Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office
550 W 7th Avenue, Suite 1600
Anchorage, AK 99501
marijuana.licensing@alaska.gov
https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/amco
Phone: 907.269.0350

Alaska Marijuana Control Board

Cover Sheet for Marijuana Establishment Applications

What is this form?

This cover sheet **must** be completed and submitted any time a document, payment, or other marijuana establishment application item is emailed, mailed, or hand-delivered to AMCO's main office.

Items that are submitted without this page will be returned in the manner in which they were received.

Section 1 – Establishment Information

Enter information for the business seeking to be licensed, as identified on the license application.

Licensee:	Ganja By Sarah LLC	**License Number:**	33305		
License Type:	Retail Marijuana Store				
Doing Business As:	Ganja By Sarah				
Physical Address:	7830 Old Seward Hwy				
City:	Anchorage	**State:**	AK	**Zip Code:**	99518
Designated Licensee:	Sarah Alexander				
Email Address:	GanjaBySarah@gmail.com				

Section 2 – Attached Items

List all documents, payments, and other items that are being submitted along with this page.

Attached Items:	Publishers affadant

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Received Date:		Payment Submitted Y/N:		Transaction #:	

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

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STATE OF ALASKA
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Lisi Misa
being first duly sworn on oath deposes and says that she is a representative of the Anchorage Daily News, a daily newspaper. That said newspaper has been approved by the Third Judicial Court, Anchorage, Alaska, and it now and has been published in the English language continually as a daily newspaper in Anchorage, Alaska, and it is now and during all said time was printed in an office maintained at the aforesaid place of publication of said newspaper. That the annexed is a copy of an advertisement as it was published in regular issues (and not in supplemental form) of said newspaper on

June 9, 16, 23/2022

and that such newspaper was regularly distributed to its subscribers during all of said period. That the full amount of the fee charged for the foregoing publication is not in excess of the rate charged private individuals.

Signed Lisi Misa

Subscribed and sworn to before

me this 27th day of June

2022

Jada L. Nowling

Notary Public in and for
The State of Alaska.
Third Division
Anchorage, Alaska
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES

7/14/2024

Jada L. Nowling
ELECTRONIC NOTARY PUBLIC
STATE OF ALASKA
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES 07/14/2024

Nick Begich lent his US House campaign $650,000 — here's why that makes ethics watchdogs shudder

Liz Ruskin
Alaska Public Media

Republican Nick Begich III is one of the wealthier candidates in the special election for Alaska's U.S. House seat, and he's leveraging that wealth with personal loans to his campaign totaling $650,000.

Candidate loans of any amount are legal, but how winning candidates are paid back makes campaign finance watchdogs shudder.

"It's basically legalized bribery," said University of Missouri professor Kathy Kiely, a campaign finance expert. She said loans also leave the voters in the dark about information that may be critical to their ballot choice.

"Who is ultimately going to pay that candidate back and why?" she asked. "I think voters just don't know the answer to that on election day."

Thanks to a federal Supreme Court decision last month, Begich can now recoup all of his loan in post-election fundraising. Congressional candidates used to be able to recover no more than $250,000, a limit designed to minimize the potential for corruption, or the appearance of it. But in May, the Supreme Court struck that limit down as unconstitutional.

Kiely, who used to work for the Sunlight Foundation as an advocate of government transparency, said it's bad enough when successful candidates hold post-election fundraisers to pay off what they owe their consultants or pollsters.

"You're hanging out a shingle and saying, 'Anybody who's interested in winning friends and influence over here, here's the donation jar,' " she said.

It's a whole new level of troubling, Kiely said, when the aim of a debt-retirement party is to pay back the candidate, who is now a member of Congress, for his or her personal loan.

"It's one step short of putting money directly in the pocket of a lawmaker," she said, "which, in most contexts, we would consider a bribe."

Begich reported income last year of more than $1 million from a software development company he founded, plus more than $100,000 from Earthpulse Press, a company that publishes his father's theories about government mind control.

The Begich campaign did not respond to three emails asking about his campaign loans, including two asking if Begich would solicit post-election contributions if he wins.

That's the scenario that rings alarm bells at the Campaign Legal Center, one of the groups that filed a brief in the recent Supreme Court case.

"Because the pitch to potential donors at that point is, you know, 'I won the election. I'm going to be in office, but I have this large personal loan, which the campaign can repay me. I would love for you to make a contribution to help repay me,' " said Saurav Ghosh, the center's director of campaign finance reform. "It just raises all kinds of very clear corruption concerns."

