

The Capitol Report



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March 18, 2016

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Today is the 60th day of the legislative session. We are now two-thirds of the way through the process, with adjournment scheduled on April 17.

Operating Budget

As reported last week, the House has passed a university operating budget of \$300 million in state funds for FY17. This is \$50.8 million less than the budget UA received in FY16, and signifies a 14.5 percent reduction in state support.

On Monday, the Senate passed its version of the operating budget. The Senate's budget for the university is \$324.9 million in state funds, or \$25.9 million less than the budget UA received in FY16. This is a 7.4 percent reduction in state support. Senator Berta Gardner offered a floor amendment to add \$10 million back to UA's budget, to provide a budget equal to the governor's proposal. It failed on a vote of 4-16.

Once the House and Senate have passed their respective versions of the budget, generally a conference committee is quickly appointed to work out a compromise between the two budgets. Yesterday, however, it was announced that the conference committee will not be appointed right away, so that the legislature can focus instead on revenue-generating proposals.

When finally appointed, the conference committee will have three members from the House and three members from the Senate; it always includes the two Finance Committee co-chairs from each body. The final budget could be the House number, the Senate number, or something in between. It is difficult to predict what the actual final reduction might be this session, because the Senate budget also contains a \$100 million cut that has not been allocated to a specific agency; if adopted by the conference committee, the governor would have to decide how much of this additional cut would be assigned to each agency. That decision wouldn't be made until weeks or months after the end of session.

SB 174 – Regulation of Firearms and Knives by the Board of Regents

The Senate Finance Committee has scheduled a Thursday, March 24 hearing on SB 174, "An Act relating to the regulation of firearms and knives by the University of Alaska." The hearing will be from 1:30 – 4:00 p.m., and will be teleconferenced to local Legislative Information Offices. The block of time from 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. has been set aside for public testimony. People who testify will be limited to three minutes. The university has information on its position here: <http://www.alaska.edu/state/advocacy/> The legislature has more information on the bill here: <http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/29?Root=SB%20174>

Thank you for all your work to promote and support the University of Alaska!

For more information, contact Associate Vice President Chris Christensen at cschristenseniii@alaska.edu or visit www.alaska.edu/state.

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