



# *Your Guide* to **LOBBYING** *the* **ALASKA LEGISLATURE**



association of  
**ALASKA**  
school boards



# Your guide to Lobbying the Alaska Legislature

A Primer for Alaska School Board Members

*Whether you're an activist, running a nonprofit grassroots organization, or simply interested in communicating effectively with lawmakers, this is a valuable primer.*



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## Downtown Area Map



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## Chapter 1

# The Basics of Lobbying

*A primer for the advocate*

### Effective lobbying is based on:

- Knowledge of the issue
- Skill in communicating the facts and your views
- Personal contacts
- Patience, persistence, and timing

It is most people's nature to be shy of "politics" and "lobbying." They believe that community interests in the education of children or the environment would automatically result in informed and helpful state legislation. Today, however, a much more active legislature, responding to many worthwhile organizations, requires special attention so that lawmakers continue to give top priority to your issues. You must learn the tactics of politics and lobbying if you are to be successful.

### What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is the process whereby information is exchanged and constituents' views are made known to elected officials. The emphasis is on representing a point of view, not necessarily on getting a particular bill passed. There's a reason for that: Weeks, months, or even years may pass before the position you espouse is adopted by the legislature. Meanwhile, your viewpoint, if well expressed and backed up by facts, may be influencing government policy.

### The Alaska Legislature

The Alaska State Legislature has 20 senators and 40 representatives.

While the regular session of the Legislature each year generally runs from January through mid-April, the work of these legislators continues all year long. They often can be contacted in their district offices, which are located in or near your community.

Bills in the Legislature are screened by one or more standing committees in the House and in the Senate. The leadership of the House or Senate may also appoint special committees. Staff members of these committees are experts in the subject area and work throughout the year.

Every legislator is a member of multiple standing committees. He is particularly interested in subject matter dealt with in those committees. During a two-year period, these committees deal with hundreds of bills.

What does this mean for you, the lobbyist? It means that legislators have a great number of persons competing for their attention on a great number of subjects. Your job is to get attention for your issue.

## **Your Legislators**

Your senator and representative are the most important legislators for you. Your job as a lobbyist is to get well acquainted with them. To do so, you should have regular appointments with each of them during the year to discuss issues that are important to you and to find out what is going on in Juneau.

You don't have to go to Juneau to meet with them. Meet your senator and representative in their district office. It is important for you to get to know them before you ask them for something.

## **The Legislative Process**

In its barest essential, the legislative process is simple, and it offers you several occasions to influence outcome.

### **A bill comes into law this way:**

1. An idea comes to the attention of your senator or representative. This is the first point where you can influence legislation. You bring your idea to the legislator. If you work through an Association with a series of proposals to give to legislators, they may be expressed in resolutions adopted by the membership. You may also have local or individual concerns.
2. Division of Legal Services' Legislative Affairs Agency puts the idea into appropriate bill language.

3. The bill is introduced on the floor of the House or Senate for first reading and is referred to the appropriate committees. *This is the second point in which you can influence legislation.* You have a chance to influence the thinking of the members and staff of the committee on this bill. This is an excellent opportunity for bringing about change. Here is where you can get a bill amended the way you want it.
4. A bill approved by the standing committee which requires the expenditure of state funds must be sent for further review by the finance committee of that house (Senate or House Finance). Nearly all bills will be reviewed by the finance committee.

*This is the third point where you can influence legislation.* By communicating your views on a particular issue to the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Senate or House Finance Committee, and to your legislator if he or she is on either committee, you have another opportunity to influence the outcome.

5. If the committee approves the bill, it is then reported to the floor for second and third readings.  
*This is the fourth point where you can influence legislation.* Let your legislator know how you want him/her to vote. Tell him/her why the bill is important to you. Even if you told him/her at an earlier stage in the process, it is important to state the school board's position again.
6. Once the bill is passed in one house, it is referred to an appropriate committee in the other house and undergoes a process basically the same as that in the house in which it originated. *Again you have opportunities for lobbying.*
7. Once passed in both houses, the bill goes to the governor for his approval or veto. *This is the final point where you can influence legislation.* You should write to the governor and the governor's counsel, expressing your school board's view and giving your most cogent argument for or against the bill.
8. When the bill is signed, it becomes law, taking effect on the date indicated on the bill.

How much of this can you do? Obviously not all of it. But, as you see, there are a number of opportunities to influence the course of legislation. (We will cover this in even more detail in Chapter 2 as we describe the committee process up close.)

## **The Act of Lobbying**

For the lobbyist, the job consists of:

- getting acquainted with the legislators who represent your area, and their staff members.
- presenting to them your arguments for your or your association's position on major issues.
- convincing them of the correctness of your position.
- getting them to take the action you seek on a particular bill or issue.

Your weapons are: 1) The facts and 2) your viewpoint. You represent an important vote in the legislator's district. Perhaps you represent a unit of local government, or a constituency. He or she is interested in listening. At first, you may only be able to convince the legislator that your arguments are valid, but not convince him/her to change his/her point of view. You may even be able only to attract his/her interest in the issue.

Your first meeting is an ice-breaker; the door will be open to your next and succeeding meetings.

Some people feel uncomfortable lobbying, as if there is something wrong with it. The fact is, you are doing the legislator and staff person a favor. You are bringing them a sample of how the local, voting population feels on the issue. Lobbyists are important to legislators as a source of information and understanding on the issues.

## **Visiting the Legislator**

Personal visits and written communications with lawmakers and staff are a part of a continuous year-long dialogue. Contacts over a period of time are more effective than visiting when a bill is coming up for a final vote.