Begich is not the only candidate in the race who made a large personal loan to his campaign. Nonpartisan Jeff Lowenfels lent his campaign $100,000. If he were to win, Lowenfels said he'd refuse repayment contributions, a practice he described as "a little bit disgusting."

"Somebody's going to come and try to help you pay your loan back? Gee, they're being awfully nice, aren't they?" Lowenfels scoffed. "I mean, it just doesn't feel right. It feels like a bribe."

Lowenfels said he made the loan to jumpstart his campaign and would consider repayment as long as he's not a member of Congress. He's relying primarily on radio ads and mailers to get the word out. As of May 22, the end of the reporting period, his personal loan was about two-thirds of his campaign total.

Nick Begich's campaign report shows his loan comprises slightly more than half of his total, and he's also made a contribution of $23,000. His major expenses include ads, strategic advising and payroll.

In terms of contributions from others, Begich is in second place, behind rival Republican Sarah Palin.

This story originally appeared on Alaska Public Media and is republished here with permission.

Photo by BLM AKS

The East Fork Fire continued to burn Saturday as a smokejumper aircraft flies over the fire area to deploy two additional smokejumpers to help protect a Native allotment and cabin from the fire.

RURAL ALASKA

Large tundra fire burns 12 miles away from St. Marys

Olivia Ebertz
KYUK

A large tundra fire is threatening the village of St. Marys. The fire has been burning since the tundra was struck by lightning on May 31, and it is now within 12 miles of the community. Federal entities sent in more firefighters on Tuesday, and some residents are thinking about preparing their go-bags.

Elder George Beans Sr. lives on a hill in midtown St. Marys. He's been smelling smoke ever since the fire began on May 31.

"It was a little uncomfortable and hard to breathe," said Beans Sr.

On Tuesday, the wind switched and gave the village a brief reprieve from the smoke. But Beans Sr. can still see it, and it's getting worse.

"There's a lot of smoke. It's thick over up north of us. Real thick, and it seems to be getting closer too," said Beans Sr.

The fire is getting both closer and larger. What the Bureau of Land Management first reported as an 1,800 acre fire around 25 miles from the village on June 3 had grown by Tuesday. The fire as of Wednesday is estimated to be 33,000 acres and is just 12 miles from the village.

"It's been hot, it's been dry, and it's been windy. And those winds gusts of 20 miles per hour, it's kind of funneled through the Andreafsky River drainage," said Beth Ipsen, a spokeswoman for the Bureau of Land Management's fire service.

Ipsen said that the conditions and the proximity of the fire to the village prompted officials to send in more smokejumpers and the BLM's Chena Hotshot firefighters on Tuesday. Eight smokejumpers had been there since June 3. Now there are more than 40 firefighters in St. Marys.

The firefighters are setting up camps in town and will hike up to the site of the fire each day. The weather forecast looks hot and dry for the next few days, but Ipsen said that she hopes that changes.

"We're trying to stall this fire. The weather is not cooperating. We're hoping that some of the forecasted cooler temperatures pan out this weekend. And we're hoping that Mother Nature will help us out with this," said Ipsen.

Ipsen said that she's not worried yet, but Beans Sr. said that he is concerned. Beans Sr. has been living in St. Marys for most of his life, and said that this is the biggest and most dangerous fire he had ever seen.

He said that Tuesday was the first day he considered stocking an emergency bag with essentials that he can quickly take with him if he needs to leave the village in a rush.

"I instructed my family. We need to get something ready here just so we can grab and go,'" said Beans Sr.

He said that he lives just a short distance from the boat harbor, and that he plans to take his family to another village on the Yukon by boat if the fire reaches St. Marys.

LEGISLATURE

Longtime Anchorage Rep. Chris Tuck will not seek reelection

Nathaniel Herz
Anchorage Daily News

Longtime state Rep. Chris Tuck said Wednesday that he will not seek reelection, bowing out of a race that pitted two Democrats against each other in a Midtown Anchorage House district that was redrawn by the state redistricting board this year.

Tuck, in a phone interview Wednesday, said he withdrew from the race at the request of his 7-year-old daughter — a decision that leaves an opening for the other Democratic incumbent, Andy Josephson.

There are two others vying to represent the slightly liberal-leaning district: Timothy Huit, who is listed as the Alaskan Independence Party candidate, and Republican Kathy Hensley.

Tuck, who's also worked as a contractor and union organizer, was first elected in 2008. He said he's looking forward to having a garden.

