

# Alaska Education Update Tracking Legislative Information

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## Legislative Information Sources

**BASIS:** [akleg.gov](http://akleg.gov)

The [homepage](http://akleg.gov) of the legislature’s site has tabs at the top for floor calendars and committee hearings, among other things.



## Tracking Legislation in BASIS

One of the tabs on the left-hand side of BASIS is [BILLS & LAWS](#), which has links to legislation, committees, hearings, and many ways to sort and find information on legislation. Some links in BILLS & LAWS are:

- [Actions by Date](#) – All floor action on all legislation for any one date, including committee reports, floor votes, and when legislators cosponsor a bill
- [Committees](#) – Links to committees; you can find information on committee members, hearings, legislation that has been referred to, and legislation sponsored by specific, individual committees
- [Sponsor Summary](#) – All legislation sponsored by a particular legislator, for example, all legislation that Sen. Stevens has sponsored
- [Subject Summary](#) – All legislation under a particular subject, for example, all education-related legislation
- [Bill Tracking Management Facility](#) (BTMF) – Allows a user to set up an account and choose bills to receive email notification of action on, including being scheduled for a hearing or a floor vote. It's very helpful if you're tracking a particular bill and don't want to keep checking BASIS. Here is what my BTMF account looks like currently. I have set up two folders, one for house legislation and one for senate legislation.

31st Legislature(2019-2020)  
BTMF

SEARCH  Display ?

### BTMF Folder House:

BILL	SHORT TITLE	PRIME SPONSOR(s)	CURRENT STATUS	STATUS DATE	Email notification of Status change.
HB 7	SEX EDUCATION	RAUSCHER	PREFILE RELEASED	01/07/19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HB 24	LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES	KREISS-TOMKINS	PREFILE RELEASED	01/07/19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HB 28	EQUAL PAY & MINIMUM WAGE ACT	TARR	PREFILE RELEASED	01/11/19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HB 29	INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR TELEHEALTH	SPOHNHOLZ	PREFILE RELEASED	01/11/19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HB 30	WORKERS' COMP: DEATH; PERM PARTIAL IMPAIR	JOSEPHSON	PREFILE RELEASED	01/11/19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

[Alt Information](#)

### BTMF Folder Senate:

BILL	SHORT TITLE	PRIME SPONSOR(s)	CURRENT STATUS	STATUS DATE	Email notification of Status change.
SB 6	PRE-ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS/FUNDING	BEGICH	PREFILE RELEASED	01/07/19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

[Alt Information](#)

[Return to Main BTMF Page](#)
[Logout](#)

Basis Navigation

Bills

Legislators

Committees

Session

Session Laws

Tools

Archive

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Search

For BTMF, and anywhere in BASIS, actually, you do not need to capitalize or use any spaces. For instance, you do not need to type HB 5, but can simply type hb5.

**Status of Legislation** – The best way to find the status of a particular bill is to look the bill up in BASIS. On every page on the legislature’s website is a search field where you can enter a bill number (once again, no need to capitalize or use spaces). Once you pull up the bill, scroll down and click on the link on the right-hand side of the page to “Display Committee Action with Bill History,” and it will show all the hearings a bill has had. For more information on a bill, there are five tabs just above the link to display committee action:

- **Full Text** – Every version of the bill that has been read across on the floor
- **Fiscal Notes** – All fiscal notes that have been read across on the floor
- **Amendments** – All amendments as they are offered on the floor; does not include amendments offered in committees
- **Minutes and Audio** – All minutes, audio, and video of hearings
- **Documents** – All documents associated with a bill that a committee aide has posted in BASIS. This is where you will find sponsor statements, sectional analyses, written testimony that has been submitted to the committee, and proposed committee substitutes and fiscal notes that have not yet been read across on the floor.

**Publications** – On the left side of BASIS is the [Publications Tab](#), which is a page that has links to various publications, including:

- Directory of State Officials
- Alaska Constitution
- Citizen’s Guide to the Constitution
- Uniform Rules
- Constitutional Convention Files
- Executive Orders
- Administrative Codes, Regulations, & Alaska Statutes
- Legislator and staff contact lists
- Handbook on Alaska State Government
- Guides to the budget process and the legislative process
- Many other publications

**Text Message Notifications** - You can also receive notification of action on legislation through text message. To receive text message updates, text a bill number to **559-245-2529**. You do not need to capitalize or use any spaces. For instance, you do not need to text HB 5, but can simply text hb5.

**Legislative Information Offices** – In addition to handling all teleconferences, Legislative Information Office staff are there to help people find information, including helping you find your way around BASIS. The eighth tab down on the left in BASIS will take you to a list of [Legislative Information Offices](#). From there, you can click on a specific LIO and get information on the location, phone number, email address, office hours, parking information, and legislators for that office.

