rather than providing five days' notice for a

hearing, only one day's notice is required. Look for some measures to bounce back and forth between the House and Senate like tennis volleys during these final days of the 121-day Constitutional session, which comes to a close next Wednesday.

### **Capital Budget Passed to House**

Also this week, the Senate passed [SB23](#), this year's bare-bones Capital Budget. Nearly all the state spending in this FY18 infrastructure budget is designed to lever-

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age federal funding. In the Senate's version, the state has appropriated about \$123 million of its own money to bring in approximately 1.2 billion in federal funds for highways, airports, water & sewer, and other fundamental needs.

I was pleased to see that Governor Walker's recommended \$22 million for building a vessel to replace the Tustumena remains in this budget. This will bring in an additional \$222 million in federal funds. Nothing could illustrate more clearly that we need a replacement ferry as soon as possible than this week's shocking news that the Tustumena will not return to service this summer until July 18<sup>th</sup>. This delay is terrible for communities on the Peninsula and in the Shumagins and Aleutians who were counting on the lost spring and summer sailings.

SB23 also includes small appropriations for the AHFC Home Weatherization program, the Senior Citizens Housing Development program, and the Supplemental Housing Development program, all of which will help our regional housing authorities to continue to do good work in House District 37.

An appropriation of \$288 million in SB23 would pay about one third of the oil & gas subsidies accrued in recent years by oil companies in Alaska. This has not been greeted well by many members of the Alaska House Majority Coalition. Without passage of a bill for additional broad based revenues and without a strong version of [HB 111](#)—the oil &

gas credit reform bill the House passed to the Senate last month—Coalition support for this kind of cash outlay for oil companies is doubtful, to say the least.

**Senate Rejects Education Funding Act**  
Speaking of broad based revenues, today the Senate failed to pass [HB115](#), which would raise revenues for education through a progressive state income tax. In rejecting the bill, the Senate leaves a deficit of more than half a billion dollars in the FY18 budget. This only perpetuates the risk and uncertainty



Speaker Edgmon, Rep. Louise Stutes (R-Kodiak), and Rep. Paul Seaton (R-Homer) at the Stand for Salmon booth during Juneau's Maritime Festival last Saturday.

the fiscal crisis has created for Alaska's economy, its schools, and its communities. In recent weeks Governor Walker has been making a strong case for broad based revenues in towns large and small across the state. I am sure that he shares the House Majority Coal-

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tion's disappointment in the Senate majority for not seeing the good sense in this important pillar of a fair and comprehensive fiscal plan.

### **REAL ID and the Weekend Agenda**

HB 74, the REAL ID bill, will be taken up on the House floor tomorrow. This is fairly controversial legislation, and I expect the floor debate to be lengthy. For more information about HB 74, you can look at my [newsletter from last week](#), which covered the bill in some detail.

House Finance will also be at work over the weekend, hearing SB 23, the Capital Budget, which was transmitted from the Senate today. Finance's first meeting on the bill is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. tomorrow. As always, I'll be looking out for House District 37's interests in this budget as it goes through the committee process in the House.

### **Joint Session Coming Up**

Ahead of day 121 of the current session, the House and Senate will meet in a Joint Session on the House Floor to consider the Governor's appointments to various boards and commissions, as well as to positions in state agencies. The session is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. next Tuesday, the 16<sup>th</sup>.

## **On the Censure of Rep. David Eastman**

Many of you are probably already aware that the House took a historic step on Thursday in censuring Representative David Eastman (R-Wasilla). I owe it to my constituents to say something about why I believed such a serious action was necessary.

First, I want to make it clear that a censure is not censorship. It does not curtail anyone's right to free speech. To censure someone, in a legislative context, is to formally condemn wrong and irresponsible conduct that brings dishonor and indignity to the whole institution.

Recent behavior by Rep. Eastman was just that. There was broad agreement in the House that the statements and insinuations Rep. Eastman repeated were false and offensive. They insulted the dignity and integrity of Alaska Native women and all Alaska women and offended the moral sense of all principled Alaskans.

I did not come to my decision to support censuring Rep. Eastman all at once. He was given many opportunities to apologize for his statements. However, rather than show even a small sign of sincere remorse, he instead used those opportunities to reiterate his appalling allegations in media interviews and even on the House floor.

As I watched Rep. Eastman continue making groundless and degrading comments against Alaska Native women, I thought about my Aleut heritage and about my daughters and what I might explain to them about abuse towards women. I also thought about my legacy as the first Alaska Native Speaker, and the responsibility I feel to promote increased tolerance and mutual respect among the diverse people living in the state.

In the end, unfortunately, my decision was easy. Such reprehensible conduct had to be answered with serious consequences, and if we set a historical precedent in the House in doing so, then so be it. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and the times in which people had to stomach such cruel and intolerant behavior should be forever in Alaska's past.

## On Deck Next Week...

(S)FINANCE Standing Committee  
May 13 **Saturday** 9:00 AM  
HB 111 OIL & GAS PRODUCTION  
TAX;PAYMENTS;CREDITS

(H)FINANCE Standing Committee  
May 13 **Saturday** 1:15 PM  
**SB23 APPROP: CAPITAL BUDGET**  
Public Testimony  
Time Limit 2 Minutes  
Testimony will begin at 1:30 PM  
Sign in at your LIO or call by 2:00 PM  
Call 465-4648 to obtain call in number

(H)CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON  
HB57 AND HB59 Conference Committee  
May 15 **Monday** 1:00 PM  
HB 57 APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/  
LOANS/FUNDS  
HB 59 APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH  
BUDGET

(H)FINANCE Standing Committee  
May 15 **Monday** 1:30 PM  
SB 23 APPROP: CAPITAL BUDGET

HB 105 DENALI WOLF SPECIAL MAN-  
AGEMENT AREA

HB 151 DHSS;CINA; FOSTER CARE;  
CHILD PROTECTION

(H)TRANSPORTATION  
May 16 **Tuesday** 1:00 PM  
HB 247 RAYMOND CONQUEST  
BRIDGE

(H)LABOR & COMMERCE Committee  
May 17 **Wednesday** 3:15 PM  
HB 180 MONEY SERVICES BUSINESS:  
REQS; LICENSING;  
HB 240 PHARMACY BENEFITS MAN-  
AGERS



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