"It's bittersweet — I got choked up," he said. "At the same time, it's going to be a relief."

He announced his withdrawal at a Wednesday meeting of the state's campaign finance agency, the Alaska Public Offices Commission, which has proposed a $56,500 fine against Tuck for failing to report $500 in campaign income that he received just before the 2020 election.

Tuck said Wednesday that the contribution was disclosed in another report and wasn't required in the report that's subject of the proposed penalty; he said the fine wasn't a factor in his decision not to run.

ALASKA

AG recuses himself from legal review

Lisa Phu
Alaska Beacon

As the Alaska Department of Law looks into the legality of using public funds for private education through the state's correspondence school, or home-school, allotment program, Alaska Attorney General Treg Taylor has recused himself.

Taylor's wife, Jodi Taylor, is a major proponent of the concept and wrote publicly in mid-May about her plan to seek up to $8,000 in reimbursement from public funding for their two kids attending an Anchorage private school. Deputy Attorney General Cori Mills said that prompted a discussion between her and Attorney General Taylor on May 20.

"His wife submitted an op-ed on the issue of correspondence school allotments and, in that, it became clear that there was an intent to seek this reimbursement of correspondence school allotments for her children, which means also the attorney general's children. And so, for that reason, the attorney general felt like it was best to recuse himself," Mills said on the phone Monday.

Taylor recused himself on May 21 from all matters involving correspondence school allotments and delegated the review to Mills. That became public on Monday in a press release from the Department of Law. Taylor said in the release, "I want to ensure that there is no perception of bias in relation to the objective advice provided by the Department of Law on this issue of correspondence school allotments used to fund courses or tuition at a private school."

Mills cited the Department of Law's attorney-client relationship with the Department of Education and Early Development in saying that she wasn't able to give any more details of the review, nor a timeline of when an opinion could come out. She said it would be up to the Department of Education to provide any clarification to school districts.

Meanwhile, correspondence schools in Alaska are already allowing families to be reimbursed for secular private school classes. Mat-Su Central, a homeschool program within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, has been doing it for three years and bases its legality on its interpretation of state law. According to Alaska Statute 14.03.310, families may purchase nonsectarian services and materials from a public, private, or religious organization with a correspondence student allotment.

Yet, Article VII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution says, "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution."

"When you look at these issues, you always have to look at both the Alaska Constitution and the education clause, as well as the statutes, and how those fit together," Mills said.

Originally published by the Alaska Beacon, an independent, nonpartisan news organization that covers Alaska state government.

OUTDOORS

2 hikers rescued from Gold Mint Trail at Hatcher Pass

Anchorage Daily News

Members of the Alaska Army Natural Guard rescued two hikers from a trail in the Hatcher Pass area this week after one of them was injured, authorities said.

Alaska State Troopers received a report about the distressed hikers on the Gold Mint Trail just after noon Tuesday, the Alaska Army National Guard said in a statement. One of the hikers had been injured and wasn't able to walk, and the hikers used a satellite communication device to request help, according to troopers spokesman Austin McDaniel.

Troopers asked the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center for assistance, which in turn tapped the guard. Snow coverage in the area made it more likely that a "hoist rescue" would be needed, the guard said in its statement Wednesday.

The guard's G Company, 2nd Battalion, 211th General Support Aviation Battalion responded with a helicopter. Poor weather made finding the two hikers more difficult, but the pair were able to communicate with the rescue coordination center with their satellite device, according to the guard.

The helicopter landed about 50 yards from the hikers, who were around Mile 7 of Gold Mint Trail, McDaniel said. The pair were taken to a hospital in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough on Tuesday afternoon.

McDaniel said he didn't have additional information about how the hiker was injured, but that the injuries appeared to be non-life-threatening.

RURAL ALASKA

Tribe nominates Pribilof Islands area for marine sanctuary

Associated Press

An Alaska Native tribe has nominated for consideration as a national marine sanctuary an area around the Pribilof Islands that supports Steller sea lions, northern fur seals and other marine life.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Wednesday that it had agreed to add the nomination of Ala um Kanuux, or Heart of the Ocean, by the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island to a list of areas it could consider for designation as a marine sanctuary.

The agency notes that the addition of a place to the list is no guarantee it will become a sanctuary. Sanctuary designation is a separate process that is "highly public and participatory, and often takes several years to complete."

The tribe nevertheless lauded the step as significant.

"Our ultimate vision is a designated, co-managed marine area that supports the growth of local and regional economies and advances conservation," Amos Philemonoff, president of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government, said in a statement.