Make an appointment. Identify who you are, your affiliation, if any, and what issues you wish to discuss. Send the legislator background materials for his/her information before you meet face to face. Learn about your legislator before you meet: his/her party affiliation, background, personal interests and concerns.

Groups of three to five individuals make for an effective meeting. Use your most knowledgeable and articulate individual as spokesperson to open the discussion. Then have each person share in the presentation.

## **Before the meeting**

Plan what you are going to say, and who is going to say it. Prepare back-



ground materials you are going to give to the legislator.

If you are speaking on particular bills, check on the status of those bills on the day before you have your meeting. That is, find out how far these bills have traveled in the legislative process. It is embarrassing to ask for a bill to be moved out of committee and be told that it has been moved already. Contact your nearest Legislative Information Office (LIO) or visit the state's online bill tracking system to check bill status. You will need to know the bill number and the body in which it originated (House or Senate).

## **At the Meeting**

- Be prompt if you have an appointment.
- Wear buttons for visibility, or a name tag with your name and affiliation.
- Be polite to secretaries and receptionists—they control access to people.
- Be sure to indicate you are a constituent. Let the legislator know the community affiliation you have. State that you represent your community's positions.

Be friendly, even if you disagree, whether you are speaking to legislators or staff members. Be polite, but firm, and avoid confrontations. (A few words about staff: Often, legislators are busy in committee meetings and in floor sessions. You may find yourself speaking with a legislative aide instead of a legislator. This is common. Staff are very interested in what you have to say, and they will pass on your concerns. A positive relationship with staff is important. For a list of legislator staff visit [www.legis.state.ak.us/infodocs/infodocs.htm](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/infodocs/infodocs.htm))

- Don't guess. If you don't know the answer to a question, volunteer to supply the same by mail.
- Don't assume the legislator has read—or remembers—the materials you sent him/her in advance.
- Take notes on any topic discussed.
- Leave materials. Position papers and resolutions are most helpful.
- Keep your visits brief and to the point. Give the legislator a chance to ask questions. Be prepared to get him back on the subject if he/she strays away from the issue you wish to discuss.
- Seek a specific commitment. However, don't interpret the legislator's unwillingness to make a commitment as opposition to your position. There may have been legitimate reasons for hesitation.
- Keep the door open for future contacts, even if a particular legislator appears to be negative to your views.
- Sign the guest book (and leave a message if you are unable to meet

with anyone).

- Follow up the visit with a note thanking the legislator for his/her time and summarizing the points you presented. Request a response to further questions.

## **The Confidence Factor**

You may be in awe of your legislator. He/she represents power and authority. He/she may attempt to impress you with his importance. Here's why you don't have to worry about the image of busyness or importance that the legislator and his/her staff may try to maintain:

1. You are from his/her election district. You represent a vote for the legislator. The legislator knows he/she may need your vote.
2. You are active in your community just as the legislator is. You represent a portion of the legislator's constituency.
3. You represent far more than one vote; you represent the sensibilities of like minded individuals or the viewpoint of those in your association. You will be speaking to many friends and acquaintances about this legislator during the year.
4. You are in the legislator's office for the purpose of giving him/her information about your (or your group's) views on issues that must be dealt with by the legislator. He or she needs your information.
5. After several visits, you will both feel more comfortable with each other.

An individual who is involved in legislative action is a student. You must be willing to read background materials and follow the progress of legislation through the press, mailings of associations, and other sources. Information is the key to effectiveness—so you need to do your homework.

## **Writing the Legislator**

Writing the legislator on major issues is an important aspect of lobbying. You should write even if you spoke to him/her last week on the same topic.

1. Your letter should clearly and concisely state why you want the bill.
2. Your legislator will have it for a reference.
3. He/she also can use it in deciding what his/her position will be on this issue. He/she weighs your views against the views of others who have expressed themselves on the issue.

## About your letter:

1. At the top of your letter, and on the lower left hand corner of the envelope, identify your topic; Re: Bill No.\_\_\_\_, Sponsor, Title
2. Keep you letter short, and to the point. A concise letter gets better attention.
3. Use plain stationery or personal stationery. If you are writing as the representative of an organization, say so.
4. A simple personal letter gets more attention than a form letter. Use your own words.
5. Be specific, and factual. Show how the bill affects your school district.
6. If you are knowledgeable about an issue, give the legislator the information on which you are basing your opinion.
7. Be courteous. Don't use threats-ever!
8. Write legibly. A typewriter isn't necessary.
9. Deal with just one issue in each letter. One letter, one issue.
10. Write correctly. Check your spelling, punctuation and meaning.
11. Know your legislator's full name and spell it correctly.
12. Let your legislator know you are watching his/her record with deep interest.
13. Don't forget to compliment your legislators when they work or vote for a piece of legislation important to you.

The same letter technique applies with regard to letters to legislative leaders and the governor.

### Sample of a Letter to a Legislator

Your task: Funding for local Head Start programs is at-risk. Your task is to let your legislator know you want him or her to support Head Start.

Dear Representative (last name):

As a parent with a small child at (name of school), I am writing to encourage you to support full and adequate funding for Head Start. Without your support, there will be many children and families who won't get the services they need and deserve.

Education is very important to me. Head Start gives me the opportunity to become involved in my child's education and future by (use your own words, explain how). This program has helped my family by (explain how), but most of all it has given my child the eagerness, excitement and readiness to learn.

I'd like to thank you for your time and ask that you support adequate funding for Head Start in any way you can. If you have further questions, you may contact me at (your address and phone). This program has made a difference in my life. I hope it will continue to make a difference in the lives of other families.

