

City of Dillingham

House District 37 / Senate District S

~ 1/29/2021 ~

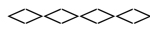
(Day 11)

32nd Alaska State Legislature ~ 1st Session

JANUARY 2021 – LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Cliff Stone / City Lobbyist

~ **House still not organized – reminiscent of 2019** ~



If you've ever seen the movie *Ground Hog Day* you'll begin to have a sense of what must be going through the minds of some Alaskans. We seem to be living in 2019 all over again. During that first session of the 31st State Legislature, it took 31 days to organize the House and finally get down to business.

We're not close to that record-breaking scenario, but it does seem like we're caught in a time wrap. I reviewed the opening paragraphs of what I wrote for a lobby report that year and I could almost copy and paste certain elements of that narrative for this report.

Here's a brief excerpt of what I wrote in 2019 – "*The House is another story. They are still in a stalemate concerning their organization. Lt. Governor Kevin Meyer was able to swear all members into office...*" All of that is true for this session as well. Before Jan. 19th, a preliminary vote was taken by the House members, but the final tally was 20 – 20 for a certain individual to become Speaker. Since then very little progress has been made with both sides digging in.

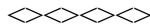
As I stated in my December report, Rep. Louise Stutes, a Republican from Kodiak has aligned herself with the Democrats and Independents, thus making their loose coalition of 20 members. Who ever is successful in forming a Majority, it will undoubtedly be precarious as only one or two members are likely to join one or the other. There is also talk of a 60-day session because of the pandemic and limiting exposure. My thinking is that it will boil down to how many people are able to be vaccinated and how soon to give them a sense of safety and security from the virus. We'll have to wait and see.

Meanwhile the Senate is organized and able to conduct business, although stunted to some degree without the House Majority being formed. Senator Peter Micciche of Soldotna was officially named President of the Senate. Once again the Senate organization consists of all 13 Republicans and one Democrat, that being Senator Lyman Hoffman representing District S – which includes Dillingham. Senator Shelley Hughes of Palmer will be the Majority Leader with Senator Mia Costello as the Majority Whip. Hoffman is once again on the finance committee and will certainly be watching out for budget items and bills affecting Dillingham.

Rounding out the leadership team for the Majority is Senator Bert Stedman of Sitka as co-chair of Finance along with Senator Click Bishop of Fairbanks serving along side Stedman as the other co-chair. It appears that Stedman will handle the operating budget side and Bishop the Capital side. Senator Gary Stevens of Kodiak will chair the Senate Rules Committee. This is a significant position, as he will control what legislation comes before the floor. Not to age myself, but Gary and I have known each other for going on 45 years. He's a good guy! Senator Tom Begich of Anchorage will serve as the Minority Leader for the Democrats.

Additionally, all of the standing committee chairs and memberships for the Senate have been determined and is posted online. See the following website: <http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Committee/List/32>
The Senate has also named members to some of the joint committees. Finance sub-committee memberships will be forthcoming as determined by the full Finance Committee.

As a side bar, we came fairly close to a Senate organization with a combination of moderate Republicans and Democrats. It all fell apart just a few days before the gavel dropped on the new Legislature. From my sources, a certain member wanted a chairmanship that had already been promised to someone else. That's when it all started to unravel.

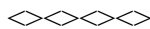


CAPITOL ACCESS

I felt like this next topic needed a headline all to itself since the public will be restricted once again from the Capitol. In addition, the public will be barred as well as members of the news media will be prohibited from entering the House and Senate chambers. Lawmakers must wear masks under a set of new anti-COVID rules approved by the Legislative Council. However, all of these rules are under a legal cloud since the House is still not organized.

Lawmakers question whether the Legislative Council's vote has power past Jan. 19, when the legislative session began. Typically the Council is "in charge" during the interim, but since we don't have a presiding officer yet in the House, it becomes a sort of a blur where the lines intersect. Hopefully the fog will lift soon and we can get down to business.

Legislators are also being asked to quarantine after traveling to or from Juneau and are being discouraged from making their usual return-to-district trips during the session.



PRE-FILED BILLS and NEWLY INTRODUCED

I highlighted the following bills and subject matter in an email to the City as items of interest. I will follow these more closely as the session proceeds. During the course of the session, more bills or resolutions will present themselves as pieces of legislation that I will report to you on and monitor. As of Jan. 15th, the House had pre-filed 67 bills and 2 joint resolutions. The latest count for the Senate is 56 bills and 7 joint resolutions as of Jan. 25th. See "Budget Bills" highlighted later in this report. As in the past, if you see a bill that you want tracked, I will be happy to do so and report accordingly.

HB 1 – CARES Act related

HB 4 – COVID-19 related

SB 6 and **SB 37** – PERS/TRS related

HB 55 – PERS related/Peace officers and Firefighters

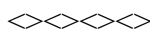
HB 56 – Power Cost Equalization (PCE)

HB 67 – K-12 special funding to mitigate effects of COVID-19

Other newly introduced bills by the Senate since the session started are as follows.

