



**DATE** July 20, 2023  
**TO** Assembly Legislative Committee  
**FROM** Jennifer Veneklasen, Legislative Services, Research & Policy Analyst  
**THRU** Assembly Member Anna Brawley, Chair of the Legislative Committee  
**SUBJECT** **2023 Alaska State Legislative Session Items to Watch**

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Lawmakers passed 30 bills this year.  
You can view them all here: (<https://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Passed/33>)

## Bills Potentially Still in Play

Because it was the first of a two-year session, there are several bills introduced this year which didn't pass but could return next year. Of these, we've bulleted seven items to watch and potentially include in the Municipality's 2024 Legislative Priorities and/or in resolutions of support, as these bills may align with the Assembly's priorities. Links to each bill are provided within this memo.

### School funding, increase to Base Student Allocation

- A bill to permanently increase the base student allocation for public school funding stalled in the House after passing the Senate.
- [SB 52](#) – "An Act relating to education; requiring the Department of Education and Early Development to provide information relating to public schools on an Internet website; relating to information on the post-secondary education, career path, and residency of graduates from high schools in the state; relating to transportation of students; relating to state funding for districts operating residential schools; increasing the base student allocation; and providing for an effective date."
- Sponsor: Senate Education
- Current Status: House Finance
- *Anchorage Connection*: Largest school district in the state. See **AR No. 2023-57**, Anchorage Assembly Resolution in support of the BSA increase.



### **Retirement Systems, Defined Benefit Option**

- [SB 88](#) – "An Act relating to the Public Employees' Retirement System of Alaska and the teachers' retirement system; providing certain employees an opportunity to choose between the defined benefit and defined contribution plans of the Public Employees' Retirement System of Alaska and the teachers' retirement system; and providing for an effective date."
- Senate majority advanced this bill in an effort to solve ongoing challenges in recruitment and retention of workers including teachers and firefighters.
- Sponsors: Senators Giessel, Bishop, Stevens, Kiehl, Kawasaki, Tobin, Wielechowski, Gray-Jackson, Dunbar, Claman, Olson.
- Current Status: Senate Finance
- *Anchorage Connection*: This bill could have implications/benefits for recruitment and retention of Municipal workers. See the following:
  - March 31, 2023, Worksession re MOA Job Vacancies – Competing in a Challenging Job Market;
  - Resolution No. **AR 2023-27(S)**, a resolution of the Anchorage Municipal Assembly regarding Alaska House Bill 22 and Senate Bill 35, An Act that would create a new defined benefit pension option for state and municipal peace officers and firefighters in the Public Employees' Retirement System of Alaska, with protections for the state against unforeseen future liabilities; and
  - Resolution No. AR 2023-147, a resolution of the Anchorage Municipal Assembly supporting the municipality's efforts to recruit and retain qualified employees.

### **Elections/Voter Registration/Campaigns**

- [SB 138](#) – "An Act relating to elections; relating to voters; relating to voting; relating to offices of the Alaska Public Offices Commission; relating to the crime of unlawful interference with voting in the first degree; relating to campaign signs; relating to the reporting of financial and business interests by certain municipal officers and former officers and candidates for municipal office; relating to the Redistricting Board; and providing for an effective date."
- This bill would implement several changes to Alaska's elections process.
- Sponsor: Senate State Affairs
- Current Status: Returned to Senate Rules Committee



- *Anchorage Connection*: Resolution No. **AR 2022-342**, a resolution of the Anchorage Municipal Assembly recommending amendments to Alaska Statutes Title 15 related to voter registration.
  - The first recommendation is to amend Alaska Statute 15.07.130b by shortening the period in which a voter, whose mail is returned as undeliverable and who is not responding to the Division's efforts to make contact, from four years to two years, to remain on the voter registration list.
  - The second recommendation is to amend Alaska Statute 15.07.130 by adding a new section that directs the Director to cancel a voter's registration upon notification from the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), or other similar tool or agency, that a voter has registered in another state and the voter doesn't respond to a SOA confirmation.

### **Competency; Involuntary Civil Commitments**

- [SB 53](#) – "An Act relating to competency to stand trial; relating to involuntary civil commitments; and relating to victims' rights during certain civil commitment proceedings."
- Bill seeks to change the rules that govern how the state treats people who are accused of a crime but not competent to stand trial. It would require the state to petition for some violent offenders suffering from mental illness to be involuntarily committed to a psychiatric institute.
- Sponsor: Senators Claman, Gray-Jackson
- Current Status: House Judiciary, then Finance
- *Anchorage connection*: This bill was championed by Angela Harris who was stabbed in the back while at Anchorage's Loussac Library in February 2022.

### **Municipal Blight Tax, Property Tax Exemptions**

- [SB 77](#) – "An Act relating to municipal property tax; and providing for an effective date."
- Bill would allow municipalities to exempt owners of newly developed or redeveloped commercial properties from paying property taxes. Another provision would allow municipalities to increase the property taxes of owners whose properties have become blighted by as much as 50%".



- See article: [Alaska Senate passes bill to allow municipal blight tax, property tax exemptions](#) - Alaska Public Media
- Sponsors: Senators Dunbar and Claman and Representative Sumner
- Companion bill in other body: HB 84, sponsored by Representatives Sumner, Coulombe, McCabe, and Mears.
- Current Status: Passed Senate. Referred to House Rules Committee.
- *Anchorage Connection*: Housing is one of the Assembly's main initiatives. The sponsor of SB 77 says the bill is aimed at spurring housing development.

### **Short-Term Rental Unit Registry**

- [HB 184](#) – "An Act relating to short-term rental units; relating to the duties of the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; establishing a state short-term rental unit registry; and providing for an effective date."
- Sponsor: Representative Gray
- Current Status: Read for first time and referred to House Labor & Commerce and Finance Committees.
- *Anchorage Connection*: This bill would require Anchorage STR owners to register and operate only one STR at a time.

### **Port of Alaska, Port Authority**

- [SB 155](#) – "An Act relating to the Port of Alaska; establishing the Port of Alaska Authority to manage and operate the Port of Alaska; and providing for an effective date."
- Sponsor: Senate Finance
- Current Status: Referred to Senate Transportation and then Finance.
- *Anchorage Connection*: One of the Assembly's 2023 goals is to continue advocacy for Port renovation funds. This bill contemplates the creation of a Port Authority with a board of directors, three of which would be appointed by the Anchorage Assembly.



## 2024 Budget

The Budget bill should be reviewed in more detail to see where Assembly priorities align with State funding. Wendy Chamberlain, the MOA lobbyist, will flag line items relevant to the Municipality of Anchorage at the Assembly's July Legislative briefing worksession.

- Omnibus Budget Bill – [HB 39](#)

**Note:** On June 19th Governor Dunleavy vetoed several line items within the budget including \$87 million in one-time funding for public K-12 schools, \$35 million in university capital projects across the campuses in Anchorage, Fairbanks in Juneau, \$1 million for rural public radio funding, \$2.5 million for tourism marketing, \$3.5 million in Head Start funding, and \$10 million for maintenance of K-12 school buildings. Link to Dunleavy's 46 line-item vetoes:

[https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/24\\_budget/PDFs/HB39\\_HB41\\_Veto\\_Summary\\_6-19-2023.pdf](https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/24_budget/PDFs/HB39_HB41_Veto_Summary_6-19-2023.pdf)

### Sources:

- May 24, 2023 Anchorage Daily News [article](#) by Iris Samuels and Sean Maguire.
- June 5, 2023, Alaska Beacon [article](#) by James Brooks
- June 19, 2023, Anchorage Daily News [article](#) by Iris Samuels and Sean Maguire.