



Representative Chris Tuck

Alaska House Majority Coalition Leader

Serving House District 23 • Dimond Estates, Foxridge, Taku, Campbell, Northwood, and Windemere

Sponsor Statement House Bill 364 Perm Leg Cmte Appts/Unorganized House

The Alaska Legislative Council and the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee perform important functions for the operation of the Legislature, overseeing the nonpartisan staff of the Legislative Affairs Agency, the Legislative Finance Division, and the Division of Legislative Audit. In addition, the Legislative Council provides policies and procedures that ensure the smooth running of the legislative buildings and the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee has important oversight over the financial functions of the State of Alaska. Although these are classified as interim committees in statute, their functionality is important whether or not the Alaska State Legislature is in session.

Because the membership of these joint committees is appointed by the presiding officers, the committees cannot form until both bodies of the Legislature have organized. This can leave a period of time where these committees do not exist, as has happened in recent years. This could lead to multiple problems, including legislative audits not being released timely, delays in procurement necessary to complete audits timely, contracts and leases expiring without being renewed, inability to expend funds in an emergency situation, and complications in litigation to which the Legislature is a party.

House Bill 364 establishes a procedure for appointing temporary members to the committees so that important business may be undertaken if necessary. The unorganized body's temporary members would be filled by membership from the previous year and then by seniority. This would allow the committees to continue seamlessly from one session to the next utilizing the members of the unorganized body with the most experience with the committees and the legislature. Once the body organized, permanent members would be appointed in the normal manner.

HB 364 also provides for minority caucus representation on both committees by specifying that the minority leader (or their designee) serves on the committee, rather than differentiating by party. Since statehood, it has been the exception rather than the rule that caucuses are formed strictly along party lines and membership on these important committees should reflect that.

Finally, HB 364 modernizes the statutes related to Legislative Council and Legislative Budget and Audit, changing the term "chairman" to "chair."

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