SB 55 – Employer Contributions to PERS

SB 56 – Extending the COVID-19 Disaster Emergency



BUDGET BILLS 2021

For a handy reference, below are the budget-type bills that have been introduced so far this year. They will be considered through out this first session. When other budget type bills are introduced, I'll bring those to your attention. Note: Since the House is still not organized; they cannot introduce any new legislation beyond the pre-files already on record. The last one of those was recorded on Jan. 15th. They have adjourned until Feb. 1, 2021. The Senate has continued to introduce new legislation. They have adjourned until today (Jan. 29th).

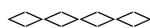
- **HB xxx / SB 48 – Supplemental Appropriations (FY21)**
- **HB xxx / SB 49 – FY22 Operating Budget**
- **HB xxx / SB 50 – FY22 Capital Budget with reappropriations and making supplemental appropriations**
- **HB xxx / SB 51 – FY22 Mental Health Budget**
- **SB 52 – Appropriation from the ERA for payment of the PFD**
- **HB 56 – Power Cost Equalization**
- **HB 57 – CBR Sweep Provisions**
- **HB 67 – K-12 Appropriation for Academic Recovery from COVID-19**
- **HJR 1 – Constitutional Amendment: Permanent Fund, POMV, and Earnings**
- **SJR 5 – Constitutional Amendment: Budget Reserve Appropriation Limit**
- **SJR 6 – Constitutional Amendment: Permanent Fund and PFD's**
- **SJR 7 – Constitutional Amendment: State Tax Voter Approval**

As I described in my December report, the governor had introduced the FY22 budget a little early and dubbed it as “A Path Forward.”

Just to restate, in addition to the mandated budgets for the new fiscal year he has recommended a multitude of “Express Capital” budget items ranging from the PFD to fisheries projects to construction and maintenance projects. As reported, the most encouraging proposal is an Infrastructure Bond package in the amount of \$300 – \$350 million. This funding would build roads, bridges, airport runways, **ports and harbors**, along with renewable energy projects. If this last proposition begins to gain traction, a reminder to your district legislators as to the importance of your harbor will be in order. I will follow this one closely.

Create Your Own Budget for the State of Alaska

Commonwealth North has created an **online tool** that allows Alaskans to modify most aspects of Alaska's budget, so revenues match up with expenses. As many of you know, Alaska is at a budget crossroads, and difficult decisions must be made to preserve essential services and ensure Alaska remains a vibrant and successful place to live, work and play. While the tool isn't perfect, I think users will gain a deeper insight into our state budget and get an idea how budget cuts, taxes and investments in state services impact our bottom line. In case the link above doesn't work: <https://www.akbudget.com/>

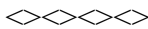


FISH & GAME BUDGET

The agency is proposing to collapse four different regional commercial fisheries management components, plus a statewide management component, into a single “commercial fisheries” component with a \$73 million budget in all funds. The Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) will remain its own component with a \$3.1 million budget. It will be interesting to watch the sub-committee process and the discussion on this proposal.

ADF&G also wants authority to collect up to \$5 million for Commercial Fisheries due to increases in federal grants and fishery disasters from 2016 and 2018, and possibly 2020. This one is a no brainer and will be probably be approve without much discussion.

In looking at some of the other department budgets, nothing stands out that would affect your area, but I will continue to scrub through those documents and I'll listen to the ongoing discussions in the respective finance committees.



COVID-19

Mayor Ruby ask me to be part of Dillingham's COVID-19 EO Team so I can track, monitor, and engage at the Juneau level on related issues and news coming out of the governor's office, the state's Department of Health & Social Services, and their division of Public Health. I'm also monitoring COVID-19 topics and updates at the federal level.

Since then I have provided general information, press releases, and orders from the governor related to the COVID. Hopefully this has allowed the community to comment in a timely fashion to various proposals and directives coming out from numerous entities within the state government. A handy reference tool that everybody can access is the state's "Vaccine Updates" signup at the following link:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/AKDHSS/signup/16046>

The following state resources can be helpful for getting the vaccine:

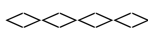
Use Alaska's [PrepMod website](#) to book online or

Use [Vaccine Providers List](#) to call the providers in your community directly

For scheduling or information about COVID-19 vaccine in Alaska: www.covidvax.alaska.gov

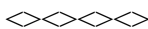
If you need assistance to book your appointment, call Vaccine Scheduling Call Center at 907-646-3322

As I posted in my December report, if you or anybody in the community suspects they've been a target of fraudulent information or requests regarding COVID-19 vaccines, they should **notify the Medicare Information Office at hss.medicare@alaska.gov via email or call 1-800-478-6065 immediately!**



CARES ACT

I'm also keeping abreast of any CARES related funding from the state to municipalities for various programs within your community. The additional funding will affect so many vital areas in your administration and the public including the fishing industry and fishermen in general. Gregg has asked me to be sure I monitor this issue on the federal level as well for anything that might be forthcoming as additional monies for the state. I will report accordingly.