Sincerely,  
Your name

## Phoning Your Legislator(s)

At times, you will need to contact your legislator on a bill immediately. There is no time for the mail or telegrams. Use the telephone. When a critical bill is about to be voted upon, either in committee or on the floor, it will be urgent that the legislator receive your opinion. Call his/her Juneau office and ask to speak to the legislator. Then:

- Identify yourself by name, address and school district within his/her legislative district.
- Identify the bill by name and number.
- Briefly state what your position is and how you want your legislator to vote.
- Ask for your legislator's view on the bill or issue; be firm in obtaining a commitment on his/her vote.
- Show appreciation for his/her service or past votes. Be positive.
- If your legislator requires further information, supply it as quickly as possible.
- Do not be abusive and do not threaten.
- If you get an aide, identify yourself by name, address and area in the legislator's district. Identify the bill by name and number; and state how you would like your legislator to vote.

- If you want to discuss the bill more fully, ask the aide to relay your name and telephone number to your legislator and ask that your call be returned. Even if you are not able to speak to your legislators directly, your messages will be relayed and can add to the overall impact of your effort.
- Use the phone also to strengthen your contact with the legislator. Call him/her and ask for copies of a bill and to convey your opinions. Always identify yourself by name and affiliation.

## E-mail

E-mail is an excellent way to contact legislators. All Alaska legislator addresses use the following form:

Representative.Firstname.Lastname@akleg.gov

Emails, like letters and POM's, are fast, efficient ways to convey your message.

## Sample of an E-mail Message to a Legislator

*Your task: The Senate is considering legislation that would require increased monitoring of pollutants from cruise ships.*

Dear Senator (last name):

I understand you will be voting soon on legislation increasing the monitoring of pollutants from cruise ships. HB 100 does a number of things that would help keep our oceans and beaches clean, and protect wildlife. (In a few sentences list those things.)

I support the cruise ship industry. They are important to the economy of our community. They provide jobs and much needed revenue.

I do not wish to see their cost of doing business increased unnecessarily. However, I believe HB 100 is reasonable in that it takes necessary steps to ensure the safety of our waters and wildlife, and the pristine environment that brings the cruise ship industry to Alaska. In my view, this is a win-win bill.

I support HB 100. I hope you will too. Please contact me if you would like to discuss this further. (Address and phone number go here.)

Sincerely,  
Your name

## POMs (Public Opinion Message)

An additional, attention-getting way to communicate with your legislator is by means of public opinion messages. Here's what you do:

- Call your nearest Legislative Information Office (LIO). They will send the message for you.
- Messages must be 50 words or less in length. Messages are electronically entered and immediately available for legislative staff to access, which they do on a regular basis.
- Things you will be asked: Name, address, telephone number, Bill number (if appropriate), who you are sending the POM to, and message. You may wish to send POMs to a number of individual legislators, for example, each member of the Senate HESS Committee. Simply notify the LIO operator of all the legislator names you wish to send your message to and they will each receive your message. There is no cost in sending POMs through your local Legislative Information Office.

## Sample of a POM to a Legislator

*Your task: You find out that later today the HESS Committee is likely to vote on whether or not to pass out a bill that allows policemen the right to strike. In 50 words or less, state your case.*

Message: Please vote no on HB 100, allowing police officers to strike. I think it is unconscionable to support a bill that so clearly puts our community members at risk. Who will protect the community while police are picketing? There's got to be another way to address their concerns.

## Testifying At Hearings

Every year the Legislature conducts public hearings to get input on issues it must address. It may be important to express your position or the position of your association at such a hearing.

1. Sign up early to testify. If you sign up early, you may get to testify early. Early testimony, before the committee gets tired, is most effective.
2. Prepare written copies of your testimony. The committee will tell you how many copies it wants. Have enough extra for the press and others interested in what you have to say.
3. In preparing your testimony, give your best arguments, state them briefly, and don't repeat.
4. If speaking on behalf of an association, say so. If you are speaking

as an individual, say so.

5. Don't make the committee guess what your position is. State it right off, at the beginning of your testimony. Then tell why.
6. Back up your arguments with examples from your experience.
7. Let the committee know you are happy to send it answers to questions that you could not answer at the hearing. Let the committee know you are willing to send supplementary information, if they ask for it.
8. Send your association, if applicable, a copy of your testimony.

## **What Will Come of Your Efforts**

The first outcome will be that the legislator has a greater awareness of your issues and your point of view.

Then he/she will begin adding your thinking to his/hers in making legislative decisions.

Finally, he/she may use your information to vote your way. The outcome may come quickly, or it may take a long, long time.

Meanwhile, so long as he or she keeps communicating you are making progress!

## **A Final Word - The Rhythm of Legislative Activity**

Legislators have an attention span that is based in part on the calendar. During the Fall, they are generally more interested in hearing about broad general issues. Once the legislative session begins and bills are introduced, they are thinking in terms of specific bills.

Alaska's Legislature convenes in January and under a voter approved deadline, must end the regular session after 90 days, in April. January is often a slow month, as bills are introduced and background information collected. By February committee hearings are in full swing. Nearer the end of regular session, in April and May, major legislation moves quickly and often unexpectedly. A bill may take center stage and lobbying reactions to sudden developments will require a quick response.

Take note of the timing, here. It is at this time—just as Summer is about to begin—when the most is required of lobbyists. It is in those final days of the regular session that you will be called upon to make maximum use of the contacts you have developed so carefully with your legislator. These are the bills that have the most impact upon critical issues. This is the time when your action is most needed.

