

SJR

4



SENATOR LOREN LEMAN

Northwest Anchorage

3111 "C" Street Anchorage, AK 99503 561-7614 During Session: State Capitol Juneau, AK 99801 465-2095

SPONSOR STATEMENT

BY: Senator Loren Lemman
SUBJECT: SJR 4: Limiting Session Length to 90 Days
DATE: January 20, 1993

SJR 4 proposes a constitutional amendment to reduce the length of the regular session from the existing 121 days to 90 days. I believe that the work of the Legislature, if organized properly, can be completed well within this revised limit.

The benefits to reducing the session length are substantial.

First, legislative service will be possible for more people. Most people who own a business or work a job for a salary have substantial difficulty in taking the time necessary to serve as a legislator. Reducing the session length by one month will make it possible for more people to serve. This I believe will be a big step in the right direction toward improving representative government.

Second, it will save us money. At \$50,000 per day to operate the Legislature, a 31-day reduction will save the State \$1.55 million.

Third, it will make it easier for others to do business with us. Traveling to Juneau and communicating with us is expensive. The more concentrated we make our legislative session, the easier it is for others who are interested in participating in the legislative process.

Opponents of a reduction in the session length argue that this will just place more power in the hands of the Administration. I heartily disagree. The Legislature still has control of the State's purse strings via the budgeting process. Additionally, we as legislators still have authority and responsibility even when we are not in session. That will continue.

Shortening the session length will force us to establish a work plan for completing our work within the 90-day limit.

I believe that passage of this resolution and voter approval of the constitutional amendment will help make the Legislature a more responsive, representative and open institution.

DIVISION OF LEGAL SERVICES

**LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY
STATE OF ALASKA**

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Juneau, Alaska 99801-2105

MEMORANDUM

January 15, 1993

SUBJECT: Duration of a Regular Session (SJR 4)
TO: Senator Loren Leman
FROM: Tamara Brandt Cook
Director

TBC

Here is the sectional summary of SJR 4 you requested.

Sec. 1. A regular session of the legislature is limited to ninety consecutive calendar days, excluding any extension. Currently, a regular session may not exceed 121 consecutive calendar days, excluding any extension.

Sec. 2. The proposed constitutional amendment is to be presented to the voters in 1994. If adopted, it would apply to the Nineteenth Legislature.

TBC:gc
93-029.glc

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1993 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO: SJR 4

Revision Date: _____
Title: Proposing an amendment to the
Constitution...duration of a regular session.
Sponsor: Senator Leman
Requestor: Senator Leman

Department Affected: Legislative Affairs Agency
BRU: Legislative Council
Component: Session Expenses, Legal Svcs.,
Sal & Allow., Public Svcs & Admin Services

COMPONENT SERIAL NO:

Expenditures/Revenues: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS		<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>
TOTAL OPERATING	0	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>

CAPITAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
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REVENUE FUND SOURCE	0	0	0	0	0	0
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FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND	0	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>
FEDERAL FUNDS	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER FUND SOURCE	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>	<1,500.0>

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

Estimate of current year impact: _____

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

SJR 4 reduces the length of the legislative session from a 120 day limit to a 90 day limit.
The estimated daily cost of the session is \$50,000 a day. If the session is reduced by 30 days,
a savings of \$1,500,000 is calculated.

Prepared By: Pamela A. Stoops, Director
Division: Administrative Services

Pamela A. Stoops

Phone: 465-3850
Date: 1/18/93

Approved By: Warren W. Endicott, Executive Director
Agency: Legislative Affairs Agency

Warren W. Endicott

Date: 1/18/93

Distribution (by preparer): Leg. Finance, Legislative Sponsor, Requestor, OMB, Gov., & Impacted Agency(ies).

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1993 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SJR 4

Revision Date: January 14, 1993
 Title: "Proposing an amendment...relating to
 the duration of a regular session."
 Sponsor: Senator Leman
 Requestor: Senate State Affairs

Department Affected: Department of Law
 BRU: Legal Services
 Component: Operations
 COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 0093

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES:

OPERATING	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

CAPITAL						
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REVENUE FUND SOURCE:						
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FUNDING:

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
OTHER						
TOTAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

FULL-TIME	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

Estimate of current year (FY93) impact: _____

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)
 SJR 4 proposes an amendment to the state's constitution that would reduce the duration of a regular session of the Legislature from one hundred and twenty to ninety days. This is a matter involving a separate co-equal branch of government, and it will not have a fiscal impact on the Department of Law.