GOVERNOR'S CORNER <http://gov.alaska.gov>

Handy phone numbers for Governor's offices: Anchorage: 907-269-7450 and Juneau: 907-465-3500

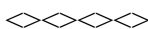
The governor delivered his third state of the state address on January 28, 2021. He emphasized the importance of self-reliance, energy independence, maximizing opportunities, and the need to guarantee the PFD for future generations. Access can be gained by going to the website above or the following link: <https://gov.alaska.gov/newsroom/2021/01/28/2021-state-of-the-state-address/>

On January 18, 2021, Governor Dunleavy announced the appointment of Clyde "Ed" Sniffen to the position of Attorney General. Sniffen was named acting Attorney General in August 2020.

The governor has introduced a bill (SB 56) relating to the extension of the public health disaster issued on January 15, 2021. This bill would extend the public health disaster emergency period to the end of the federal fiscal year, September 30, 2021, or until the commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services certifies to the governor that there is no longer an outbreak of COVID-19 or an imminent threat of an outbreak in the State of Alaska, whichever is earlier.

The existing public health disaster declaration expires on February 15, 2021. Only the Alaska Legislature can extend the public health disaster beyond 30 days. The full text for SB 56 can be [found here](#).

On January 14, 2021, Governor Dunleavy issued a Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration effective 12:00am, January 15, 2021, until 12:00am February 14, 2021, due to the continuation of the COVID-19 virus in the State of Alaska. The Disaster Declaration enables the state’s ongoing response to the increased outbreak of COVID-19 and is necessary to manage the efficient and orderly administration of vaccines to Alaskans and address a new strain of the SARS-CoV-2 virus identified in January 2021.

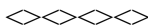


IMPORTANT DATES

***15th Legislative Day (Feb. 2nd) – Supplemental Budget Deadline.** This is for the current fiscal year FY21 and includes both Operating and Capital Budget requests of the Governor. It is also the last day for the governor to transmit appointments for his cabinet, boards, and commissions to the Legislature. *(By law, the governor has to submit his proposals for supplementing the fiscal year 2021 budget that are due to unforeseen circumstance that forced an agency to spend more money than they were allocated.)*

***30th Legislative Day (Feb. 17th) – Budget Amendments Deadline.** This is for the next fiscal year’s budget FY22 beginning July 1st.

March 31st – 2021 PFD Filing Deadline



TESTIFYING

If you are planning to testify on any particular bill or subject matter, check the committee calendar the day of or the day before the scheduled hearing as sometimes a bill is rescheduled or cancelled at the last minute. You should also be able to ascertain if they are even accepting public testimony on any particular day. If you can’t attend a hearing at your local LIO you can participate by using the following numbers.

The **toll-free number** can only be used if you have had prior approval to call in from the appropriate committee chair. That number will be distributed upon your request and subsequent approval.

In Juneau the number is: (907) 463-5009.

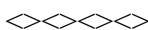
Go to: <http://www.akleg.gov/basis/start.asp> for a complete description of a bill that is up in committee. Fiscal notes and other documents that the legislative office has posted in regards to that particular bill should also be available. Type in the appropriate bill/resolution number in the space provided.

Remember – Bills that have already been heard or previous scheduled in committee can come back before that body without prior notification.

Live on the Web [www.360north.org]

Most committee hearings can be seen and heard on Gavel Alaska/360 North on the web or look for Cable Channel-18 in Juneau. You can also access schedules, various programs, and online archives from the website above. *Note: With COVID-19 restrictions, Gavel Alaska will not be broadcasting as normal.*

You might have to go to the following website: www.alaskalegisature.TV



WEBSITES OF INTEREST

! COVID-19 ~ Information ! / <https://covid19.alaska.gov>

In Alaska, a COVID-19 Help Line has been set up at **211** or dial: 1-800-478-2221

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Capitol is closed to the public. To reach your legislator, please find Senate contact information [here](#) and House of Representatives contact information [here](#). For the latest COVID-19 information, please visit the [Alaska Department of Health & Social Services](#).

* U.S. REAL ID Compliant license – deadline extended to October 1, 2021.

- <http://doa.alaska.gov/dmv/>

Online Public Notices for Alaska <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/default.aspx>

2021 Alaska Legislature Publications List <http://akleg.gov/publications.php>

(Constantly being updated)

2021 1st Session Staff Contact List (Currently being updated)

Legislators by District <http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/Legislators-by-District.pdf>

Legislature Photo Sheet <http://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/Legislator-Photo-Sheet.pdf>

Representative Bryce Edgmon: 907-465-4451 // Senator Lyman Hoffman: 907-465-4453

Congressional Delegation websites

<http://murkowski.senate.gov/public>

www.sullivan.senate.gov

<http://donyoung.house.gov>

DC Phone Number

Murkowski: 202-224-6665

DC Phone Number

Sullivan: 202-224-3004

DC Phone Number

Young: 202-225-5765

Anchorage Phone Nr

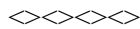
Murkowski: 907-271-3735

Anchorage Phone Nr

Sullivan: 907-271-5915

Anchorage Phone Nr

Young: 907-271-5978



~ End Report ~

Have a blessed and joyous New Year. Stay safe and strong! ~ Cliff