"As a lifelong commercial halibut fisherman, I've witnessed the changes occurring in our ecosystem and their impacts on our people. It's time for proactive change for the better, and I'm proud that our Tribe is leading this movement."

Meanwhile, the White House on Wednesday highlighted as part of the Biden administration's work related to oceans a recent meeting between federal agencies and an advisory council representing more than 70 tribes focused on the Northern Bering Sea region. The White House in a statement said the parties represent "a new model for nation-to-nation coordination for a large ocean area."

Ganja By Sarah LLC is applying under 3 AAC 306.300 for a new Retail Marijuana Store license, license #33385, doing business as Ganja By Sarah, located at 7630 Old Seward Hwy, Anchorage, AK, 99518, UNITED STATES. Interested persons may object to the application by submitting a written statement of reasons for the objection to their local government, the applicant, and the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) not later than 30 days after the director has determined the application to be complete and has given written notice to the local government. Once an application is determined to be complete, the objection deadline and application information will be posted on AMCO's website at https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/amco. Objections should be sent to AMCO at marijuana.licensing@alaska.gov or to 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1600, Anchorage, AK 99501.

ALASKA

Dunleavy appoints investor from prominent family to Permanent Fund board

Nathaniel Herz
Anchorage Daily News

Gov. Mike Dunleavy has appointed a philanthropist-businesswoman to the six-member board of trustees of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., which manages the $79 billion, state-owned investment account that pays for a huge share of Alaska government services.

Rubenstein

Lawmakers and Dunleavy's critics have been closely watching the corporation's board in recent months, after members voted to fire its former chief executive, Angela Rodell, in December. That move came amid disagreements over the fund's management, and how much lawmakers can sustainably spend from the account each year.

Dunleavy's new appointment of Ellie Rubenstein, announced late Tuesday, fills the board seat left open by the retirement of Ketchikan banker Bill Moran, who was the only trustee to vote against Rodell's termination.

The governor's office, in its announcement, described Rubenstein as chief executive of a Vail, Colorado-based, food-focused investment firm, Manna Tree Partners, and a graduate of Harvard University and two Indiana masters programs in business and agriculture economics.

Rubenstein is the daughter of Alice Rogoff, the former owner of the Anchorage Daily News — then called Alaska Dispatch News — and billionaire David Rubenstein, co-chairman of the board of The Carlyle Group, one of the world's largest investment firms.

Carlyle and affiliated firms are paid to manage some $825 million, or 1%, of the Permanent Fund's investments, according to a breakdown provided by Paulyn Swanson, a spokeswoman for the corporation.

Ellie Rubenstein has no investment or ownership interest in The Carlyle Group or related companies, a Dunleavy spokeswoman, Shannon Mason, said in an email Wednesday. And the Permanent Fund has no investments in Rubenstein's company, Manna Tree, Swanson said.

As a board member, state law will require Rubenstein to disclose any investments in entities or projects in which the Permanent Fund is also invested, Swanson said.

State ethics and disclosure laws also bar board members from taking official action on matters in which they have personal or financial interests, or for the purposes of obtaining financial gains for themselves or family members.

Dunleavy met with Rubenstein several times in recent months before naming her to the board this week, according to copies of his public schedule obtained by the Daily News.

The governor spent an hour with Rubenstein and her father, David, during a Houston energy conference, CERAWeek, in early March. Three days later, Dunleavy had a dinner meeting with Ellie Rubenstein in Juneau.

At the end of March, Dunleavy flew to Colorado for a health forum hosted by Rubenstein's company, Manna Tree, whose participants also included Colorado Democratic Gov. Jared Polis and David Rubenstein. On that trip, Dunleavy, who's made food security a policy focus during his term as governor, also toured an indoor agriculture facility run by Gotham Greens, one of the companies that Manna Tree has invested in.

Dunleavy was unavailable for an interview about the appointment Wednesday, but he said in a prepared statement that he chose Rubenstein because of her "robust background in investment and business management, both professionally and through her education."

"And she is an Alaskan resident who would devote herself to the work of the board," the statement added.

Public records show that Rubenstein votes in Alaska but has never applied for a Permanent Fund dividend, which can only be paid to Alaskans who spend 180 days or fewer outside the state, except for allowable absences. Mason, the governor's spokeswoman, called Rubenstein a "legal resident" of Alaska and said that "her job requires an exceptional amount of traveling to other states and other parts of the world.

