

Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education Legislative Update



Tuesday, January 20th began the 26th Alaska Legislative session in Juneau. During this session, the GCDSE is keeping you up-to-date by monitoring legislative action and tracking bills that relate to issues concerning health, education, disabilities, and services in the State of Alaska.

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Hearings for Bills and other Committee Business

On the right-hand side of every newsletter from now on, you will receive a listing of some of the most important committee hearings of the past week and the week to come. They include the number of the room in which they will be held, but there's an even easier way of listening in on them than getting to Juneau! You can tune into the meetings either when they are happening or after the fact by tuning into Gavel to Gavel on your computer. Just follow this link: <http://www.ktoo.org/gavel/audio.cfm> and it will take you to Gavel to Gavel Alaska, where you can look for the committee you're interested in and click on its link to listen in.



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

Also known as the federal stimulus package, the ARRA was signed into law by President Barack Obama on February 17th. It includes \$540 million dollars for vocational rehabilitation services, in order to carry out part B of title I of the Rehabilitation Act. It also includes \$140 million for independent living services, in order to carry out parts B and C of chapters 1 and 2 of title VII of the Rehabilitation Act. That sum will be broken down into \$18.2 million for state grants; \$87.5 million for independent living centers; and \$34.3 million for services for older blind individuals.

- A copy of the Rehabilitation Act can be found here: <http://www.nationalrehab.org/website/history/act.html>
- A comprehensive breakdown of the funds in the ARRA can be found here: www.recovery.gov

Private Autism Insurance Legislation

Legislation is currently being drafted to mandate private insurance coverage of approved treatments for autism spectrum disorders. One of these treatments is Applied Behavioral Analysis, which has been proven effective repeatedly, and is endorsed by government and scientific organizations (Autism Votes). Eight states have already passed similar legislation, and another 17 states have introduced bills to that end.

To see which states have passed private autism insurance legislation, follow this link:

http://www.autismvotes.org/site/c.frKNI3PCImE/b.3909861/k.B9DF/State_Initiatives.htm

Held Committee Referrals and Hearings

Senate Bill 1:

Minimum Wage

February 12 heard and held in
Labor & Commerce

Senate Bill 32:

Home and Community-Based Services Rate Reviews

February 4 heard and held in
Health & Social Services

Senate Bill 83:

Vocational Rehabilitation Committee

February 6 referred to Finance

Hb 29, HB 125, SB 1— Minimum Wage Bills

There are three bills in the legislature proposing minimum wage increases:

- HB 29 suggests that the Alaska minimum wage should stay at \$7.15 an hour, or 50 cents an hour more than the federal minimum wage. The full text can be found here: http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=26&bill=HB29
- HB 125 changes the minimum wage to \$7.85 an hour and prescribes regular increases for the following years of at least \$1 more than the federal minimum wage. The full text can be found here: http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=26&bill=HB125
- SB 1 provides for the minimum to be adjusted up each year according to inflation and ensures that it is at least \$1 ahead of the federal minimum wage. The full text can be found here: http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=26&bill=SB1

SB 61— Mandatory Universal Healthcare

This bill establishes an Alaska health care program mandating and ensuring affordable health care for all Alaskans. It promises to reduce unsustainable health care cost increases by emphasizing preventative care and chronic disease management within a primary care environment; create more public involvement and oversight within the health care system; and provide services for humane and dignified end-of-life care. It also establishes a sliding scale voucher system to ensure more personal responsibility in the system, a health care clearinghouse, and the Alaska health care fund.

Sponsors: Senators French and Ellis
Status: 1/21 read and referred to Senate Health & Social Services committee

Link to Bill Text:
http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=26&bill=SB61

Upcoming Committee Bills Hearings

February 23rd

3:15pm
HB 29: Minimum Wage
Labor & Commerce
Barnes 124 State Capitol
(Teleconference)

February 24th

1:30pm
SB 1: Minimum Wage
Labor & Commerce
Beltz 211 State Capitol
(Teleconference)

3:00pm

Telemedicine
Health & Social Services
Room 106 State Capitol
(Teleconference)

February 25th

8:00am
Legislative Hearing: Key Campaign
Health & Social Services,
Senate Finance Committee
Room 532 State Capitol

February 26th

3:00pm
HB 26: Medicaid for Adult Dental Services
Health & Social Services
Room 106 State Capitol
(Teleconference)

If you have any Questions or Comments, please contact:

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