

HJR

34

From the desk of  
Representative Jerry Sanders

April 16, 1996

Dear Brian,

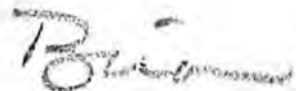
Thank you for your do pass vote on HJR 34 this morning in State Affairs.

I would appreciate it if you could schedule this resolution in House Judiciary immediately so that it will have a better chance of making it to the ballot in this year's election. I feel a 90 day session is sufficient time to conduct the State's business and certainly cost effective due to dwindling General Fund revenues.

Again, thanks for your support.

  
Jerry Sanders

TOM,  
Will checking on  
OK for scheduling  
next week —

  
Brian



Official Business

COMMITTEES  
Labor and Commerce  
Transportation

# Alaska State Legislature

Chairman - Economic Development Committee

REPRESENTATIVE  
**JERRY SANDERS**  
District 19

Anchorage  
718 W. 4th Ave.  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
(907) 258-8199

State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
(907) 465-4945

## SPONSOR STATEMENT

### HIR 34

### 90 DAY SESSIONS

HJR 34 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 limit.

The benefits to reducing the session length are substantial. Most people who own a business or work a job for a salary have difficulty in taking the time necessary to come to Juneau to conduct legislative business. Traveling to Juneau to communicate with us is expensive. The more concentrated we make our Legislative session, the sooner we will be home to meet with our constituents face to face without exorbitant cost.

Reducing the session length by one month will make it possible for more people to meet with the representatives from their districts. I think this will be a big step in the right direction toward a true representative government.

It will save us money. At \$50,000 per day, a 31 day reduction will save the State \$1.55 million.

I understand that 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 the same responsibilities even when we are not in session.

# FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HJR34

Revision Date: 3/20/96 Dept. Affected: Office of the Governor  
 Title: Constitutional Amendment RE: duration of BRU: Elective Operations  
the regular legislative session Component: General and Primary Elections  
 Sponsor: Representative Sanders  
 Requester: House State Affairs COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 22

**Expenditures/Revenues**

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 100	FY 01	FY 02
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL	2.2					
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
----------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )						
------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

**FUND SOURCE**

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF	2.2					
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY96) cost: \$ 0.0

**POSITIONS**

FULL-TIME	0					
PART-TIME	0					
TEMPORARY	0					

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This figure includes the cost of providing information about this issue in the Official Election Pamphlet as required by AS 15.58, and the programming costs for counting votes cast on the measure. However, only four measures can be printed on a single ballot card. If this measure requires printing an additional ballot card, the costs will increase by \$53.4.

Prepared by: Dana LaTour *D.LaTour* Phone: 465-5347  
 Division: Division of Elections Date: 3/20/96  
 Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Commissioner: Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer *Fran Ulmer* Date: 3/20/96  
 Agency: Office of the Lt. Governor

**PREPARER TO PROVIDE ALL DISTRIBUTION COPIES TO GOVERNOR'S LEGISLATIVE OFFICE**  
 For further distribution information, call the Governor's Legislative Office

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

**BILL NO. HJR 34**

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Affected: Department of Law  
 Title: "Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to the duration of a regular session." BRU: Civil Division  
 Sponsor: Representative Sanders Component: General Legal Services  
 Requester: Representative Sanders COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 2087

**Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)**

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
----------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )						
------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

**FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)**

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
Other						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY96) cost: \$ 0.0

**POSITIONS**

FULL-TIME	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

HJR 34 would place a ballot proposition before the voters at the next general election that would amend the state's Constitution to reduce the duration of a regular legislative session from 120 to 90 calendar days. If enacted, this resolution will not have a fiscal impact for the Department of Law, because it simply places the proposition before the voters.

