

Alaska Legislative Process 101

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The Alaska Legislature

- Each year the Alaska Legislature convenes the legislative session in Juneau on the second Tuesday in January.
- Each Legislature consists of two sessions, lasting for a period of 90 days each.
- Alaska's legislature is bicameral, meaning that it consists of two chambers.
 - Senate
 - House of Representatives

Alaska State Senate

- Alaska has twenty Senate districts across the state.
- There is one Senator per Senate district, therefore we have twenty Senators.
- Senate members serve four-year terms.
- The Senate is presided over by the Senate President.

Alaska State House of Representatives

- Each Senate district in Alaska has two corresponding House districts, therefore we have forty members in the House of Representatives.
- Members in the House serve two-year terms.
- The House of Representatives is presided over by the Speaker of the House.

Lets Talk Legislation!

How a bill is born!

- A bill begins as an idea. These ideas come from a legislator, their staff, a constituent, professional organizations, a legislative committee...
- A bill must be introduced by a legislator, legislative committee, or the Governor via the Rules Committee.
- Whoever introduces the bill is the bill sponsor and will be responsible for “carrying the bill” through the committee process.

Introduction of a Bill

- Bills introduced by the legislature have to be formally drafted and printed by the Legislative Legal Department.
- Once the bill is in its final form, it is introduced during floor session in either the Senate or the House.
- After the bill is read by the clerk (this is known as the “first reading”), the presiding officer refers that bill to the appropriate committees.
 - Most bills receive two to three committees of referral.

Committees

- Each body has ten standing committees.
 - Education
 - Finance
 - Health & Social Services
 - Judiciary
 - Labor & Commerce
 - Community & Regional Affairs
 - Resources
 - Rules
 - State Affairs
 - Transportation

Committee Makeup

- Each committee has an odd number of members and is presided over by a chairperson.
- In order to conduct business, the committee must have a quorum (at least half of their members must be present).

Committee Hearing

- Once a bill is referred to a committee, the bill sponsor must submit a memo to the chair of the committee to request a hearing.
- Once the Chairperson schedules the bill, the sponsor will present the bill to the committee, public testimony is heard and members on the committee have the opportunity to ask questions of the sponsor and debate and vote on the bill.
- Modifications in the form of additional language, deletions of language, and technical changes can be made in committee by making “amendments”. If there is objection to the amendment, a vote will be called.
- Once discussion/debate on the bill and amendments to the bill have been concluded, the bill is voted on by committee members.
- If the bill receives support from the majority of the members on the committee, it moves out of committee and moves on to the next committee of referral.

Movement from one house to the other...

- When a bill has made its way through the committee process, it is then scheduled by the Rules Chair for consideration by the entire body during floor session.
- When the bill is brought back before the full body and read across by the clerk, this is known as “second reading”.
- When the body concludes amendments, discussion and debate, the bill is voted on in “second reading”. If the bill passes “second reading” it moves to “third reading”, this is when the FINAL vote in that body is made.
- If the bill is in third reading, it can be returned to second reading for the purpose of a specific amendment to the bill.
- Once the bill passes third reading, it is then transmitted to the other body for consideration. The bill will go through the same process on the other side.

Final Passage

- If a bill is amended in its second body of referral, the bill has to go back to the original body for “concurrence”.
- If the originating body does not accept the changes to the bill, a conference committee will be appointed by the presiding officers and the bill will be considered in conference committee.
- Once a final version is agreed upon by both bodies, the bill is signed by both the Senate President and the Speaker of the House and transmitted to the Governor for his signature.

Bill Becomes Law

- The Governor has several options once a bill arrives on his/her desk.
 - He/she can sign the bill, making it law.
 - He/she can allow the bill to sit on his/her desk without signature and it automatically becomes law 90 days after passage (unless another “effective date” is specified in the bill).
 - He/she can veto the bill.

Alaska Legislative Budget

- The Alaska Constitution requires the Governor to submit a budget and associated appropriation bills for the next fiscal year.
- The Constitution also bestows the power of appropriation to the legislature.
- Therefore, the Governor submits the budgets to the legislature for their consideration and approval. The Legislature has the ability to amend the budgets during this process and eventually vote on the final versions of the budgets that will go back to the Governor for his signature.

Different Types of Budgets

- The Governor typically submits the following appropriations bills for legislative consideration:
 - Operating Budget
 - Mental Health Budget (containing operating and capital mental health appropriations)
 - Two Supplemental Budgets (one fast-track & one slow-track)
 - Capital Budget

Operating Budget

- Annual appropriations covering ongoing operations of state programs.
- Operating budget appropriations are typically made for a fiscal year, with unexpected unobligated funds lapsing at the end of the fiscal year.

Capital Budget

- An appropriation for items that have an anticipated life that exceeds one year and that usually costs more than \$25,000.
- Capital budget appropriations generally lapse after a five-year period.
- Often times projects are completed and funds are left over. These funds will most times be re-appropriated to an entirely new project.
- If a project is not completed in the 5 year time period and funds are still left over, an time extension can be requested to complete the existing project.

