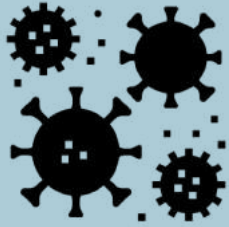


Legislative Context & Process

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Advocacy**

**AASB Virtual
Legislative Academy
March 20, 2021**

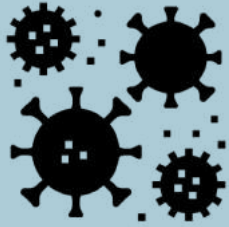




COVID -19 and the Legislative Process

Legislative Council implemented safety protocols

- Capitol closed to all but legislators, staff, limited press
- Capitol personnel must be tested every 4-5 days
- Daily temperature checks required
- CDC approved face masks required
- Legislators & Staff requested to limit travel outside of Juneau



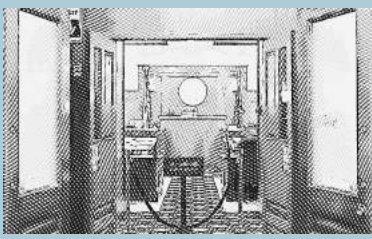
COVID -19 and the Legislative Process

- House shut down all committee meetings for two days due to exposure.
- As of the week of March 8-12 there were 7 positive tests and 22 close contacts. This includes 1 hospitalization.
- 1 legislator was barred from common spaces, floor, & committee rooms due to a refusal to wear a CDC approved mask. Another was asked to leave the floor for a refusal to don a mask.
- There is a high level of concern among leadership over the possibility of an outbreak.
- Senate has passed a concurrent resolution to suspend Uniform Rules to permit digital attendance at hearings and floor sessions.



Where Is the Senate?

- Senate organized within 1 day of the convening of the session. Committees are meeting and bills are being heard by committees of referral.
- Senate leadership has a goal of having a budget finalized and ready for transmission by mid March. Realistically, it may be closer to the end of March.
- Senate Finance Committee has almost completed their in-depth review of the elements of the budget.
- Finance Committee Subcommittees are well into their hearings on administration budgets.
- The challenges are the CBR, ER, PF, sustainable draw on the PF (POMV), new sources of revenue.
- They will likely put some of these items aside to work on over the interim.



Where Is the House?

- The failure of the House to organize has severely hampered their ability to consider any policy legislation.
- Having 10 freshmen members has exacerbated their inability to accomplish meaningful work.
- The Finance Committee is far behind in their examination of the budget. Typically, the House passes the Operational Budget for consideration and the Senate does the same for the Capital Budget. That may not work this session?
- The House Finance Committee Subcommittees are meeting on a full schedule – which has limited standing committee work.



Distractions from the “Real” Work

- Capitol personnel contraction of COVID and exposure to those infected.
- A recalcitrant Senator’s refusal to abide by Legislative Council COVID-19 protocols.
- Difficulty of House organization.
- Non-binding Senate majority caucus.
- House majority (15D’s, 2R’s, 4N/A’s) Minority (18R’s) 1 caucus of 1R.
- “Sense of the House” motion over Rep. Fields comments for Rep. Rasmussen’s birthday.



The “Glass Half Full” Story

- Senate Finance has held public hearings on 3 major appropriation bills (Operations, Capital, Mental Health).
- Senate Finance & House Finance Subcommittees are well along on their review of department budgets.
- Both bodies are committed to soon begin weekend and late evening meetings to speed up progress.
- Both bodies are taking “hard line” enforcement of Legislative Council COVID protective measures.
- Budget work is rapidly moving.



The “Glass Half Empty” Story

- Will the legislature wrap up the budget and adjourn?
- Doesn't seem to be much policy work in progress.
- Doubtful that much progress will be made during the session on a sustainable budget.
- If new revenue is not addressed during the 1st session – then the topic would need to be addressed during the 2nd session – and this would be an election year - not the time to be addressing new revenue (i.e. taxes!!!!).