Rubenstein declined to be interviewed Wednesday but said in an email that she has chosen not to apply for dividends for "personal reasons." She said the appointment came after Dunleavy "asked me to bring my experience running a global investment firm to the Alaska Permanent Fund."

"The Permanent Fund is an important Alaskan institution," Rubenstein said in response to a question about her vision for the corporation. "As a new board member, my first priority is to listen and learn."

Asked about how she'd handle potential conflicts between her personal and family business interests and the Permanent Fund's, Rubenstein said that "the ethics requirements and fiduciary duties are clear and I take them seriously."

Rubenstein is a registered Republican who was one of the honorary co-chairs of former President Donald Trump's campaign in Alaska in 2016.

She has not publicized her views on the Permanent Fund's management.

Legislative leaders have been investigating the board since Rodell's firing and have largely opposed Dunleavy's agenda of paying higher dividends.

That includes one gubernatorial proposal last year that supported higher payments with a one-time, $3 billion withdrawal from the fund beyond the sustainable limit previously set by lawmakers.

Rodell has attributed her firing to her public calls for more conservative management of the fund. Dunleavy has denied that he had any involvement in her firing, and his office has pointed to a performance review released by Rodell that said some trustees "have lost trust in her veracity and leadership."

Two Anchorage lawmakers who were critical of Rodell's firing said Wednesday that they aren't familiar enough with Rubenstein to comment directly on her appointment.

But both Republican Sen. Natasha von Imhof and Democratic Rep. Andy Josephson said they support changes to the Permanent Fund board appointment process that they argue would better shield it from political influence. All six board members are currently chosen by the governor.

Von Imhof, in a phone interview, said she thinks board members should be subject to legislative confirmation, which is not currently a requirement.

Josephson proposed legislation this year that would create a nine-member appointment committee to name public members of the board, with committee members named by the governor, state revenue commissioner and legislative leaders. It passed one committee but never made it to the House floor for a vote.

In a phone interview, Josephson said Rubenstein is replacing "the only dissenting voice" on the board.

"I want a free agent who has an independent voice," he said. He doesn't know enough about Rubenstein, he added, to tell if she fits that description.

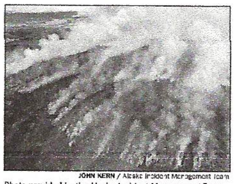
ALASKA

Wildfires trigger air quality warnings

Anchorage Daily News

A series of fires burning in Southwest and Central Alaska triggered air quality warnings across a broad area of the state as officials warned that critical fire conditions now exist across many portions of Alaska.

Fires burning in Southwest and Western Alaska increased in size more than 150 square miles each day this week, according to the Alaska Division of Forestry. So far this year, 253 fires have burned an estimated 835,369 acres, or over 1,300 square miles, surpassing the 500,000 acres burned during a typical year based on the median value of data from the 2012–21 fire seasons.


JOHN KERN / Alaska Incident Management Team
Photo provided by the Alaska Incident Management Team shows backing fire behavior on the East Fork Fire Monday.

Alaska's fire season around the solstice is driven by long, warm days that dry out the boreal duff layer that can easily be ignited by lightning, fire officials say. Fire on the Southwest Alaska tundra isn't unheard of, but as climate change continues to reshape the state's environment, tundra fires are becoming more frequent and more severe.

Smoke from numerous fires on Tuesday triggered an air quality advisory from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation through Thursday afternoon for the Southwest, Central and Eastern Interior regions. The advisories warned of air quality that could reach very unhealthy levels depending on wind flow and proximity to fires. Smoke from the fires previously led to hazy skies and poor air quality in Southcentral before the wind shifted.

Meanwhile, favorable winds and weather continued to push the state's biggest fire away from several villages on the Yukon River.

The East Fork Fire, the biggest fire in Alaska at nearly 141,200 acres by Wednesday, was still active but a shift in wind direction and cooler weather allowed crews to fight the fire directly at the northeast edge and strengthen fire lines aimed at reducing its spread, according to an update from the Alaska Incident Management Team. The fire, and another smaller one, had threatened several communities and triggered voluntary evacuations including St. Mary's, Pitkas Point and Mountain Village before favorable wind conditions started this week.

Much of the smoke blanketing vast parts of the state is coming from the 40,000-acre Hog Butte Fire along the North Fork of the Kuskokwim River about 30 miles southwest of Lake Minchumina, along with several fires in Southwest Alaska, according to the BLM Alaska Fire Service.

As of Wednesday, there were more than 90 active fires burning across more than 900,000 acres (1,400 square miles), according to the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center.