*Richard I. Pegues*

Prepared by: Richard I. Pegues, Director  
 Division: Administrative Services Division  
 Approved by Commissioner: Bruce M. Botelho, Attorney General  
 Agency: Department of Law

Phone: 465-3672  
 Date: 3/21/96  
 Date: 3/21/96

**PREPARER TO PROVIDE ALL DISTRIBUTION COPIES TO GOVERNOR'S LEGISLATIVE OFFICE**  
 For further distribution information, call the Governor's Legislative Office

# FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
BILL VERSION: HJR 34  
PUBLISH DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Department Affected: Legislative Affairs Agency  
Title: Proposing an amendment to the BRU: Legislative Council  
Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to the duration...  
Sponsor: Representative Sanders Component: Session Expenses  
Requestor: Representative Sanders Salaries & Allowances

COMPONENT SERIAL NO:

**Expenditures/Revenues: (Thousands of Dollars)**

OPERATING	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02
PERSONAL SERVICES	-1,140.0	-1,140.0	-1,140.0	-1,140.0	-1,140.0	-1,140.0
TRAVEL	-75.0	-75.0	-75.0	-75.0	-75.0	-75.0
CONTRACTUAL	-240.0	-240.0	-240.0	-240.0	-240.0	-240.0
SUPPLIES	-30.0	-30.0	-30.0	-30.0	-30.0	-30.0
EQUIPMENT	-15.0	-15.0	-15.0	-15.0	-15.0	-15.0
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>

CAPITAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
---------	---	---	---	---	---	---

REVENUE FUND SOURCE	0	0	0	0	0	0
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

**FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)**

GENERAL FUND	-1,500.0	-1,500.0	-1,500.0	-1,500.0	-1,500.0	-1,500.0
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER FUND SOURCE						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>	<b>-1,500.0</b>

**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)**

HJR 34 would amend the Constitution of the State of Alaska by limiting the regular session to 90 days. The daily cost of a legislative session is \$50,000. A 90 day session would decrease the cost of a regular session by \$1,500,000.

Prepared By: Karla Schofield, Deputy Director *Karla Schofield* Phone: 465-3852  
Division: Administrative Services Date: 3/21/96

Approved By: Pamela A. Varni, Executive Director *Pamela Varni*  
Agency: Legislative Affairs Agency Date: 3/21/96

# Alaska State Legislature

Legislative Research Agency



P.O. Box Y  
Juneau, AK 99811-3100  
Phone: (907) 165-3991  
Fax: (907) 163-3331

November 8, 1991

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Representative Eugene Kubina  
FROM: Gordon S. Harrison, Director *gsh*  
RE: The Case For and Against a 90-Day Legislative Session

You asked for a brief discussion of the pros and cons of a 90-day limit to the length of legislative sessions.

### Arguments For a 90-day Session

Legislators constrained to an annual session of 90 days will presumably work faster and more productively than they do under a 120-day limit. Those people--legislators and nonlegislators alike--who support a 90-day limit believe that a good deal of time is wasted during the session: for example, committees hold too many hearings; legislators "sit on" legislation too long; staff produce too much information and too many amendments and committee substitutes to bills; and everyone devotes too much time to organization, unimportant legislation and petty bickering. According to this line of argument, the business of the state can be transacted more efficiently than it is now, and a 90-day session limit would compel the necessary efficiency.

Fewer days in session would cost less. Legislators' per diem and session staff salaries would be reduced. The director of administrative services of the Legislative Affairs Agency estimates that 120-day sessions now cost approximately \$50,000 per day. Curtailing sessions by 30 days could therefore save something in the neighborhood of \$1.5 million per year.

Also, a shorter session would make legislative service less disruptive to many legislators with families that must be uprooted and businesses that must be left behind for the session. It may be argued that a 90-day session might make legislative service feasible, or at least more appealing, to many people who cannot devote four months per year to sessions in Juneau.

### Arguments Against a 90-day Session

The main argument against short sessions is that bad legislation is more likely to result from the hurried consideration of complex policy issues. Opponents of a shorter session do not believe that time is wasted during a 120-day session. While the legislative process may not be as rigorously efficient as *all year*

LEG. RESEARCH OPINION ON HJR 6

Representative Kubina  
November 8, 1991  
Page 2

a well-run business, the objective of government is not efficiency but good laws and wise public policy. Contemporary society is complex, and attempts to find rational legislative solutions to social ills is time-consuming. The social and economic cost to Alaska of ill-conceived, poorly crafted legislation is potentially far higher than the inconvenience to some legislators and the cost to the state of 120-day sessions.