### **Gavel to Gavel**

Gavel to Gavel is an independent source for audio and video of legislative hearings, floor sessions, and press conferences. Audio and video of legislative hearings are available in BASIS, but Gavel to Gavel is the only source for audio and video of floor sessions and press conferences. Gavel to Gavel homepage: [www.360north.org](http://www.360north.org)

### **House & Senate Majority & Minority Press Releases**

The House and Senate Majorities and Minorities all have press officers, and they are a good source for current legislative news via their press releases. They send out announcements when legislation is introduced or passed, on press conferences, and sometimes when legislation is scheduled for a hearing or moved from committee.

To contact press officers or to get on email distribution lists, scroll down to the bottom of any page on BASIS and on the right are links to caucus websites.

### **Individual Legislator Newsletters**

Many legislators send out newsletters regularly. You will probably want to subscribe to your own legislators' newsletters. To access a legislator's newsletters, go to the page of the caucus they belong to and click on a legislator's name to view and subscribe to their newsletters.

### **Social Media**

Twitter is the most useful social media platform for tracking up-to-the-minute legislative information. Journalists often tweet during hearings, press conferences, and floor sessions, and legislative staff and legislators also tweet regularly.

One way to follow specific topics on Twitter is to use hashtags (#). The hashtag for following the Alaska State Legislature is **#akleg**. You can also subscribe to curated lists that people put together. I've put together lists of legislators, staff, and legislative reporters, which aggregates all tweets from the people on the list. Here's [a link](#) to all my Twitter lists.

The nice thing about Twitter is it's what's known as a microblogging platform. Posts are limited to 140 characters, which means you can scroll through all the **#akleg** tweets and get up to speed with what's going on very quickly – no unnecessary verbiage on Twitter!

## **Me**

I am also happy to help you find information you are having trouble tracking down. Maybe there's a report on such-and-such that you remember being presented in the House Education Committee, but you can't remember which day it was presented and can't find it in BASIS. I am happy to help you find that report! 😊 Just email me at [alaskaeducationupdate@gmail.com](mailto:alaskaeducationupdate@gmail.com) or [shana@alaskaeducationupdate.com](mailto:shana@alaskaeducationupdate.com), or call or text me at 907-500-7069.

## **The Budget Process**

Any legislation with a fiscal impact, including the governor's proposed operating and capital budgets, is referred to the finance committees. The finance committees are the last committee of referral for legislation. This means that if legislation has committee referrals in addition to finance, it goes to those committees first. Bills that are solely budget bills are referred only to the finance committees.

Although the governor's budgets are introduced concurrently in both the house and the senate, it is always the house version of the operating and mental health budgets, and the senate version of the capital budget that are passed.

The finance subcommittees review the governor's operating budget requests for each state agency and then make a report to the full finance committee with changes they have made to the governor's budget requests. The finance committee then usually accepts the recommendations of the subcommittees, but will sometimes change some items. Eventually, a version of each budget (operating, capital, mental health, and supplemental) will make it to the floor of the house and the senate, where additional amendments may be made.

The house and senate pass different versions of each budget. The legislation then goes to a conference committee to negotiate a final bill. The conference committee will put together their own committee substitute when the members come to agreement on all the items in the budget. The house and the senate then vote to adopt the conference committee substitute. Once the house and senate pass the same version of a budget, it is sent to the governor, who then has the option to make partial or total line item vetoes.

## **The 24-Hour Rule**

When the operating budget (always the house version) passes in the senate, it will be returned to the house for concurrence (a fancy way for the senate to say, “We know you will just love what we did with this thing and vote to accept our changes”). I can guarantee you the house will not concur with the senate amendments to the bill.

The house will then send the bill back to the senate, asking them to recede from their amendments (a fancy way for the house to say, “No thank you, we like our bill better; vote for our bill”). I can guarantee you that will not happen either.

At that point, a conference committee consisting of three members of the House Finance Committee and three members of the Senate Finance Committee will be appointed. The conference committee always consists of the co-chairs of each committee and a minority member of each committee.

Once the conference committee for the operating budget is appointed, under [Uniform Rule 23 \(d\)](#) committee chairmen are only required to give 24-hour notice to hear a bill. That is the 24-hour Rule, and things speed up considerably at that point. In fact, “24-Hour Rule” is somewhat of a misnomer, as notice is just given a calendar day before the hearing, which is often less than 24 hours.

Even without the 24-Hour Rule in place, bills that have already been heard in committee or that have previously been scheduled for a hearing, even if they weren’t taken up, can be taken up at any point in the future under “Bills previously heard/scheduled.” Toward the end of session things begin moving really fast, and often members of the public and the press don’t hear about a piece of legislation being heard in committee until after the fact.