Supplemental Budget

- An appropriation increasing or decreasing the operating or capital budget for the CURRENT fiscal year.
- Departments at the State level occasionally have expenses that exceed their expected budget. In this case, they submit a request to the Governor and the legislature to have additional funds placed into the supplemental budget that will become available to them in the same fiscal year, if approved.

Operating Budget Process

- 1.) State agencies prepare their budget requests
- 2.) Requests are submitted to Office of Management & Budget (OMB) for consideration by the director and Governor.
- 3.) Final budget requests approved by OMB Director and Governor are submitted to the legislature in both bodies.
- 4.) The bills are automatically referred to the Finance committees on each side.
- 5.) Finance Subcommittees are appointed by the presiding officers to handle each department's budget request.
- 6.) Each Subcommittee considers the budgets and makes recommendations to the full Finance Committee.
- 7.) The full Finance Committee considers the bill, has opportunity to debate, discuss and amend. Then eventually pass the bill out of committee.
- 8.) The bills go to the floor to be considered by the full body in "second reading". After floor amendments and discussion/debate, the bill moves to "third reading" for a final vote.
- 9.) And as all other bills do, the operating budget has to travel through both bodies and have concurrence from the originating body. If it starts in the Senate, it will end up back in the Senate for final approval/vote. If the two bodies cannot agree on the budget, the items they cannot agree on will end up in conference committee.
- 10.) When the legislature passes the budget, it is transmitted to the Governor for his consideration and signature. The Governor has 20 working days (excluding Sundays) to review the bill and exercise line item veto power, if desired.
- 11.) The bill becomes law and is typically effective on the first day of a fiscal year.

Capital Budget

- What is typically included in a capital appropriations bill?
 - New infrastructure construction
 - Capital improvements to existing infrastructure
 - Infrastructure maintenance/deferred maintenance
 - Information technology upgrades
 - Equipment purchases
 - Materials stockpiling
 - State equipment fleet replacement
 - Trail/parks construction and maintenance
 - Land purchases
 - Grants to Municipalities, Communities and Organizations.

Developing the Capital Budget Bill

1. Governor submits his budget to the legislature.
2. Identical capital budget bills are introduced and referred to the finance committees in each body.
3. It is common that one body will begin work on the capital budget early while the other begins work on the operating budget early.
4. It is customary for one co-chair of each body's finance committee to oversee review and modification of the capital budget bill.
5. Full Finance Committee meetings are held to consider the bill, hear public testimony and make amendments.
6. Staff to the Finance Committee works with all members of their respective bodies to compile the requests from each legislator/legislative district.
7. Each body's Finance Committee eventually produces a Committee Substitute that includes that body's amendments/recommendations.

CAPSIS

CApital PProject Submission and Information System

- CAPSIS is the Legislative Finance Capital Project Submission and Information System. Created in 2007, and under continuous refinement, this internet based user interface allows for each legislative office to input their capital project priorities for submission to the co-chair's office. In depth information for each project is captured in a digital format that can be retained in perpetuity and readily located by Legislative Finance. The information is also made available to the public on the internet, as well as be transmitted to OMB for post session veto analysis.

Capital Budget Bill Becomes Law

- After the capital budget bill has been considered by the legislature and passed and the Governor signs it into law, the grants will become available in the following fiscal year.
- MOA will receive notification from Department of Commerce Community & Economic Development that the grant has become available.
- Before the funds are received, a grant agreement must be reached between the State and the MOA.
 - MOA reviews the grant language/scope and makes sure the project description matches our intentions for the funds.
 - MOA & the State then sign an agreement stating that the funds will be spent specifically for the purposes stated in the appropriation language.
 - Again, the grantee typically has 5 years to spend the funds or the grant will lapse.

Municipality of Anchorage

Developing our Budget & Request to
the Legislature

MOA's Budget Process

- Community Council surveys are sent out to all councils within MOA.
- Mayor's office communicates with each Anchorage legislator on what their top priorities are.
- Departments submit their priority lists through Team Budget
- The budget is formally introduced during their first meeting in October. They are required to have at least two public hearings on the proposed budget, which are held during the months of October and November.
- Work sessions are held to allow the Assembly members to ask questions and get additional information from the Administration and various departments on the proposed budget.
- The Assembly has the opportunity to make amendments to the proposed budget during meetings that generally take place in late November/early December.
- The Anchorage Charter requires that the Assembly approve the budget 21 days prior to the end of the year (December 10).

Forming the Legislative Program/Requests

- The legislative program is provided to the legislature each year and includes all of the projects included in the approved budget.
- Once the program is in its final form, it is presented to the Assembly for their consideration, discussion and amendments.
- Once the Assembly approves the Program, it is printed in its final form and provided to all 60 Legislators.

Thank you!

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