Opponents of a 90-day session argue that legislatures that are unduly constrained--in time, frequency of meeting, financial and staff resources--are weak vis-a-vis the executive branch. Legislators working in an environment of constraint are unable to master complex subjects, and consequently they must defer to the opinions, data and analyses of the governor and his staff. Also, according to this argument, legislators without the time necessary to study and fully understand policy issues tend to be overly dependent upon their own professional staff and lobbyists for information and ideas.

#### Comment

The delegates to the Alaska Constitutional Convention deliberately created a strong legislature to counterbalance a strong governor. They pointedly allowed the legislature to meet annually in sessions of unlimited length. The constitution was amended in 1984 to limit sessions to 120 days. My impression is that the amendment is generally regarded as a positive step: it did wring wasted time from the legislative process and enforced some efficiency measures without upsetting the fundamental balance between the legislative and executive branches.

The question now is whether a further reduction of the session length will cripple the legislature as an institution. On this question people of good will may disagree.

I hope this brief discussion is sufficient for your purposes. I will be pleased to analyze the issue at greater length if desired.

## 1989 LEGISLATIVE SESSION DATES

	Scheduled to Convene	Time Limit (Days)	
		Regular Session	Special Session
Alabama	Feb. 7	30	12
Alaska	Jan. 9	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 elec-

tion of members for organizational purposes. Bill in-

roduction permitted

(g) Limited to 30 days

(h) Legislature may convene itself with unlimited sub-

ject agenda

## LEGISLATURES

### 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 organization 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 predominant occupation of members of the legislature not be that of "legislator," but that legislative bodies represent a broad spectrum of vocations. 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).

Dill 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 mind 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?

# The Anchorage Times

Bill J. Allen, Publisher  
 William J. Tobin, Assistant Publisher  
 Gene R. Arabart, General Manager

J. Randolph Murray, Editor  
 Paul Jenkins, Managing Editor  
 Drake Fradley, Editor, Editorial Pages

Robert B. Atwood, Publisher Emeritus

ALASKAN OWNED AND OPERATED SINCE 1915

## SHORTENING THE LEGISLATURE

### Put lid on at 75 days

**W**HEN 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

THE  
BOOK  
OF THE  
STATES

VOLUME 30



## LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS: LEGAL PROVISIONS—Continued

State or other jurisdiction	Regular sessions				Special sessions			
	Year	Legislature convenes		Limitation on length of session (a)	Legislature may call	Legislature may determine subject	Limitation on length of session	
		Month	Day					
Michigan	Annual	Jan.	2nd Wed. (d)	None	No	No	None	
Minnesota	(w)	Jan.	Tues. after 1st Mon. (m)	120 L. or 1st Mon. after 3rd Sat. in May (w)	No	Yes	None	
Mississippi	Annual	Jan.	Tues. after 1st Mon.	125 C (g,x); 90 C (g,x)	No	No	None	
Missouri	Annual	Jan.	Wed. after 1st Mon.	May 30	By petition, 3/4 members, each house	Yes	30 C (y)	
Montana	Biennial-odd yr.	Jan.	1st Mon.	90 L (g)	By petition, majority, each house	Yes	None	
Nebraska	Annual	Jan.	Wed. after 1st Mon.	odd-90 L (g); even-60 L (g)	By petition, 2/3 members, each house	Yes	None	
Nevada	Biennial-odd yr.	Jan.	3rd Mon.	60 C (t)	No	No	20 C (t)	
New Hampshire	Annual	Jan.	Wed. after 1st Tues. (d)	45 L.	By 2/3 vote of members, each house	Yes	15 L. (t)	
New Jersey	Annual	Jan.	2nd Tues.	None	By petition, majority, each house	Yes	None	
New Mexico	Annual (t)	Jan.	3rd Tues.	odd-60 C; even-30 C	By petition, 3/5 members, each house	Yes (h)	30 C	
New York	Annual	Jan.	Wed. after 1st Mon.	None	By petition, 2/3 members, each house	Yes (h)	None	
North Carolina	(w)	Jan.	3rd Wed. after 2nd Mon. (m)	None	By petition, 3/5 members, each house	Yes	None	
North Dakota	Biennial-odd yr.	Jan.	Tues. after Jan. 3, but not later than Jan. 11 (d)	80 L (z)	No	Yes	None	
Ohio	Annual	Jan.	1st Mon.	None	Joint call, presiding officers, both houses	Yes	None	
Oklahoma	Annual	Feb.	1st Mon. (aa)	160 C	By 2/3 vote of members, each house	Yes (h)	None	
Oregon	Biennial-odd yr.	Jan.	2nd Mon.	None	By petition, majority, each house	Yes	None	
Pennsylvania	Annual	Jan.	1st Tues.	None	By petition, majority, each house	No	None	
Rhode Island	Annual	Jan.	1st Tues.	60 L (t)	No	No	None	
South Carolina	Annual	Jan.	2nd Tues. (d)	1st Thurs. in June (g)	No	Yes	None	
South Dakota	Annual	Jan.	2nd Tues.	odd-40 L; even-35 L	No	No	None	
Tennessee	(w)	Jan.	(bb)	90 L (t)	By petition, 2/3 members, each house	Yes	30 L (t)	
Texas	Biennial-odd yr.	Jan.	2nd Tues.	140 C	No	No	30 C	
Utah	Annual	Jan.	2nd Mon.	45 C	No	No	30 C	
Vermont	(w)	Jan.	Wed. after 1st Mon. (m)	None	No	Yes	None	
Virginia	Annual	Jan.	2nd Wed.	odd-30 C (g); even-60 C (g)	By petition, 2/3 members, each house	Yes	None	

## LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS: LEGAL PROVISIONS—Continued

State or other jurisdiction	Regular sessions				Special sessions		
	Year	Legislature convenes		Limitation on length of session (a)	Legislature may call	Legislature may determine subject	Limitation on length of session
		Month	Day				
Washington	Annual	Jan.	2nd Mon.	odd-105 C; even-60 C	By vote, 2/3 members, each house	Yes	30 C
West Virginia	Annual	Feb. Jan.	2nd Wed. (c,d) 2nd Wed. (c)	60 C (g)	By petition, 3/5 members, each house	Yes (cc)	None

State	Session Type	Month	Day	Limitation on length of session	Legislature may call	Legislature may determine subject	Limitation on length of session
Rhode Island	Annual	Jan.	1st Tues.	60 L (i)	No	No	None
South Carolina	Annual	Jan.	2nd Tues. (d)	1st Thurs. in June (g)	No	Yes	None
South Dakota	Annual	Jan.	2nd Tues.	odd-40 L; even-35 L	No	No	None
Tennessee	(w)	Jan.	(bb)	90 L (i)	By petition, 2/3 members, each house	Yes	30 L (i)
Texas	Biennial-odd yr.	Jan.	2nd Tues.	140 C	No	No	30 C
Utah	Annual	Jan.	2nd Mon.	45 C	No	No	30 C
Vermont	(w)	Jan.	Wed. after 1st Mon. (m)	None	No	Yes	None
Virginia	Annual	Jan.	2nd Wed.	odd-30 C (g); even-60 C (b)	By petition, 2/3 members, each house	Yes	None

## LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS: LEGAL PROVISIONS—Continued

State or other jurisdiction	Regular sessions				Special sessions			
	Year	Month	Day	Limitation on length of session (a)	Legislature may call	Legislature may determine subject	Limitation on length of session	
Washington	Annual	Jan.	2nd Mon.	odd-105 C; even-60 C	By vote, 2/3 members, each house	Yes	30 C	
West Virginia	Annual	Feb. Jan.	2nd Wed. (c,d) 2nd Wed. (e)	60 C (g)	By petition, 1/5 members, each house	Yes (cc)	None	
Wisconsin	Annual (dd)	Jan.	1st Mon. (m)	None	No	No	None	
Wyoming	Annual (f)	Jan. Feb.	2nd Tues. (n) 3rd Mon. (n)	odd-40 L; even-20 L	No	Yes	None	
Dist. of Columbia	(cc)	Jan.	2nd day	None				
American Samoa	Annual	Jan. July	2nd Mon. 2nd Mon.	45 L. 45 L.	No	No	None	
Guam	Annual	Jan.	2nd Mon. (ff)	None	No	No	None	
No. Mariana Islands	Annual	(gg)	(d,gg)	90 L (gg)	Upon request of presiding officers, both houses	Yes (h)	10 C	
Puerto Rico	Annual	Jan.	2nd Mon.	Apr. 30 (g)	No	No	20 C	
U.S. Virgin Islands	Annual	Jan.	2nd Mon.	75 L	No	No	15 C	

Sources: State constitutions and statutes.