Prepared by: Richard I. Peques, Director
 Division: Administrative Services Division
 Approved by Commissioner: Charles E. Cole, Attorney General
 Agency: Department of Law

Phone: 465-3672
 Date: January 14, 1993
 Date: January 14, 1993

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1989 LEGISLATIVE SESSION DATES

	Scheduled to Convene	Time Limit (Days)	
		Regular Session	Special Session
Alabama	Feb. 7	30	12
Alaska	Jan. 9	121 120a	30
Arizona	Jan. 9	None	None
Arkansas	Jan. 9	60a	b
California	Jan. 2	None	None
Colorado	Jan. 4	None	None
Connecticut	Jan. 4	June 7	None
Delaware	Jan. 10	June 30	None
Florida	Apr. 4	60a	20a
Georgia	Jan. 9	40	40c
Hawaii	Jan. 18	60a	30a
Idaho	Jan. 9	60	20
Illinois	Jan. 11	None	None
Indiana	Jan. 3	61	30
Iowa	Jan. 9	None	None
Kansas	Jan. 9	90a	None
Kentucky	No regular session		
Louisiana	Apr. 17	60d	30
Maine	Dec. 7, 1988	June 21a	None
Maryland	Jan. 11	90a	30
Massachusetts	Jan. 4	None	None
Michigan	Jan. 11	None	None
Minnesota	Jan. 3	120e	None
Mississippi	Jan. 3	90	None
Missouri	Jan. 4	June 30	None
Montana	Jan. 2	90a	None
Nebraska	Jan. 4	90a	None
Nevada	Jan. 16	60	20
New Hampshire	Jan. 4	45	15
New Jersey	Jan. 10	None	None
New Mexico	Jan. 17	60	30c
New York	Jan. 4	None	None
North Carolina	Jan. 11	None	None
North Dakota	Jan. 10	80f	None
Ohio	Jan. 2	None	None
Oklahoma	Jan. 3	90	None
Oregon	Jan. 9	None	None
Pennsylvania	Jan. 3	None	None
Puerto Rico	Jan. 9	Apr. 30a	20
Rhode Island	Jan. 3	60	60
South Carolina	Jan. 10	40	40
South Dakota	Jan. 10	40	None
Tennessee	Jan. 10	90	30
Texas	Jan. 10	140	30
Utah	Jan. 9	45	30
Vermont	Jan. 4	None	None
Virginia	Jan. 11	60a,g	30
Washington	Jan. 9	105	30h
West Virginia	Jan. 11	60a	None
Wisconsin	undetermined	None	None
Wyoming	Jan. 10	40	None

(a) May be extended.

(b) 15 days after disposal of subjects on governor's call.

(c) Legislature convening itself — 30 day limit.