# Correct Form of Address for Letter to Lawmakers

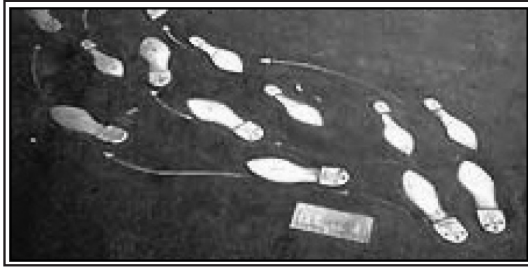
The Honorable (insert Governor's name)  
Governor of Alaska  
PO Box 110001  
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor (insert name):

The Honorable (insert Senate President's name)  
President of the Senate  
Alaska Senate  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator (insert Senator's name):





## Chapter 2

# A Step-By-Step Guide

*Through The Committee & Voting Process*

We talked about the legislative process in chapter 1. Now let's take a closer look at just how committees work and why they are important. Seasoned lobbyists will tell you the committee process is where all the work is done. It's where you have the best chance of success at shaping legislation. Once it goes to the floor of the House or Senate, it's pretty much a done deal and the task of changing a proposal or asking a legislator to switch votes becomes more difficult.

The legislative process is designed to give time for lawmakers to gain adequate knowledge about a particular subject. It allows for vigorous debate so decisions are not made prematurely. In short, it is designed to stop bad proposals from becoming law. Any lawmaker will tell you it is much easier to stop a bill than to get one passed. It takes only one committee chairperson to stop a bill. On the other hand, it can take as many as six committees or more, and the Governor, all giving a thumbs up, to pass a bill into law.

### **Step 1 - Sponsoring a Bill**

The legislator gets an idea. Often it is not his or her own, but a statement of concern from a constituent or a proposal or resolution from an organization calling for a specific action. This is called sponsoring a bill. A proposed law is called a bill.

### **Step 2 - Drafting a Bill**

The legislator drafts a basic idea of what should happen; what the proposed bill should do. This draft is sent to the legislature's legal department and these folks will draft a bill for the legislator.

### **Step 3 – Seeking Co-sponsors**

The legislator will circulate the proposed bill among fellow legislators to gain their support. The legislator will also ask for persons willing to place their names on the bill with the originating legislator. This is called co-sponsoring a bill. The more sponsors, the better. It gives fellow lawmakers an idea of the kind of support the bill has among his or her peers.

### **Step 4 – Introducing a Bill/ Assigning Committees**

Once a bill is ready for the consideration by the full legislature, the sponsor of the bill will turn it into the office of the clerk. The bill will then be calendared for introduction. The introduction process is merely the step whereby the clerk is asked to read the bill by title and then the presiding officer of the body will assign the bill to appropriate committee(s) for consideration.

Assigning Committees: This is a very important step. The more committees a bill is referred to, the less chance of passage. When you see a bill with only one committee of referral, chances are it is on the fast track. (Budget bills are the exception. They can be referred to Finance Committee only, yet take the entire session to pass.) On the other hand, a bill with four committees of referral is unlikely to survive the legislative process. Typically, bills are referred to two or three committees per body. A bill introduced by a member of the majority (Republican-led legislature) will typically be referred to one or two committees. A bill sponsored by a member of the minority (Democrats), however, often receives three or more committees of referral.

### **Step 5 – Committee Consideration**

Committee chairpersons decide which bills assigned to their committee will be discussed. No bill moves from the committee without the approval of the chair. Bills may be reviewed by committees and passed out intact, with minor revisions or with major revisions. When a bill receives major changes in a re-write, the bill is considered as a Committee Substitute for the original bill. Each committee that considers a bill can write its own version of the previous version. (e.g., Finance committee substitute for committee substitute for Senate Bill 1).

### **Step 6 – Calendaring a Bill for a Vote**

After a bill has been considered by all committees it has been referred to, the bill goes to the Rules Committee. This committee determines when the bill should be considered by the full body. This process is called . . . Calendaring A Bill. The Rules Committee can also write its own version of any bill.

## Step 7- Voting on a Bill

If a bill has a number of committee substitute versions, often the last version is the one considered by the body on the floor of the House or Senate. On occasion, there is a recommendation that one of the earlier versions be considered. This takes a motion and a vote as to which one is placed before the body.

**Floor Amendments:** Often there are amendments proposed from the floor. These are called Floor Amendments. A floor amendment seldom passes unless it is of a minor technical nature or non-controversial. A number of floor amendments having support will get a bill sent back to committee for further work.

**Passing a Bill:** All bills must go through a second and third reading. Typically the second and third readings take place on different days. This is so that a bill is not rammed through too quickly. It takes 21 votes in the House and 11 votes in the Senate to pass a bill.

**2nd and 3rd Reading:** Once the bill has been scheduled for a floor action by the Rules Committee, the bill appears on the calendar in Second reading. Any amendments to the bill are offered and voted on in Second Reading. Typically, if the changes are minor and uncomplicated the bill may be advanced to Third Reading for final passage on the same day. The motion requires approval by a three-fourths vote of the membership (30 in the House, 15 in the Senate). Otherwise the bill is automatically advanced to Third Reading on the next calendar day. Third reading is when a final vote is taken.

A motion may be made to return to Second Reading for a specific amendment. This motion required the affirmative vote of the majority of the full body. Only action on that specific amendment may be taken at that time. Following the vote on the specific amendment, the bill is again in Third Reading.

