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Juneau Update



Feb. 4, 2009

The legislative session is underway. As usual, the budget will be UA's biggest challenge this year. We've already had some action on that front. On Jan. 26, representatives from UA met with the chair of House Finance and his staff along with members of the Legislative Finance Division and staff members from the co-chairs of Senate Finance. This is always a first step in the process and allows everyone to introduce themselves and learn what the ground rules and potential schedules will be.

It's too early to draw any conclusions from this meeting, but the legislature is struggling hard with revenue problems as a result of low oil prices. As of this writing the price of a barrel of ANS crude is about \$40 per barrel. The governor's budget assumes about \$75 per barrel to balance.

In total the legislature has squirreled away nearly \$7 billion in accounts from the days of higher prices. It is the hope that money will last about 10 years and help bridge the gap to times of higher revenue.

On Jan. 23, UA and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) made a joint presentation on Alaska's workforce before the House Committee on Labor and Commerce.

On Jan. 29, UA and the Department of Health and Social (HSS) services made a presentation on Alaska's healthcare workforce to the House HSS Committee. On Jan. 30, UA and DOLWD made an additional joint presentation to the House Education committee regarding the Alaska Vocational-Technical Center (AVTEC).

Tuesday, Feb. 3, was the first House Subcommittee meeting on the UA budget. Later that day, UA President Mark Hamilton made a joint presentation with the commissioners of Education, as well as DOLWD, to the full Finance Committee.

There are three more formal presentations scheduled to various committees of the legislature. They are posted on the calendar on <http://www.alaska.edu/state/>. Additional events will be published as they are scheduled.

In other good news, the governor's proposal on Feb. 3 to reduce current year spending (FY09 supplemental) reflects actual changes in the university's utility bills, and doesn't negatively affect the university.