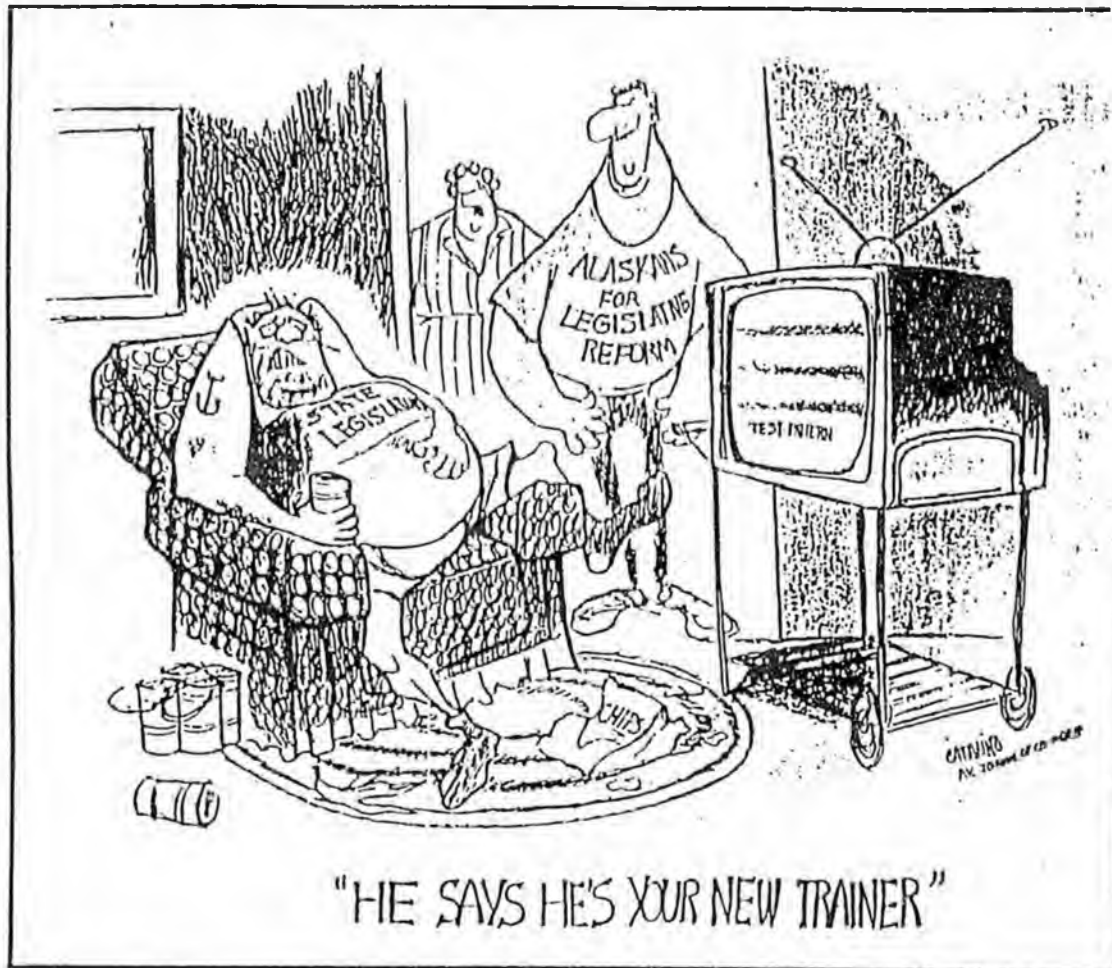
(d) 60 legislative days within 85 calendar days.

(e) Limited to 120 legislative days during 2-year period. Must adjourn by May 22, 1989.

(f) Preliminary session convenes in Dec. following election of members for organizational purposes. Bill introduction permitted.

(g) Limited to 30 days.

(h) Legislature may convene itself with unlimited subject agenda.



"HE SAYS HE'S YOUR NEW TRAINER"

Legislative Operations, Organization, and Procedures

The increase in the capacity and willingness of legislatures to deal with modern societal problems has involved more than changes in patterns of representation. Legislative organi-

zation and procedures are constantly evolving. Many legislatures regularly review their structures and procedures, often through a Rules Committee or an interim study. Many procedural changes in recent years have had the objective either of opening and formalizing the process and providing more information to both the public and members of the legislative body, or of more effectively using legislative time.

Concern about legislative use of time has been motivated by at least two issues: How much time should a legislature spend in session, and should it be considered "full-time" or "part-time" in nature? And, how can the legislature most effectively use the time available and avoid the end-of-session logjam that occurs in many states?

Length of Legislative Sessions

Twelve states place no limit on session length, while 32 operate with constitutional limits (two of these, Colorado and Kansas, limit only the second year), and six states (Arizona, Iowa, Nevada, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Vermont) have statutory or indirect limitations based on cutoffs in legislator's salaries or per diem expense payments.