**Notice of Reconsideration:** A member may give notice of reconsideration of his or her vote on a piece of legislation. The reconsideration is usually available on the next calendar day. A reconsideration vote cancels the previous vote on the question to be reconsidered as completely as though the vote had never been taken, even if the result is the opposite of the action taken by the body previously. These requests are almost always granted. The reason why people do this is to gain time to get more support for the bill. Quite often the practice is effective enough to turn the vote around.

## **Step 8 – Transferring a Bill to the Other Body**

If the bill passes one body, it is then transferred to the other body, read across the clerk's desk and the presiding officer assigns it to committees just as the previous presiding officer did.

## **Step 9 – More Committees**

The bill must again wind its way through the same committee process in this body.

## **Step 10 – Calendared, Again**

The bill has to be calendared and considered by the body.

## **Step 11 – Reconciling Two Versions of a Bill**

**Conference Committee:** When one body passes a version of a bill that is different than the version of the other body, the originating body is asked to concur with the other body's amendments. The originating body usually declines this request and asks the second body to rescind their amendments. Failing all this, the presiding officers of the bodies then appoint a Conference Committee consisting of three members from each body. The conference committee members then meet and work out the differences. The compromise must be within the limits of the two versions of the bills.

**Free Conference Committee:** Should it become apparent that there is a need to exceed the limits of the two versions of the bills, the conference committee members must go back to their respective bodies and ask for the powers of Free Conference. If granted, the conference committee becomes a Free Conference Committee and comes up with a compromise that is outside the limits of the original bills.

**Deadlock:** If there is a deadlock, the committee reports this. The presiding officer of one or both houses may dissolve the committee and appoint a new committee.

**Conference Committee Reports:** The conference committee report is presented to each body in the form of a conference committee version of the bill. Whatever is agreed to by the conference committee is usually passed by the bodies.

## **Step 12 – The Governor**

The bill, once having been passed by both houses, is transmitted to the governor for his consideration. The governor can sign the bill into law, can allow the bill to become law by doing nothing, or she can veto the bill. While the legislature is in session, the governor has 15 days, Sundays excepted, in

which to act on any bill transmitted to her; after the legislature has adjourned, the governor has 20 days, Sundays excepted, to act on a bill. It takes two-thirds of the legislature to override a veto of a bill, and three-fourths to override a budget veto. When legislators meet to consider the governor's vetoes, they meet in joint session.



## Chapter 3

# Tracking Legislation

*A Fun Way To Start, Essential For Lobbying*

Tracking is simply following actions on a bill as it wends its way through the legislative process. As an advocate or lobbyist you are trying to impact legislation, no matter where it is in the legislative process. A bill you support can start out saying one thing through five committees, and in the sixth committee be changed to something you cannot support. It happens all the time. Thus, you need to be cognizant of where your bill is at any given moment.

There are a number of ways to track legislation

### **In person**

Lobbying on the hill isn't for the faint of heart. It takes a load of people skills and determination and stick-to-it-tiveness. If you're in Juneau, visit the Capitol building. You can sit in on committee hearings and House or Senate floor sessions. More importantly, you can visit with your legislator (and other legislators) and their staff in person.

Tracking legislation in person is easy. Simply walk to the documents window on the first floor of the Capitol building. There you can pick up the Daily House & Senate Journals, and House & Senate Daily calendars, and copies of bills.

The Journals give you much of yesterday's legislative actions. They tell you which bills were introduced, which committees they were referred to, which bills were moved from a particular committee and how each committee member voted. Journals tell you how members voted on a bill on the floor of the House or Senate, and what amendments, if any, were

made. It gives you committee calendars for the next week so you know when a bill you are tracking is up for a hearing. These are valuable documents. Every paid lobbyist on the hill scans the Journals on a daily basis.

What the daily Journal doesn't tell you is what happened during committee meetings throughout the building. The Journal only tells you when a bill has been given final consideration by a committee and moved from committee or tabled.

House & Senate Calendars are typically one-page documents that show which bills are up for consideration on the floor of each body that particular day, and which reading they are in. They are also available from the Documents Room.

## **By Television**

KTOO-TV is the public television station in Juneau. It carries selected committee meetings and daily House and Senate floor action on its Gavel-to-Gavel program, sometimes prerecorded for airing at a later date. Again, if you can't be there in person, this television coverage is invaluable. Visit the KTOO website for information on which committee hearings and floor sessions will be covered [www.juneau.com/ktoo/gavel/](http://www.juneau.com/ktoo/gavel/). The drawback, of course, is that you may be tracking a bill in a committee that does not get televised. Coverage schedules are typically determined only 24 hours in advance. Nevertheless, cable television is an excellent way to get to know legislators and issues they are working on.

Gavel to Gavel Alaska is seen in the following communities:

