

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**DECEMBER 16, 2025
1:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Sara Hannan, Chair
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Mike Prax
Representative Calvin Schrage
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Donna Mears (alternate)
Senator Matt Claman
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Bert Stedman

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Representative Ashley Carrick
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Löki Tobin (alternate)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Ky Holland
Representative Rebecca Himschoot

AGENDA

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
COMMITTEE BUSINESS
EXECUTIVE SESSION

SPEAKER REGISTER

Santé Lesh, Acting Executive Director, Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA)
JC Kestel, Procurement Officer, LAA
Tim Powers, Chief Technology and Outreach Officer, LAA
Emily Nauman, Legal Services Director, LAA
Megan Wallace, Chief Counsel, LAA
Michael Mason, Staff to Senator Tobin

I. Call to Order

1:03:02 PM

CHAIR HANNAN called the Legislative Council meeting to order at 1:03pm on December 16, 2025, in Room 519 (House Finance) of the State Capitol.

Present at the call were Representatives Edgmon, Kopp, Prax, Schrage, Stutes, Mears, Hannan; Senators Claman, Giessel, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Stedman.

Twelve members present.

II. Approval of the Agenda

1:04:26 PM

SENATOR STEDMAN moved and asked unanimous consent that Legislative Council approve the agenda as presented.

The motion passed without objection.

III. Approval of Minutes

a. November 5, 2025, Meeting Minutes

1:04:47 PM

SENATOR STEDMAN moved and asked unanimous consent that Legislative Council approve the minutes dated November 5, 2025, as presented.

The motion passed without objection.

IV. Sanctioning of Charitable Events

a. Alaska Sealife Center Annual Soiree

1:05:15 PM

SENATOR STEDMAN moved and asked unanimous consent that Legislative Council ratify the Chair's sanctioning of the following charitable event per AS 24.60.080(a)(2)(B): Alaska Sealife Center Annual Soiree.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purpose of discussion, and stated that the 501(c)(3) status of the Sealife Center has been verified.

There was no further discussion, Chair Hannan removed her objection, and the sanctioning was ratified.

V. Committee Business

- a. Late Travel Reimbursement Claims**
 - i. Senator Cronk
 - ii. Representative Holland

1:07:07 PM

SENATOR STEDMAN moved that Legislative Council approve Senator Cronk's late travel reimbursement request for travel which took place from August 24 to August 26, 2025.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES commented that this issue has occurred before and noted there were multiple instances on the agenda. She suggested it may be appropriate for Legislative Council, Accounting, or the Rules offices to send reminders about applicable time limits and the need for more timely submissions.

CHAIR HANNAN stated that she has asked that the sixty-day deadline be emphasized during annual staff and new member orientation, so it is clearly communicated, particularly to freshman members, and heard more than once.

SENATOR STEDMAN asked whether there was a written excuse or explanation for the late request by Senator Cronk, or whether testimony would be provided.

CHAIR HANNAN stated that documentation in members' packets shows Accounting verified the expenses as legitimate. She said Senator Cronk was listed as being online for questions, although she did not see him present, and noted she did not know why the request was submitted late but that it was submitted in November.

Seeing no further discussion, Chair Hannan removed her objection and a roll call vote was taken.

1:10:11 PM

YEAS: Representatives Edgmon, Kopp, Prax, Schrage, Stutes, Mears, Hannan; Senators Claman, Giessel, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Stedman

NAYS: none

The motion passed 12-0.

1:11:17 PM

-DRAFT-

SENATOR STEDMAN moved that Legislative Council approve Representative Holland's late travel reimbursement request for travel which took place July 16 through July 24; August 28; and September 14 through September 19, 2025.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purpose of discussion.

SENATOR STEDMAN commented that there appeared to be a lengthy list of items and asked whether any were filed on time, or whether this reflected a large volume of travel with a few requests submitted late.

CHAIR HANNAN stated that she believed Representative Holland had been on the line but noted that he had dropped off the call.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP stated that he would appreciate any explanation from Representative Holland.

CHAIR HANNAN stated Council would take a brief at ease.

1:12:24 PM

Council took a brief at ease.

1:14:15 PM

Council returned from a brief at ease.

CHAIR HANNAN asked Representative Holland to provide additional explanation for the three late travel reimbursement requests, noting that both Senator Stedman and Representative Kopp had requested clarification.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND apologized for the confusion and said he appreciated the questions. He explained that the reason for his late travel claims was he had set aside several reimbursement requests and did not realize the sixty-day requirement at the time. He said the three trips were part of those delayed submissions, acknowledged the oversight as a lesson learned, and thanked the committee for its consideration.

Seeing no further discussion, Chair Hannan removed her objection, and a roll call vote was taken.

1:16:27 PM

YEAS: Representatives Edgmon, Kopp, Prax, Schrage, Stutes, Mears, Hannan; Senators Claman, Giessel, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Stedman.