The argument about session limitations often is couched in terms of preserving the "citizen" nature of state legislatures, as opposed to developing "professional" or full-time legislatures on the congressional model. There is no question that the amount of time spent in session and the level of compensation affect the composition of the membership of the legislative bodies. Many argue it is desirable that the dominant occupation of members of the legislature not be that of "legislator," but that legislative bodies represent a broad spectrum of occupations. However, the growing demands on state legislatures and the greater legislative role in policy initiation, budgeting and program oversight have increased the pressure on legislative time.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of elimination or relaxation of the limits on legislative sessions. More recently, however, there has been a mixed response to the question of session length. In 1984, Alaska adopted a 120-day limit, replacing its previously unlimited sessions. In 1982, Colorado adopted a limit of 140 days for the second year of the session, and in 1981, Washington included session limitations when it moved from biennial to annual sessions. In 1984, Utah lengthened its sessions by

ten days per biennium when it changed from a 60-day (first year) 20-day (second year) system to 45 days per session. New Hampshire adopted annual sessions effective in 1986. Several legislatures, notably Arizona and Iowa, have limited their sessions by legislative rule or statute. Movements to adopt more restrictive session limits surface periodically. Michigan has experienced several attempts to limit sessions. Montana held annual sessions for one biennium in the 1970s, then returned to a biennial schedule. Colorado is considering further limitations on session days and there is a serious proposal in New Hampshire to return to biennial sessions.

"Full-time" Legislatures and Legislators

Whether a legislature is full-time in nature generally can be measured by factors such as time spent in session, level of compensation and occupational self-definition of members. Moreover, full-time legislatures are likely to have a pattern of considerable legislator time spent in district offices and a high priority placed on constituent service functions.

The legislatures of California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin have lengthy sessions, relatively high legislator salaries and many members whose primary occupation is "legislator." None of these states have constitutionally-imposed session limitations, although both California and Wisconsin adopt a systematic schedule of committee and floor activity, as well as recess periods at the beginning of each biennium. Many of the legislatures which have longer sessions meet only two or three days per week, while in other states with more restricted sessions, five- and six-day work weeks are common. Several of the medium-sized states spend as many actual days in session as do the full-time legislatures. Twenty-nine legislatures today have the authority to convene themselves in special session without being dependent on the governor.

The number of legislators who define their occupation as "legislator" is increasing. An occupational survey of state legislators conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures in 1986 found that more than 60 percent of the legislators in New York and Pennsylvania define their occupation as "legislator," and more than half the legislators in the Middle Atlantic states are full-time. The study also indicated that in larger states the number of

"business owners" who are members of the legislature is much smaller than it is in the states with more limited session lengths. Lawyer legislators exist in greatest numbers in the South, with Virginia having the largest number (45 percent). In a number of states, members engaged in "education" outnumber those coming from any other professional background. Individuals engaged in "agriculture" still are found in every legislature but are in greatest number in the rural Midwestern and mountain states. In rank order, the largest occupational categories are "attorney" (16 percent), "business owner" (14 percent), "full-time legislator" (11 percent), "agricultural occupations" (10 percent) and "educator" (8 percent).

The category of full-time legislator would exceed 20 percent if those who list themselves as "retired," "homemaker" or "student" were included. The increased time demands and complexity of legislative activity as well as stringent conflict of interest and disclosure laws have likely contributed to the continuing decline in lawyer legislators. The number of women and minorities in the legislatures continues to increase each biennium. In 1987, 1,157 of the 7,461 state legislators were female (15.5 percent). The number of women legislators is highest in New Hampshire, Colorado, Maine, Washington and Vermont. Female representation is smallest in Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Pennsylvania. Minority membership in state legislatures now exceeds 400 (5.4 percent).

THE GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE

Refocusing priorities

THE ANNUAL showdown over the state budget is a mundane affair compared to the list of assignments that Gov. Walter Hickel has in mind.

In his State of the State address last night, the governor announced he is declaring war on the federal government and is dispatching his attorney general to do battle in court.

Like David being sent after Goliath, Attorney General Charles Cole has been directed by the governor to prepare and file a series of landmark lawsuits. Among the objectives of the legal challenges are adequate access to all state land holdings, compensation for royalties lost when federal lands were locked up in wilderness, an end to the oil export ban, and reaffirmation of the state's authority to regulate fishing in all navigable waters in and off Alaska.

While the attorney general and his staff are keeping busy in court, other departments are going to find their hands full as well. Mr. Hickel is counting on his subsistence advisory council to complete work on a solution for the subsistence issue to enable him to present a proposal to the Legislature in the near future.

HE ALSO intends to make the gas pipeline project become a reality; put an end to the waste of fish resources off Alaska shores; continue work on road access, including the road to Cordova; promote resource development on state owned lands; open ANWR; introduce a tough new crime bill; complete the Mental Health Trust settlement; and stimulate the economy to create new jobs in the state.