### **Community**

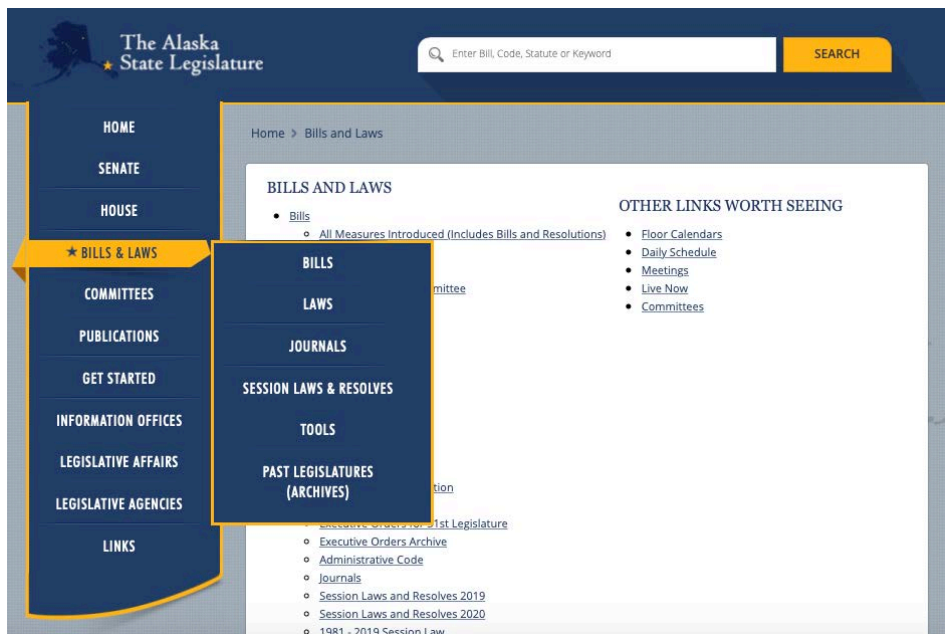
Anchorage  
Atkasuk  
Barrow  
Bethel  
Buckland  
Cordova  
Craig  
Dutch Harbor  
Eagle River  
Fairbanks  
Girdwood  
Haines  
Homer

Hydaburg  
Juneau  
Kachemak City  
Kenai  
Ketchikan  
King Salmon  
Kodiak  
Kotzebue  
Mat-Su Valley  
Nome  
North Pole  
Palmer  
Petersburg  
Ridgeway  
Saxman  
Seward  
Sitka  
Skagway  
Soldotna  
Unalaska  
Valdez  
Wasilla  
Wrangell

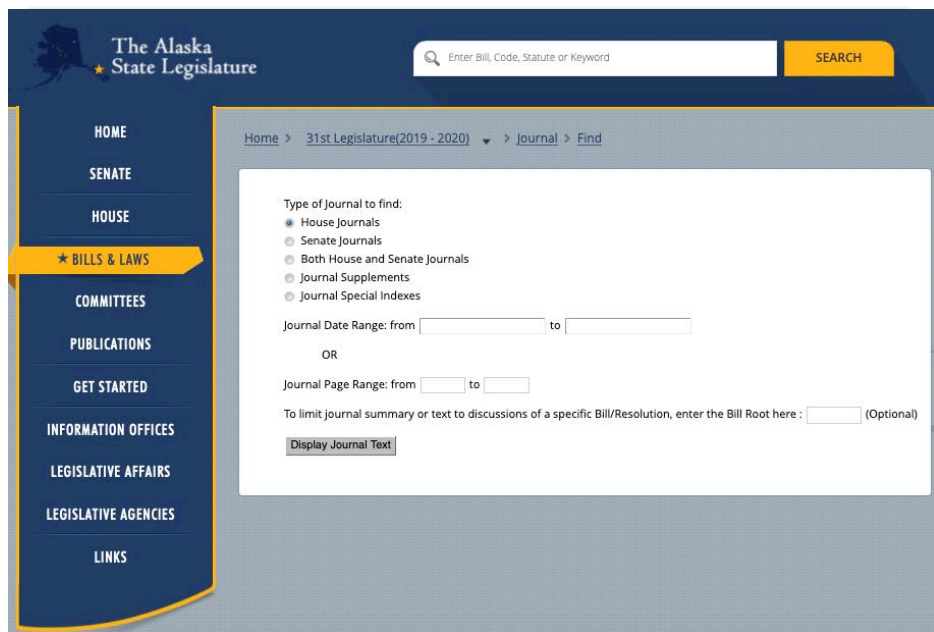
## **Via the Internet-BASIS**

More and more people are on the Internet. Luckily, Alaska's government had the forethought to create an excellent bill tracking system online called BASIS (Bill Action and Status Inquiry System). BASIS is the single most valuable and easiest way to track legislation. BASIS is a database that allows you to look at (and download) House and Senate journals, the text of individual bills, bill status, history of a bill, committee calendars, search legislation by topic, and lots more. When session gets hot and heavy, BASIS is updated every 15 minutes! Once you're familiar with this easy to use system, tracking bills becomes a snap. No more phone-call-after-phone-call to find out basic information on legislation. Via the Internet - Basis. "Go to AKLEG.GOV to access BASIS and information about the Alaska Legislature.





*Main BASIS screen for tracking legislation.*



*Daily Journals have loads of information—bills introduced, passed out of committee, votes in the Senate & House, legislative reports, etc.*

The screenshot shows the official website of The Alaska State Legislature. The header includes the state seal and the text "The Alaska State Legislature". A search bar is located in the top right corner. The main navigation menu on the left includes links for HOME, SENATE, HOUSE, BILLS & LAWS, ★ COMMITTEES (highlighted), PUBLICATIONS, GET STARTED, INFORMATION OFFICES, LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE AGENCIES, and LINKS. The "★ COMMITTEES" dropdown menu is open, showing options: HEARING SCHEDULE (highlighted), STANDING COMMITTEES, FINANCE COMMITTEES, SPECIAL COMMITTEES, JOINT COMMITTEES, CONFERENCE COMMITTEES, OTHER COMMITTEES, and MINUTES. The "HEARING SCHEDULE" sub-menu is also open, showing a list of committees: STANDING COMMITTEES, FAIRS (CRA), FINANCE COMMITTEES, HSS), SPECIAL COMMITTEES, JOINT COMMITTEES, CONFERENCE COMMITTEES, OTHER COMMITTEES, and MINUTES. The "SENATE" section is also visible, listing various committees and subcommittees.