Note: Some legislatures will also reconvene after normal session to consider bills vetoed by governor. Connecticut—if governor vetoes any bill, secretary of state must reconvene General Assembly on second Monday after the last day on which governor is either authorized to transmit or has transmitted every bill with his objections, whichever occurs first; General Assembly must adjourn *sine die* not later than three days after its reconvening. Hawaii—legislature may reconvene on 45th day after adjournment *sine die*, in special session, without call. Louisiana—legislature meets in a maximum five-day veto session on the 40th day after final adjournment. Missouri—if governor returns any bill on or after the fifth day before the last day on which legislature may consider bills (in even-numbered years), legislature automatically reconvenes on first Wednesday following the second Monday in September for a maximum 10 C session. New Jersey—legislature meets in special session (without call or petition) to act on bills returned by governor on 45th day after *sine die* adjournment of the regular session; if the second year expires before the 45th day, the day preceding the end of the legislative year. Utah—if 2/3 of the members of each house favor reconvening to consider vetoed bills, a maximum five-day session is set by the presiding officers. Virginia—legislature reconvenes on sixth Wednesday after adjournment for a maximum three-day session (may be extended to seven days upon vote of majority of members elected to each house). Washington—upon petition of 2/3 of the members of each house, legislature meets 45 days after adjournment for a maximum five-day session.

Key:

C—Calendar day

L—Legislative day (In some states, called a session day or workday; definition may vary slightly, however, generally refers to any day on which either house of the legislature is in session)

(a) Applies to each year unless otherwise indicated.

(b) General election year (quadrennial election year).

(c) Year after quadrennial election.

(d) Legal provision for organizational session prior to stated convening date. Alabama—in the year after quadrennial election, on the second Tuesday in January for 10 C. California—in the even-numbered, general election year, on first Monday in December for an organizational session, recess until the first Monday in January of the odd-numbered year. Florida—in general election year, 14th day after election. Indiana—third Tuesday after first Monday in November. Kentucky—in odd-numbered year, Tuesday after first Monday in January for 10 L. Louisiana—in year after general election, second Monday

in January, not to exceed 3 L. Michigan—held in odd-numbered year. New Hampshire—in even-numbered year, first Wednesday in December. North Dakota—in December. South Carolina—in even-numbered year, Tuesday after certification of election of its members for a maximum three-day session. West Virginia—in year after general election, on second Wednesday in January. No. Mariana Islands—in year after general election, second Monday in January.

(e) Other years.

(f) By 2/3 vote each house.

(g) Session may be extended by vote of members in both houses. Alaska: 2/3 vote for 10-day extension. Arkansas: 2/3 vote. Florida: 3/5 vote. Hawaii: petition of 2/3 membership for maximum 15-day extension. Kansas: 2/3 vote. Maine: 2/3 vote for maximum 10 L. Maryland: 3/5 vote for maximum 30 C. Mississippi: 2/3 vote for 30 C extension, no limit on number of extensions. Nebraska: 4/5 vote. South Carolina: 2/3 vote. Virginia: 2/3 vote for 30 C extension. West Virginia: 2/3 vote (or if budget bill has not been acted upon three days before session ends, governor issues proclamation extending session). Puerto Rico: joint resolution.

(h) Only if legislature convenes itself. Special sessions called by the legislature are unlimited in scope in Arizona, Georgia, Maine, and New Mexico.

(i) No constitutional or statutory provision; however, legislative rules require that regular sessions adjourn no later than Saturday of the week during which the 100th day of the session falls.

(j) After governor's business has been disposed of, members may remain in session up to 15 C by a 2/3 vote of both houses.

(k) Regular sessions begin after general election, in December of even-numbered year. In California, legislature meets in December for an organizational session, recesses until the first Monday in January of the odd-numbered year and continues in session until Nov. 30 of next even-numbered year. In Maine, session which begins in December of general election year runs into the following year (odd-numbered); second session begins in next even-numbered year.