An ambitious agenda if ever there was one.

And while his list has more than enough challenges to keep his executive staff busy for many days to come, the governor had a special assignment for the Legislature that also could keep lawmakers tied up for a while.

Gov. Hickel repeated his challenge to the Legislature to place on the this year's ballot a constitutional amendment to limit legislative sessions to 75 days and consecutive terms of legislators to eight years.

Getting the legislative reform proposal on the ballot probably will be a greater challenge than winning all the court battles with the federal government.

THE GOVERNOR'S message to Alaska, after one year in office, was pragmatic and necessary.

He acknowledged that he is putting people atop his list of priorities. Health care, education, combating crime — are among those priorities. So, too, are jobs.

The governor recognizes that this state is entering a period of economic uncertainty and that it is essential for Alaskans to work together to prepare for that future. His message last night is he intends to provide the necessary leadership.

ALASKAN OWNED AND OPERATED SINCE 1915

SHORTENING THE LEGISLATURE

Put lid on at 75 days

WHEN IT COMES to reforms that would improve the way the state of Alaska functions, put high on the list a reduction in the length of time the Legislature stays in session every year.

The new suggestion is for a 75-day limit.

Let's endorse that, and urge all Alaskans to think in that time frame.

Clearly it will take a voter revolt to reduce the length of legislative session, because lawmakers themselves will never do so on their own. They like being in session for four months each year, and they cultivate the appearance of working full time — complete with full-time staffs and offices — the other eight months of the year.

And before the people of the state brought enough pressure to bear to force a 120-day limit on the annual sessions, the legislators were delighted to stay in Juneau for much longer periods of time — more than 160 days on three occasions, in fact.

THAT KIND OF time spent legislating each year for a half a million people is a frightful disgrace.

So, too, is 120 days each year.

The truth is, and most legislators will privately acknowledge the reality, nothing much is accomplished in the first 30 days of any session — and often not much in 60, besides a great deal of posturing and pandering to each other's egos.

And while the legislators are in Juneau, doing whatever they do to occupy the time, the wheels of government essentially stop turning.

The result is that for three months at the start of every year, the administrative departments of government — which are supposed to be running things — drop everything else and concentrate on being at the beck and call of the lawmakers.

Then once the Legislature has adjourned, the administrative branches of government spend the next three months trying to figure out what happened to them as a result of legislative actions — and changing regulations and whatnot to conform to changes in the law. Not a whole lot of progressive actions are accomplished during this part of the year.

By the time the last three months are at hand, the administrative offices have to start getting ready for the next legislative session — spending three months building their defenses or trying to concoct arguments in favor of some new program or spending plan.

IT'S NO WONDER that the state winds up running in circles, accomplishing little for the good of the people — but spending an enormous amount of dollars in the process.

The governor — whoever the governor might be — has little time to develop programs and to effectuate leadership goals. Juneau's whole attention is on the legislators — not on the administration and the governor, charged by the Alaska Constitution to lead and direct the state's welfare and future.

Walter J. Hickel, who now occupies the governor's office, has endorsed the 75-day legislative limit. He recognizes there is much to be done and that huge challenges are out there — with great opportunities awaiting if only the state could focus on the goals.

The one-third-of-year legislative session indeed can be shortened. But it will take action by the voters — speaking loudly and with force — to make it happen.

Speaking out



Clymer



Lopez



Grabowski

Q. Should the Alaska Legislature's 120-day session be further reduced to a 75-day limit?

• "Yes. They need to reduce the length. They're taking too long. I think 75 days is sufficient time for them to legislate"

— Chlora Clymer, Kodiak

• "Yes. It takes them too long to make decisions."

— Nga Lopez, Anchorage

• "Yes. I always feel it takes them too long to make decisions. I think we need to reduce the session."

— Sue Grabowski, Anchorage

Bill J. Allen
Publisher and Chairman

Hugh Cunningham
Editor

William J. Tobin
Editor, Editorial Page

Paul Jenkins
Managing Editor

60th legislative day

THE ALASKA Legislature is at the midway point today of its 120-day journey in Juneau.