NAYS: none

The motion passed 12-0.

b. Anchorage LOB Security Contract Renewal No. 3

1:17:50 PM

SENATOR STEDMAN moved that Legislative Council approve Renewal No. 3 of the contract for armed security services with Security Services Northwest in an amount not to exceed \$199,449.20.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purpose of discussion and asked Legislative Affairs Agency Procurement Officer JC Kestel to come forward to provide information about the contract and be available for any questions members may have.

JC KESTEL, Procurement Officer, Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA), explained that the Agency is seeking to exercise the third one-year renewal before the contract expires on December 31, which would extend the contract through December 31, 2026. He noted that, if approved, two additional one-year renewal options would remain. He said he was available to answer questions.

CHAIR HANNAN took a moment to note that Mike Warenda was available online to answer any questions related to the security contract and to announce that he is retiring after working at the Anchorage Legislative Office Building for twenty-four years, with Friday being his last day. She thanked him for his service to the Legislature and congratulated him on his retirement.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON thanked Mr. Warenda for his service, stating that he has been an outstanding employee and will be greatly missed. She expressed her appreciation on behalf of herself and her staff.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON thanked Mr. Warenda for his many years of service, his willingness to work late hours when needed, and said Mike will be missed.

SENATOR CLAMAN thanked Mr. Warenda for his exceptional service at the Anchorage LIO. Noting the creativity and

dedication required to address daily challenges, that Mr. Warenda was a strong problem solver, and will be greatly missed.

CHAIR HANNAN commented that while Mr. Warenda will likely not miss late night emergency calls related to keys and building issues and winter maintenance, he often addressed unexpected problems and solved them creatively. She thanked him for his service and wished him restful holidays.

Seeing no further discussion, Chair Hannan removed her objection and called for a roll call vote.

1:22:40 PM

YEAS: Representatives Edgmon, Kopp, Prax, Schrage, Stutes, Mears, Hannan; Senators Claman, Giessel, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Stedman

NAYS: none

The motion passed 12-0.

c. Capitol Security Screening Contract Renewal No. 1

1:23:41 PM

SENATOR STEDMAN moved that Legislative Council approve Assignment and Renewal No. 1 of the contract for security screening services to Universal Protection Service, Limited Partnership in an amount not to exceed \$65,000.00.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purpose of discussion and asked Mr. Kestel to provide information on the contract.

MR. KESTEL explained that the assignment reflects a corporate name change from "Universal Protection Services, LP" to "Universal Protection Services, Limited Partnership." He said the contractor provided security screening services at the Capitol at the end of the last regular session and during the special session. He added that the Agency is requesting approval to renew the contract for a one-year period from January 1 through December 31, 2026, to continue providing security screening services at the Capitol for the upcoming legislative session.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked what services the contract covers and whether it applies to Capitol security personnel or to screening of individuals entering the building.

MR. KESTEL responded that the contract is for lobby screening services, with contractors operating the x-ray machine and metal detector used for the public. In response to a follow-up question, he clarified that the contract provides screening services during legislative sessions and special sessions only.

CHAIR HANNAN restated this clarification after Representative Stutes indicated she was unable to hear the response.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES then asked whether the contract amounted to approximately \$200,000 for a 120-day period.

MR. KESTEL clarified that the previously discussed Anchorage contract totaled \$199,449.20 and had already been approved, and that the contract currently under consideration is for Capitol security screening services only and is not to exceed \$65,000 annually.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES thanked Mr. Kestel for the clarification.

SENATOR STEDMAN stated that he does not support the proposed security screening, expressing the view that metal screening at the Capitol entrance is unnecessary given existing armed security and staffing throughout the building. He said the risk from the public is low, past incidents have been managed without difficulty, and the measure is redundant and could create barriers for Alaskans seeking to meet with their legislators or testify in committees.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked whether Legislative Council had previously approved the use of metal detectors and whether the current action was simply a renewal of an existing contract.

CHAIR HANNAN confirmed that the policy remains in effect and that the item before Council is the contract renewal to carry out that policy.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON stated that denying the contract extension would effectively require reconsideration of the policy itself.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON spoke in support of the contract, citing prior security concerns, noting that security is a significant issue nationwide, and emphasizing the importance of preemptive measures. He stated that safety cannot be

measured by cost and urged Council to move forward with the contract.

Seeing no further discussion, Chair Hannan removed her objection and a roll call vote was taken.

1:33:08 PM

YEAS: Representatives Edgmon, Kopp, Schrage, Stutes, Mears, Hannan; Senators Claman, Giessel, Gray-Jackson

NAYS: Representative Prax; Senators Kiehl, Stedman

The motion passed 9-3.

VI. Executive Session

a. Professional Services Contracting-Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Funding

CHAIR HANNAN stated that Council would now go into Executive session to discuss professional services contracting for the Education Funding Task Force.