A new team that includes wildfire specialists from Alaska and the Lower 48 will assume command Thursday of the Southwest fires burning across a 40 million acre region, according to the Division of Forestry.

The team will help support crews "defending villages, lodges, cabins, native allotments, mining infrastructure and other values at risk," the agency said in an update Wednesday afternoon. In addition to mobilizing resources from the Lower 48 and Canada to assist suppression efforts, this interagency effort will establish and maintain supply chains, remote fueling depots for aviation assets, and will help identify additional cabins, lodges and other values at risk threatened by these remote interior lightning caused wildfires.

Crews on the ground are protecting infrastructure and villages from several fires around Dillingham, Red Devil, Sleetmute, Georgetown, Crooked Creek and the King Salmon area, the update said.

CRIME & COURTS

Man sentenced to 99 years in prison for murder of 10-year-old Quinhagak girl

Tess Williams
Anchorage Daily News

A 20-year-old Quinhagak man was sentenced Monday to spend 99 years in prison for the 2020 murder of a 10-year-old girl in the Western Alaska village.

Jordan Mark pleaded guilty in December to a charge of first-degree murder for Ida "Girlie" Aguchak's death. He also admitted to kidnapping and sexually assaulting the girl, according to the Alaska Department of Law.

Aguchak's death shook the village of Quinhagak, home to roughly 700 people and located about 70 miles southwest of Bethel. The girl was missing for about a day before volunteer searchers discovered her body.

Mark apologized during a sentencing hearing Monday at the Bethel courthouse and asked for a 45-year sentence, the Department of Law said. "There is no excuse for what I've done. I hope you see past that and see who I actually am. I'm a human being. I made a terrible mistake."

Aguchak's family also spoke during the hearing, asking for the 99-year maximum sentence, state prosecutors said. They described her as the baby of the family who wanted to be a nurse. Her mother told the court that Aguchak's death "broke our family and our community as well as his own family. She was taken too soon. We are still broken from this."

Fairbanks Superior Court Judge Michael MacDonald sentenced Mark to spend 99 years in prison, saying his actions demonstrated "a depravity of heart and derangement of mind."

CORONAVIRUS

Alaska reports 35% increase in hospitalizations from last week

Anchorage Daily News

The number of people sick enough to be hospitalized with COVID-19 in Alaska rose by more than 35% this week compared to last as reported cases decreased slightly.

Here are a few main takeaways from the latest data available from the state Department of Health and Social Services:

• By Wednesday, there were 61 COVID-positive patients hospitalized around Alaska, a significant increase from the 45 reported by the state a week earlier. Just under 5% of Alaska's hospital patients were COVID-positive. Current hospital counts are still well below all-time peaks, but on the rise.

• The state reported 2,452 cases in Alaska over a seven-day period, a slight decrease from 2,872 cases reported last week. This week's total includes 1,904 cases among residents and averages out to just over 350 cases per day. That data doesn't include at-home tests.

• Alaska's seven-day new case rate per 100,000 people rose from 15th highest to seventh highest in the nation this week, according to a CDC tracker. Nationally, cases are increasing slightly.

• The regions with the highest seven-day case rates included the Copper River Census Area, Yakutat plus Hoonah-Angoon region, the City and Borough of Juneau, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and the Prince of Wales and Hyder Census Area — all at more than 400 cases per 100,000 people.

• The state reported no new deaths linked to the virus. In total, 1,252 COVID-19 deaths among residents and 34 among nonresidents have been reported since March 2020.

• According to Alaska's coronavirus variant dashboard, the majority of the most recent cases were the BA.2 omicron subvariant.

• Across the state, 65.3% of eligible Alaskans as well as military personnel had completed their primary vaccine series. About 30.9% of eligible Alaskans were considered up-to-date on their vaccinations with at least one booster.

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

ANCHORAGE

Assembly changes how its youth member is picked, draws criticism from Youth Commission

Emily Goodykoontz
Anchorage Daily News

Under a new measure, the Anchorage Assembly's chair will oversee the nomination and selection of the Assembly's youth representative, rather than the mayor-appointed Youth Advisory Commission — a code change opposed by the Assembly's most recent youth member and the youth commission.

The Assembly passed the code changes in a 6-3 vote on Tuesday night, after a few heated exchanges between some Assembly members and public testimony largely opposing the measure, including testimony from youth commission members. Eagle River/Chugiak Assembly members Jamie Allard and Kevin Cross and South Anchorage member Randy Sulte voted against the measure.