*Check the committee schedule query screen regularly to see when bills are scheduled for a hearing.*

## Useful Websites

*The following are some useful websites to help you keep up with what's happening on "The Hill."*

**Alaska Legislature:** [www.legis.state.ak.us](http://www.legis.state.ak.us)  
(Direct link to the state-run BASIS etc)

**"Gavel to Gavel" televised schedule:** [www.360north.org](http://www.360north.org)  
(Look here each morning to find out which committee meetings will be televised. All floor sessions are televised.)

**State of Alaska web page:** [www.state.ak.us](http://www.state.ak.us)  
(Look here for government departments, communities online, hot topics, handy links.)

**House Majority web page:** [www.housemajority.org](http://www.housemajority.org)  
(Background info on legislators, press releases.)

**House Minority web page:** [www.akdemocrats.org](http://www.akdemocrats.org)  
(Background info on legislators, press releases.)

**Senate Majority web page:** [www.aksenate.org](http://www.aksenate.org)  
(Background info on legislators, press releases.)

**Senate Minority web page:** [www.alaskasenatedems.com](http://www.alaskasenatedems.com)  
(Background info on legislators, press releases.)

**Statutes & Regulations web page:** [www.touchngo.com/lglctr](http://www.touchngo.com/lglctr)  
(Sponsored by the Alaska Legal Resource Center, includes court opinions, statutes, regulations and rules, legal resource links.)

## Don't Have a Computer?

Don't have a computer? Just call your nearest LIO. Legislative Information Offices are scattered throughout Alaska. They have full information capabilities and are equipped to provide current information on legislative activity. During legislative sessions, reports of floor and committee activity are transmitted to the information offices immediately after daily floor sessions adjourn. Printed materials are available on a one-day delay basis. Data communications equipment provides access to a computerized bill-tracking system and speeds transmission of business messages between legislators and their constituents. Participation in legislative committee hearings and informal meetings between constituent groups and legislators is possible from regional teleconference and information facilities throughout Alaska. (See page 39 for more information on LIO's and their locations.)

## Reporting Services

**Alaska Legislative Digest** is published weekly by former legislator Mike Bradner and his brother Tim Bradner. “An inside view of Alaska policy,” this commentary tackles a wide range of issues under consideration by the Legislature. Contact: Bradner, 3037 South Circle, Anchorage, AK 99507, Phone: 440-6068, Fax: 345-5683, Email: [akdigest@gmail.com](mailto:akdigest@gmail.com)

**Alaska Education Update** covers education issues in the legislature on a daily and weekly basis during the session and irregularly during the interim. Contact, Shana Crondahl. Located at 4100 Blackerby St., Juneau, AK. 99801. Phone: 500-7069, Email: [alaskaeducationupdate.com](http://alaskaeducationupdate.com)



## Chapter 4

# How To Read A Bill

*On The Face Of It*

1. Date bill was introduced. (A bill is considered formally introduced when the Clerk or Secretary reads the heading or title aloud in open session - First Reading.)
2. Committee referral (s) in the house of origin. (Referrals are made by the presiding officer, to a single committee or several committees. By a majority vote of the house, the bill may be referred to any other standing committee. The presiding officer sometimes makes additional referrals as the bill progresses.)
3. House of origin. (Senate or House of Representatives)
4. Sponsor (s). (Any member, group of members, standing or special committee; the Governor and/or Legislative Council through the Rules Committee.)
5. Bill number. (Retained through subsequent changes and substitutions. The bill number at the top of the page - #5 - does not change at any time; amendments and/or substitutes are reflected at the bottom of the page - #11.)
6. Session bill was introduced.
7. Title of the bill - its subject. (No Motion or proposition on a subject shall be admitted under color of amendment if the subject matter is different from that under consideration. In practice, however, it is possible to amend the title to accommodate other amendments.)

8. AS 24.05.090 (In our example) refers to existing law - a chapter and section of the Alaska Statutes.
9. Underlines material is being added.
10. Material in brackets is being [deleted].
11. Amendments and/or substitutions to the bill are recorded here. Each amendment or substitution makes the prior version obsolete. If you are reviewing legislation, make sure you have a copy of the version presently under consideration.

*Some of the abbreviations that might be found at the bottom of a bill are:*

**am** (amended)

**am H** (amended by the House)

**am S** (amended by the Senate)

**SS** (sponsor substitute)

**CS** (committee substitute)

**FCCS** (free conference committee substitute)

		①	
		Introduced: 1/18/73	
	②	Referred: State Affairs	
1	IN THE HOUSE — ③		BY FINK — ④
2			
3			
4			HOUSE BILL NO. 99 — ⑤
5			
6			IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
7			EIGHTH LEGISLATURE -- FIRST SESSION — ⑥
8			A BILL
9		⑦	
10		For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to the time the legislature shall	
11		convene for regular sessions."	
12			
13			BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:
14		⑧	
15		* Section 1. AS 24.05.090. is amended to read:	⑨ ⑩
16		Sec. 24.05.090. REGULAR SESSIONS. The legislature shall	
17		convene at the capital each year on the <u>third</u> [SECOND] Monday in	
18		January at 10:00 a.m. Pacific Standard Time. Each legislature shall have	
19		a duration of two years and shall consist of a "First Regular Session"	
20		which shall meet in odd-numbered years and a "Second Regular Ses-	
21		sion" which shall meet in the even-numbered years and any special	
22		session or sessions which the governor or legislature may find necessary	
23		to call.	
24			
25			

or any combination or variation - like **CSHB 29 (Fin) am S** (Finance Committee Substitute for House Bill 29, amended by the Senate), or **SCS CSHB 52 am S** (Senate Committee substitute for committee substitute for House Bill 52 as amended by the Senate), or **2d FCCS 2d HCS SB 57** (second Free Conference Committee substitute for the second House committee substitute for Senate Bill 57)!