1:34:42 PM

SENATOR STEDMAN moved that Legislative Council go into Executive Session under Uniform Rule 22(B)(1), discussion of matters, the immediate knowledge of which would adversely affect the finances of a government unit, and 22(B)(3), discussion of a matter that may, by law, be required to be confidential. The following people may remain in the room or on-line for the executive session: Santé Lesh, JC Kestel, Ernest Daigle, Tim Powers, Emily Nauman, Megan Wallace, Andrew Dunmire, any legislators not on Legislative Council, and any staff of Legislative Council members.

1:35:36 PM

Council went into Executive Session.

2:03:21 PM

Council came out of Executive Session.

2:03:26 PM

Roll was taken to establish a quorum. Present at the call were: Representatives Edgmon, Kopp, Prax, Schrage, Stutes, Mears, Hannan; Senators Claman, Giessel, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Stedman.

Twelve members present.

a. Professional Services Contracting—Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Funding

2:04:47 PM

SENATOR STEDMAN moved that Legislative Council, under Sec. 040(a)(1) of the Legislative Procurement Code, approve a contract between the Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Funding and Matthew Turner dba Concept of Degrees for professional services for the creation of a final report of findings and recommendations in an amount not to exceed \$70,000.00.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purpose of discussion and asked Mike Mason, the Task Force Co-Chair Senator Tobin's staff, to briefly summarize the contract request.

MICHAEL MASON, staff to Senator Tobin, noted for Council that the Task Force on Education Funding was authorized by House Bill 57 and is co-chaired by Senator Tobin and Representative Himschoot. He stated the proposed professional services contract would allow the Task Force to engage a qualified education policy writer to document the Task Force's work and assist in drafting the required final report. He noted that the Task Force must submit findings and recommendations by the first day of the Thirty-Fifth Alaska State Legislature in January 2027 and requested approval of the contract with Matthew Turner so work on the report can begin.

SENATOR STEDMAN asked how the \$70,000 amount was determined and expressed that the cost seemed high.

MR. MASON explained that the co-chairs agreed to a flat rate of \$60,000 with Mr. Turner to cover report writing, research, and outreach. He said the contract was structured as a not to exceed amount of \$70,000 to include up to \$10,000 for travel and related expenses. He further noted that the contractor is expected to attend Task Force site visits, including recent and upcoming visits to locations such as Wasilla, Anchorage, Kenai, Fairbanks, and Nenana, to observe and document Task Force activities.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON stated he does not intend to oppose the contract but noted concerns given current fiscal constraints. He compared the proposal to prior Task Forces where legislative staff prepared reports and said he wanted to ensure his support was based on a clear understanding of the role and scope of the contractor.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether the flat rate contract accounted for the number of hours involved and whether sufficient time was allocated to produce a quality product. He questioned whether the proposed amount would provide adequate value, drawing on his experience with the long-term Fiscal Plan Task Force, and expressed concern that limited resources could result in a report that does not receive meaningful consideration.

MR. MASON stated that he trusts the judgment of the Task Force co-chairs and members, including Senator Tobin and Representative Himschoot, and expressed confidence in the quality of the Task Force's work and the report due by the start of the 2027 legislative session. He said that determining whether there is sufficient time and expertise rests with the Task Force leadership and the qualifications of the contractor. He noted that the contractor has extensive experience preparing similar reports for organizations such as the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Association of Alaska School Boards, and other Alaska-based entities. He concluded that the contractor is a skilled writer and educator and that the co-chairs believe he is well suited for the task.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX followed up asking whether Senator Kiehl participated in discussions on the contract and whether Representative Himschoot could speak to the issue. He seeks to understand whether the expected hours of work were considered, noting his assumption that a consultant might charge around \$100 per hour, and expressed a desire to ensure there was a realistic expectation of the scope and value of the work.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that the work is expected to occur over the full duration of the contract, which exceeds one year, and will involve several weeks of effort completed in small increments. She stated that the contract is a flat rate and was not calculated by specific hours.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether the contractor understands the scope of the work and agreed compensation, and whether there is a shared understanding of the time commitment, so the rate does not become unreasonably low.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT stated that the scope of work was discussed and expected to include a specific number of meetings and included attending Task Force meetings, meeting with individual members, consulting with education stakeholders and tribes, and drafting the report and

recommendations. She said the work will require significant time in small increments and that the effective rate is expected to fall between \$50 and \$100 per hour.

Seeing no further discussion, Chair Hannan removed her objection and a roll call vote was taken.

2:17:36 PM

YEAS: Representatives Edgmon, Kopp, Prax, Schrage, Stutes, Mears, Hannan; Senators Claman, Giessel, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Stedman

NAYS: none

The motion passed 12-0.

VII. Adjourn

CHAIR HANNAN stated that Juneau is experiencing an unusually cold and snowy winter, with record days below zero. She wished members a warm and happy holiday season and said she looked forward to seeing everyone back at the Capitol in about a month.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON thanked staff for their work in supporting the committee, wished members a wonderful holiday season, and said she looked forward to seeing everyone in Juneau for the second session of the Thirty-Fourth Legislature.

There being no further business before the committee, the Legislative Council meeting was adjourned at 2:20pm.

2:20:25 PM