The measure is the most recent flashpoint in ongoing clashes between the Assembly's moderate-to-liberal leaning majority and the conservative Mayor Dave Bronson's administration and his supporters.

Members of the youth commission and departing Assembly youth member Sarah Price have called the code change a retaliatory, partisan effort. They have said the changes suppress youth voices and undermine the power of the commission and Anchorage young people to choose their own representative. The commission earlier this month passed a resolution against the measure and called on the mayor to veto it.

Assembly leaders have said the change fixes a separation of powers issue because the commission, whose members are selected by the mayor's administration, had been in charge of selecting the Assembly's youth member.

The youth representative is a voluntary position on the Assembly and was created in 2017. The youth member attends meetings and work sessions, providing perspective and acts as a voice for young people in Anchorage. The youth member can participate in discussions, ask questions and cast preferential votes, though the youth representative's vote does not count.

The ordinance, which had been proposed by Assembly Chair Suzanne LaFrance, moves the section of city code governing the youth representative under the Assembly, rather than the part of code regulating the city's boards and commissions, which are overseen by the mayor. It also made changes to the nomination process, putting the Assembly chair in charge of the appointment, which is then subject to a confirmation vote of the full Assembly. The youth commission can still make nominations, but oversight of the process now rests with the Assembly chair.

Previously, the Youth Advisory Commission had been in charge of soliciting applications and selecting a nominee for the Assembly's youth representative member, a nomination that then went to the members for a confirmation vote.

The youth commission has been soliciting nominations from community organizations and meeting with potential nominees to fill Price's now-vacant seat, the commission's chair, Rebekah Dunfee, told members during a work session on the code changes last week.

Price, who left the position earlier this month, spoke against the proposal at a June 7 Assembly meeting.

"It would be presumptuous of the Assembly to believe that they could add a youth representative to be able to claim they care about the youth of Anchorage, but as soon as the youth representative has something to say or something to add, they can silence them," Price said. "The youth representative is not a seat-filler. You cannot use the voices of Anchorage's youth as a token and a political game."

The youth commission in January nominated one of its own members — Price — for the youth representative seat.

Former commission member Lily Spiroski, who was appointed before Bronson became mayor, resigned earlier this year, citing a "hostile and unwelcoming" environment in an email to Assembly members. Spiroski, who is nonbinary, resigned after Denali Tshibaka, a Bronson-appointed member, gave a presentation that suggested segregating some LGBTQ and gender-identity themed literature in the public library. (The Bronson-appointed members of the commission include the son and daughter of Kelly Tshibaka, a Republican candidate for U.S. Senate, and Niki Tshibaka, the city's human resources director.)

Spiroski, in their January email, urged Assembly members not to fill the youth representative seat until applications became open to youth citywide, and not just commission members.

"The commission was created with the intent of being welcoming to ALL of Anchorage youth, not just who the Mayor agrees with," Spiroski said in the email.

On Tuesday night, two testifiers opposing the measure stood in silence and wore pieces of tape over their mouths. The women held up signs, one that said "do not silence the future," and another, "youth voices matter."

LaFrance said the changes open the door for broader community input into nominations and that the commission and that an Assembly position should be regulated by the Assembly, not the mayor.

"The Youth Advisory Commission is one stakeholder among others, and there is an opportunity here to take a look at that," LaFrance said in an interview. "Is that the best model for our community, to have a group that's appointed by the mayor, pick the young person who gets to be on the Assembly?"

The Assembly youth representative position was vacant for about two years until the Assembly confirmed Price's appointment last month. LaFrance said she proposed the changes after reviewing the code when the Assembly received Price's nomination. She said the measure is not a political effort, but is meant to "correct shortcomings" in the city code.

"We want lots of youth to apply for this process, and why not have both the executive and legislative branches recruiting young people? Why not do that?" LaFrance said. "I don't look at things the same way they they do and it's regrettable that it's being framed through an ideological lens when it's about policy."

LaFrance is also drafting a resolution that, if passed, would form a community task force to review the position and discuss providing training and support for the youth representative and youth commission members, among other measures.

Contact Emily Goodykoontz at egoodykoontz@adn.com.

ALASKA

In first statewide by-mail election, turnout was highest for a primary since 2014

James Brooks
Alaska Beacon

Final preliminary results posted Tuesday night by the Alaska Division of Elections show 161,614 people voted in the special election for U.S. House, Alaska's first statewide election by mail. With 27.5% of registered voters participating, it's the highest turnout in a primary since 2014 and the sixth-highest in the past 20 years.