## What's Behind It...

“On the Face of It” tells us what a bill says. The next Step is to find out what it means. The answers to questions like those below will help you find out “What’s Behind It”:

What is the actual effect of the bill?

Who does it affect?

How much will it cost? Can it be funded?

Who will administer the law?

Is it directed to a particular geographical area?

To a particular group?

Will it accomplish its intended purpose?

What are its weaknesses, drawbacks?

What are its strengths?

Who sponsored it? Why?

At whose request? Why?

Which legislators favor the bill? Why?

Which legislators oppose the bill? Why?

What is the Administration’s stance on the bill? Why?

What groups or individuals support the legislation? Oppose it? Why?

Does the judicial branch have an opinion or position on the bill?

Is it Constitutional?

Has the Attorney General rendered an opinion?

Is the idea new?

Are there precedents? In Alaska? In other states? At the national level?

What are the chances of passage?

Who holds the key votes?

Does the legislation affect the position of your association?

Do other individuals or groups share your feelings about the bill?



## Chapter 5

# Alaska's Capitol Building

### Logistics

**Capitol Building:** Legislative halls are on the second floor. The **Senate** is on the right as you come off the elevator or up the stairs. The **House** is on the left. No smoking in the Capitol Building.

**Legislative Offices:** Most legislator offices are on the second-, fourth-, and fifth floors. A few offices are on the first floor (also called the ground floor). The Governor's office and that of his staff are located to the left as you come off the elevator on the third floor; the Lt. Governor's offices are located to the right as you come off the elevator on the third floor.

**Galleries:** Space provided for spectators to watch the House and Senate sessions.

**Documents Room:** Copies of all bills may be obtained from the Documents Room, located on the ground floor of the Capitol Building to your right as you walk in the door. (Looks like a post office window. Just step up and ask for the *most current* version of the bill you are interested in.)

### Protocol

When you are observing the sessions from the galleries, there are some rules that must be followed, and some protocol that should be observed. Here is a summary of those rules:



1. Smoking is not permitted in the Capitol Building, including the galleries.
2. No coffee, food, or other drink may be carried into the galleries.
3. No flash cameras are permitted.
4. When in the gallery, a spectator may not speak to a legislator who is on the floor of the chamber. If a legislator initiates the conversation, it is permissible to respond.
5. Spectators rise during the invocation.
6. Spectators will rise to acknowledge introduction by the legislator. Only former legislators may speak from the galleries.
7. Loud talking or disruptive action during time when the chamber is in session is prohibited.

It is extremely important to notify your legislator that you will be present in the gallery. Be sure to specify which gallery you will be in (A or B). The legislator may want to introduce you to the body. Prior notice to the legislator of your presence is preferred. If you are a late arrival, a note to your legislator, through the Page, is appropriate to indicate your presence and location. The Pages are stationed outside the chamber doors when the chamber is in session. Merely give one of them your note and it will be delivered to the legislator on the floor.



## Chapter 6

# How To Use Your L.I.O.

### (Legislative Information Office)

Legislative Information Offices have full information capabilities and are equipped to provide current information on legislative activity. During legislative sessions, reports of floor and committee activity are transmitted to the information offices immediately after daily floor sessions adjourn. Printed materials are available on a one-day delay basis. Data communications equipment provides access to a computerized bill-tracking system and speeds transmission of business messages between legislators and their constituents. Participation in legislative committee hearings and informal meetings between constituent groups and legislators is possible from regional teleconference and information facilities throughout Alaska.

**Telecopy:** Telecopy (xerox) can be sent to and received by all Legislative Information Offices. Please deliver material to be telecopied with a cover sheet showing:

1. name of the person who is to receive the telecopy;
2. phone number contact;
3. number of pages to be telecopied;
4. name and phone number of sender;
5. any special instructions.

The public may use this service on a time available basis by providing a charge back phone number.

**Library:** The Division of Public Services maintains a library of current legislative related reports, copies of executive branch reports and publications, and legislative audits. This library has been computerized and is physically maintained in the Anchorage LIO. Most LIO's also maintain a more limited library in their own offices.

**Coverage of Daily Action:** Each of the LIO's has full computer capability to receive reports on floor and committee action as it occurs. Please note that they do not editorialize or comment on any action taken in the House or the Senate. LIO's report only information of record. (For instance, committee action, passage of a bill, introduction of new bills, etc.)

**Attending a Teleconference:** When you arrive at the LIO or teleconference center to attend a teleconference, you will be asked to sign in (name and address) and to indicated whether you are planning to testify or observe. The moderator of the teleconference is there to assist you in the use of the equipment and to let you know when you may testify. The chair may request that testimony be limited to a certain length of time and will also decide the order of participation in the teleconference.

When it is your turn to testify, step up to the microphone. Remember, this is a live mic. Anything you say, even whispered, will be picked up. Try not to rustle papers as you testify as the microphones pick this up very clearly and can make your testimony nearly inaudible. Speak directly into the mic from a distance of about 6 inches. Before beginning your testimony, state your name and who you are representing, if applicable. Remember to identify yourself each time you speak.

Indicate to the chair when you have concluded your testimony. Written testimony may also be sent to the chair of the committee. For information regarding future teleconferences, please contact your nearest Legislative Information Office.

## Legislative Information Offices

Updates of this information can be found online: **"How to Use Your LIO"**  
<http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/docs/pdf/howlio.pdf>



association of  
**ALASKA**  
school boards