

## Legislative Issues Committee – Key Working Group

June 1, 2020

The second session of the 31<sup>st</sup> Alaska Legislature recessed on March 28, 2020 in anticipation of future legislative actions required as a result of COVID-19 and the CARES Act passed by the U S Congress. The recess by the Legislature kept all filed bills active in their current committees in case one or more needed to be addressed. The Legislature returned to Juneau on May 18<sup>th</sup> for a two day session where SB 243 was the only bill introduced and adopted. SB243 was an “Act approving and ratifying the actions of the governor and executive branch in expending certain federal receipts and of the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee in approving the expenditure of certain federal receipts during fiscal years 2020 and 2021; and providing for an effective date.” Upon passage, both bodies of the Legislature adjourned the second session and for the balance of the year can only be called back into a special session with a specific agenda established in the call. All remaining bills have expired and must be reintroduced in the first session of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Legislature.

Here are the major highlights of the funding provided in the CARES Act.

- \$1,25 billion to the State of Alaska. The Governor has the authority to spend this as needed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and offset economic losses.
- Cash payment to many taxpayers, targeted at lower and middle income brackets. Payments are phased out at higher incomes. Alaska real estate licensees are considered self-employed and are eligible to file for benefits under the Payroll Protection Program.
- Expanded unemployment benefits for an additional 13 weeks and increased benefits.
- Loans to small businesses to encourage employers to keep employees hired.
- Financial assistance to fishermen and possibly fishing businesses
- Dollars in assistance to hospitals and other health care providers
- \$8 billion for tribes including those in Alaska. Program has been challenged in court and a judge has issued an injunction regarding the eligibility of those tribes in Alaska.

The State is returning to normal business operations starting the first week in June. But there are still requirements for maintaining social distancing, wearing face coverings, frequent washing of hands and testing verification for interstate travel.