A number of state legislatures only meet for 60 days a year — or every other year, in some cases. But in Alaska, where the lawmaking job has been transformed by the legislators themselves into virtually a full-time occupation, the legislative sessions last for four full months every year.

It's a terrible waste of time and money.

The job could be done annually in half the time. Most of the legislators will privately admit that, even if they won't say it publicly.

We have sung this same song many times over the years in these columns, and it's worth echoing the refrain one more time just as a reminder that there is a better way to do things.

FIRST OF all, of course, there needs to be a commitment on the part of the legislative leadership to settle down to a disciplined work schedule from the very first day of the session.

This legislature convened last Jan. 8.

And in all kindness, not much has been accomplished.

Sure, there have been floor sessions and committee meetings and roll calls and bills and resolutions introduced by the score. There has been no end of political posturing and tugs-of-war between the majority and the minority caucuses and between Republicans and Democrats.

But there has been little in the way of productive accomplishment.

Nothing, really, worthy of two months of very, very expensive operations.

In the old days — and we acknowledge that issues of the territorial past cannot be likened to the challenges of

today — Alaska's lawmakers handled the legislative function in just 60 days, and then only every other year.

We acknowledge, too, that biennial sessions probably make no realistic sense.

But shorter annual sessions certainly do — 90 days at the maximum, and probably 60 days every other year or so. There are, after all, only a few more than 500,000 people in Alaska — and they require only so much lawmaking every year. And the governor and the administration do need time to try to run the state, without the legislature demanding their constant attention.

WHAT IS going to happen now is what happens every other year in Juneau.

The legislators are going to do everything they have to do in the next 60 days.

And the point is perfectly clear to just about everybody but the legislators themselves.

They could have skipped the first 60 days and started at what now is the midpoint of the session. And the results would be exactly the same — without millions of dollars being spent on staff, travel, tons of paper grinding through the legislative print shop and all the other items that make the legislative process one of the state's most expensive operations.

The real fact is that most of the work will be done in the last 45 to 30 days of the session — ignoring the mad frenzy that will turn the legislative chambers and offices into a mini asylum on the final two or three days.

But let's thank heaven for small favors. Before the voters finally rose up in outrage and anger and forced lawmakers to accept a 120-day limit on the length of the sessions, legislatures were running beyond the 160-day mark.

Robert B. Atwood
President and Publisher

Elaine Atwood
Assistant Publisher

William J. Tobin
Vice-President, Editor-in-Chief

Aloha, legislators

FOR SOME weekend food for thought, we offer a tidbit of information about the legislative process.

Not Alaska's legislative process.

Hawaii's.

Down in the 50th State, where prosperity blooms, there is a 60-day limit on the length of the annual legislative session.

And the system works very well.

This year, the Hawaiian legislature convened on Jan. 21, a Wednesday, and will adjourn — no ifs, ands or buts — on April 27, a Monday.

And midway through the session — if you can believe such radical stuff — the legislators of Hawaii took a mandatory five-day recess. It extended from March 17 to March 23, and took all the lawmakers back to their home districts and out of the pressure cooker for a little exposure once again to the reality of life.

HOW'S IT work? Just fine, say legislative leaders.

Because of the deadlines imposed to meet the 60-day requirement, one influential senator from Honolulu says, members of the Hawaii House and Senate are forced to concentrate on priority issues.

They aren't inundated by hundreds and hundreds of pieces of legislation, because the members know the practice of papering the record

with campaign bills is counterproductive to an effective session.

At the start of each session, the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House — this year, the respective posts are held by Sen. Richard S.H. Wong and Rep. Richard A. Kawakami — sign off on a schedule that everybody abides by until adjournment comes.

AMONG OTHER things, these rules provide that no new bill can be introduced after the 22nd day of the session. Period. End of discussion. In other words, just a little more than one-third of the session can be used for bill introduction — and just about a full two-thirds for consideration of the legislation that has been put on the table.

And not all of those bills hang around until the very end.

Throughout the 60-day period, there are checkpoints along the way. If bills don't clear those hurdles, they're dead ducks.

That's how the major, priority items get handled in due order, with time for deliberation and thoughtful consideration.

Why can't Alaska legislators get the message that there is a better way to do business — and they don't have to reinvent the wheel to get there?