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The 32nd Alaskan Legislative Session Has Begun

January 2021

*Sutton / Valdez / Glennallen / Delta Junction / Ft. Greely / Whittier Chickaloon,
Paxton / Eureka / Big Delta
Farm Loop / Fishhook / Sheep Mountain / Glacier View*



The 32nd Alaskan Legislative Session has begun as of the January 19th, when

20 State Senators and 40 State Representatives were sworn in by Lt. Governor Kevin Myers. This session has proven to be somewhat of a challenge, much the same as last session. Twenty-one Republicans, fifteen Democrats, and four Independents were elected to the State House this year. One Republican, Representative Louise Stutes, decided to caucus with the Democrats and the Independents. So there are only 20 representatives left in the republican camp and 20 representatives in the democrat camp.

The Senate has organized under Senator Peter Micciche as their President with 13 Republicans and one Democrat; they are a non-binding caucus.

Because the House is evenly split, they have not been able to agree on a Speaker. Nor have they been able to find a Pro-Temp to run the House Floor Sessions every three days, while they decide amongst themselves how to establish a leadership team.

Brief Summary of Bills I've Introduced **(click each title for the full bill)**

[HB1: Audit of Cares Act Funds](#)

The CARES Act was passed and funded by our federal government to make sure that states and Americans had some assistance with multitudes of things during the COVID crisis. Over \$1Billion came into Alaska. I introduced this bill to make sure those funds were accounted for properly. It directs the legislative audit division as well as the Governor's Office of Management and Budget conduct full audits of all CARES Act funds with reports due next January.

[HB2: Minimum Age to sell Tobacco/Nicotine](#)

This bill DOES NOT change the age to purchase nicotine. Rather, it lowers the age to sell nicotine products. If this bill were to pass, an 18yro store clerk could sell nicotine products to someone of legal age to purchase. This bill is aimed at employment and making sure our young adults have as many job options locally as possible.

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[HB7: Interactive Computer SVC Content Restriction](#)

This bill would prohibit the censorship of user content on interactive computer services and social media platforms unless the user content is obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable.

[HB11: Defensive Display of Firearm](#)

This bill removes “defensive display of a firearm” from inclusion as assault in the 3rd degree. It defines “defensive display of a firearm” to include open carrying, verbally informing another person of possession, holding a firearm in a position that DOES NOT point the firearm directly at another person, displaying the firearm to dissuade a threatening person, and warning another person of the availability of a firearm to dissuade a threat.

[HB12: Hold Legislative Sessions in Anchorage](#)

This bill would allow the legislature to convene and hold the legislative session in Anchorage, where the body is accessible to the majority of Alaskans. It carries the current restrictions of lobbying and fundraising in place at the Capitol to Anchorage for the duration of the session.

[HB13: Shared Child Custody: best interest](#)

This bill would allow, when it is in the best interest of the child, that parents can have full joint custody in the form of 50/50 custody, which is currently not attainable.

[HB23: Ballot Custody/Tamper; Voting Voter Reg](#)

This bill does several things to help ensure the integrity of our voting system and process. First, it removes the automatic voter registration from the PFD application. Next, it creates a chain of custody for ballot security for used and unused paper ballots and ensures that all ballots are contained in a single location until after the certification of the election. It creates a toll-free elections offense hotline. Ensures notification of rejected ballots and creates a free

system to check on the status of your ballot. It prevents absentee voting by facsimile, creates signature verification on absentee ballots, and prohibits ballot harvesting.

[HB29: Electric Utility Liability](#)

This bill ensures that Electric Utilities are not held liable for damage within their right-of-way if it is caused by objects or trees originating beyond that boundary where the utility has no authority to mitigate the danger. It also ensures that utilities adopt and adhere to a vegetation management plan that will direct them to work with agencies or property owners to mitigate danger trees adjacent to the right of way.

[HB32: Immunity for RV Parks, Campgrounds](#)

This bill would ensure that RV parks and campgrounds are not liable for civil damages to guest property resulting from things outside the control of the park or campground or are considered inherent risks of camping such as uneven terrain, natural bodies of water, severe weather, wild animals, and the like.



The New Administration Presents Challenges For Alaska

President Joe Biden has taken office and his administration is proving to be a challenge to the economy of Alaska. Reversing much of the decisions created by the previous administration concerning permitting and regulations affect resource development in Alaska. Some of the main targets have been reversing exploration and development agreements in ANWAR, permitting off shore drilling and exploration, and stopping federal land grants to entities in this state. In spite of federal attempts to limit exploration and resource development, the Alaska House Republicans stand united and ready to defend expansion of Alaska's responsible resource development.

No COVID Vaccine Expediencies For Legislators

There will be no allowances for legislators to acquire COVID vaccinations before the public. We will have to fall into the same categories as the rest of the populous. As most are not over 65 years, most will not get a vaccination until their demographic is allowed statewide.

Constituent and Lobbyist Visitations

Presently there are no constituent visitations allowed at in the capitol. This is also the rule for lobbyists. I will meet with constituents that make scheduled appointments to speak with me somewhere in town, away from the capitol. Because I will need to leave the capital to make those appointments, they are going to be limited. Most of the committee meetings are done in the capitol or on line in our office.





The Legislative Prison Ministries



Each year, I have lead the prison ministry program at the Lemon Creek Correctional Center with 80 or so prisoners. I have invited other legislators and staff to visit the Correctional Center while in session with music, song, prayer, fellowship and a sermon. Due to COVID-19, we are not allowed to enter the prison at this time. We are working on a way to Zoom it live for them.

COVID-19 Testing at the Capitol

The COVID virus has caused complications here at the capital. Legislative Council (the accepted legal entity to dictate operational procedures here at the capitol) has authorized \$1.5 million of State funds to Beacon, Inc. to monitor the safety of the 32nd legislative session. We are required to be tested every five days, our temperatures must be taken daily before allowed to enter the building, and questionnaires must be filled out daily on our medical condition; only legislators, their staff, maintenance workers, reporters and building office and administration are allowed in at this time.

Any legislator testing positive must be quarantined for 14 days and pass a COVID test before entering the building again. Testing positive would keep you from voting on any legislation at this point.





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