(l) Second session limited to consideration of specific types of legislation. Connecticut—individual legislators may only introduce bills of a fiscal nature, emergency legislation and bills raised by committees. Louisiana—fiscal matters. Maine—budgetary matters; legislation in the governor's call; emergency legislation; legislation referred to committees for study. New Mexico—budgets, appropriations and revenue bills; bills drawn pursuant to governor's message; vetoed bills. Wyoming—budget bills.

(n) Odd-numbered years.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS: LEGAL PROVISIONS—Continued

- (n) Even-numbered years.  
 (o) Odd-numbered years—not later than Wednesday after first Monday in June; even-numbered years—not later than Wednesday after first Monday in May.  
 (p) Constitution provides for regular session convening dates and allows that sessions may also be held " . . . at such other times as the General Assembly shall judge necessary." Call by majority of legislators is implied.  
 (q) Upon completion of business.  
 (r) Limited to 40 L unless extended by 3/5 vote and approved by the governor, except in cases of impeachment proceedings.  
 (s) Legislators may reconvene at any time after organizational meeting; however, second Monday in January is the final date by which regular session must be in process.  
 (t) Indirect limitation; usually restrictions on legislator's pay, per diem, or daily allowance.  
 (u) May not extend beyond April 15.  
 (v) Joint rules provide for the submission of a written statement requesting special session by a specified number of members of each chamber.  
 (w) Legal provision for session in odd-numbered year; however, legislature may divide, and in practice has divided, to meet in even-numbered years as well.  
 (x) 90 C sessions every year, except the first year of a gubernatorial administration during which the

legislative session runs for 125 C.

(y) 30 C if called by legislature; 60 C if called by governor.

(z) No legislative day is shorter than a natural day.

(aa) Odd number years will include a regular session commencing on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January and recessing not later than the first Monday in February of that year. Limited constitutional duties can be performed.

(bb) Commencement of regular session depends on concluding date of organizational session. Legislature meets, in odd-numbered year, on second Tuesday in January for a maximum 15 C organizational session, then returns on the Tuesday following the conclusion of the organizational session.

(cc) According to a 1955 attorney general's opinion, when the legislature has petitioned to the governor to be called into session, it may then act on any matter.

(dd) The legislature, by joint resolution, establishes the session schedule of activity for the remainder of the biennium at the beginning of the odd-numbered year.

(ee) Each Council period begins on January 2 of each odd-numbered year and ends on January 1 of the following odd-numbered year.

(ff) Legislature meets on the first Monday of each month following its initial session in January.

(gg) 60 L before April 1 and 30 L after July 31.

From:  
 ALASKA LEGISLATIVE  
 RESEARCH AGENCY

Table 3.3  
 THE LEGISLATORS: NUMB  
 (As of April 1994)

State or other jurisdiction	Democrats	Republicans	Nonpartisan
All states	1,139	794	
Alabama	27	8	
Alaska	10	10	
Arizona	12	18	
Arkansas	30	5	
California	22	16	
Colorado	16	19	
Connecticut	19	17	
Delaware	15	6	
Florida	20	20	
Georgia	39	17	
Hawaii	22	3	
Idaho	12	23	
Illinois	27	31	
Indiana	22	26	
Iowa	27	21	
Kansas	13	27	
Kentucky	24	14	
Kentucky	33	6	
Maine	20	15	
Maryland	38	9	
Massachusetts	31	9	
Michigan	16	22	
Minnesota	45	22	(f)
Mississippi	39	13	
Missouri	20	14	
Montana	30	20	
Nebraska	10	11	
Nevada	11	13	
New Hampshire	11	24	
New Jersey	16	24	
New Mexico	27	15	
New York	26	35	
North Carolina	39	11	
North Dakota	25	24	
Ohio	13	20	
Oklahoma	37	11	
Oregon	16	14	
Pennsylvania	24	26	
Rhode Island	39	11	
South Carolina	30	16	
South Dakota	30	15	
Tennessee	19	14	
Texas	18	13	
Utah	18	11	
Vermont	11	16	
Virginia	22	15	
Washington	25	21	
West Virginia	32	12	
Wisconsin	18	17	
Wyoming	10	20	
Dist. of Columbia (m)	12		
American Samoa			Nonpartisan
Guam	14		
Northern Mariana Islands	3	6	
Puerto Rico	8	20	(e)
U.S. Virgin Islands	8	4	

See footnotes at end of table.