Forty-eight candidates entered the race, and ordinarily, the top four finishers would advance to the Aug. 16 special general election, but the third-place finisher, Al Gross, said he will withdraw from the race.

Elections officials said that will leave only three finalists. The fifth-place finisher, Tara Sweeney, does not plan to challenge that decision in court, according to her campaign manager.

Finishing first in the preliminary results is Republican candidate Sarah Palin, with 27% of the vote. Second is Republican Nick Begich with 19.1%.

Gross, a nonpartisan candidate, is third at 12.6%, followed by Democratic candidate Mary Peltola with 10.1% of the vote.

Sweeney, a Republican, is fifth with 5.9%. Undeclared candidate Santa Claus, who has referred to himself as a Bernie Sanders-style progressive, is in sixth with 4.7% of the vote.

Democratic candidate Chris Constant is seventh (3.9%), followed by nonpartisan Jeff Lowenfels (3.7%), Republican John Coghill (2.4%) and Republican Josh Revak (2.4%).

No candidate outside the top 10 had more than 2% of the vote.

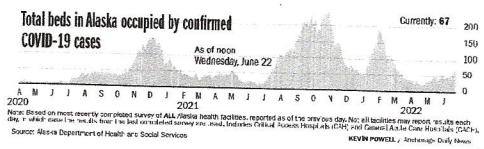
Election workers are expected to certify the results by Saturday after checking some votes by hand and conducting further review as required by state law.

At least 7,426 of the received ballots were disqualified and not counted for any candidate, based on a preliminary tally published Monday.

The rejection rate was running above 17% in one Southwest Alaska state House district and above 14% in a House district along the Bering Strait.

Turnout increased in 35 of the 40 state House districts compared with the 2020 primary. The only districts with fewer ballots cast were the four districts in Northern and Western Alaska, and the district that includes most of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

After certification, the Division of Elections will publish a report identifying the reasons for rejection and will notify voters whose ballot was cast but not counted for any candidate.



CORONAVIRUS

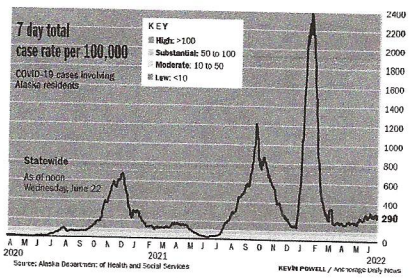
Alaska's reported COVID-19 cases increased by 23% this week

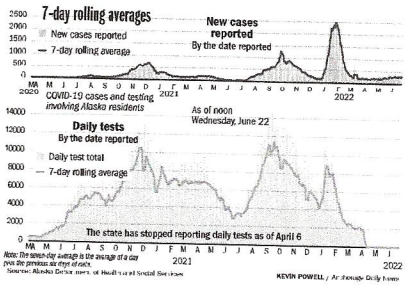
Anchorage Daily News

The number of newly reported COVID-19 cases in Alaska rose by 23% this week compared to last week as hospitalizations decreased slightly.

Here are a few main takeaways from the latest data available from the state Department of Health and Social Services:

- By Wednesday, there were 57 COVID-positive patients hospitalized around Alaska, a slight decrease from the 61 reported by the state a week earlier. Just under 5% of Alaska's hospital patients were COVID-positive, and no one required a ventilator. Current hospital counts are still well below all-time peaks but higher than at other points in the pandemic.
- The state reported 3,016 cases in Alaska over a seven-day period, an increase from 2,452 cases reported last week. This week's total includes 2,123 cases among residents and 893 among nonresidents, and averages out to just over 430 cases per day. That data doesn't include at-home tests.
- Alaska's seven-day case rate per 100,000 people is seventh highest in the nation as of this week, according to a CDC tracker. Nationally, cases are decreasing slightly.
- The state reported no new deaths linked to the virus. In total, 1,252 COVID-19 deaths among residents and 34 among nonresidents have been reported since March 2020.
- Across the state, 65.3% of Alaskans 5 and up as well as military personnel had completed their primary vaccine series. About 30.9% were considered up-to-date on their vaccinations with at least one booster.
- This week, children and babies as young as 6 months became eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations. Most vaccine appointments for very young children and babies will need to made with primary care providers and pediatricians.
- Pharmacies can vaccinate children 3 and older, and some communities around the state may be offering public clinics, many of which will be posted online at vaccines.gov, a federal website that allows users to search by ZIP code for providers offering COVID-19 vaccines near them.





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