

ALASKA · STATE · CAPITOL

# Welcome to the Alaska State Capitol



VISITOR'S GUIDE

## THE CAPITOL BUILDING



Completed in 1931, the Alaska State Capitol was originally constructed as a territorial and federal building at a cost of approximately \$1 million including the land purchase, a portion of which was raised by Juneau citizens. Upon becoming the 49th state in 1959, building ownership was transferred to Alaska to serve as our Capitol, currently housing the state legislature as well as the offices of the governor and Lt. governor. Due to its original purpose, the building lacks the traditional dome of most other state capitols. To Alaskans, this

is just another unique feature of our beloved state, emblematic of our pragmatic spirit. We are proud of our working capitol, which has served as Alaska's symbol and seat of government for more than 90 years.

In January 2017, a four-year, \$36 million renovation to the Capitol was completed. Necessary to retrofit the original structure to resist seismic forces, improve energy efficiency, and replace the original heating system, the art deco exterior was also restored to its original 1931 design. Inside, visitors can explore historic displays, artworks, photographs, and cultural artifacts celebrating Alaska's rich heritage.

## ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

The Alaska State Legislature is a bicameral institution, consisting of the House of Representatives and Senate. The House has 40 members who serve two-year terms, while the Senate has 20 members who serve four-year terms. The legislature meets annually in the capital of Juneau. Members of both chambers are elected by the citizens of Alaska, with the state divided into legislative districts based on population. Many members travel from remote places in Alaska, such as Utqiagvik and Nome, to reach the Capitol each January for the convening of session. In territorial days, this could mean traveling by dog sled, snow mobile, and steam ship, and is now made much easier by modern air travel.



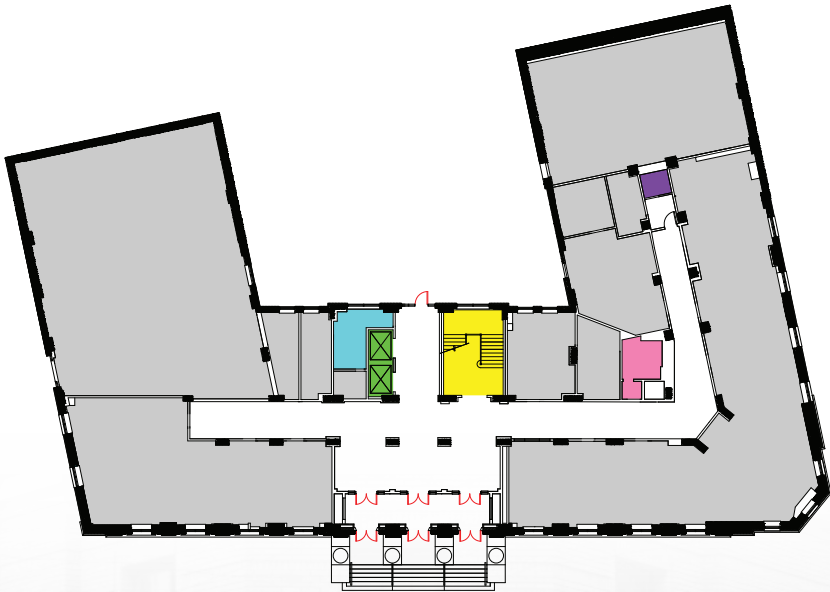
## GROUND FLOOR








Standing sentinel outside is a replica of the Liberty Bell, a powerful symbol of freedom. As you walk between the Tokeen marble columns and through the polished brass doors, Tokeen and Gravina marble walls greet you, quarried on Prince of Wales Island, located south of Juneau near Ketchikan.



Inside the lobby, admire stone fired clay murals that portray traditional fishing and caribou hunting scenes, offering a glimpse into 1930s life in Alaska. The ceiling accents depict a repeating border of symbols that capture the vast natural resources and vital industries of Alaska, including mining, lumber, and fisheries, as well as its diverse population. The lobby's centerpiece honors Elizabeth Peratrovich, a champion for civil rights, whose testimony before the 17th Territorial Legislature split the opposition that allowed passage of the Alaska Civil Rights Act of 1945.

This unassuming public entrance to Alaska's Capitol honors the pioneering efforts to ensure equality in a place of abundance and possibility - a fitting reminder for lawmakers and citizens alike that great things can happen when we all work together to ensure a prosperous future.



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|--|--|--|
|  Restroom (M)   |  Elevator |  Office Space   |
|  Restroom (W)   |  Stairs   |  Emergency Exit |
|  Restroom (ADA) |  |  |

## FIRST FLOOR

The first floor is alive with legislative activity during sessions and accommodates the offices of the Senate President and the Senate Rules Chair. The hallways between offices and committee rooms are adorned with historic photographs and original artwork. Large images capture the First Territorial Legislature, convening in 1913 before the Capitol's construction. Many photos from the Winter & Pond collection are also on display. Artworks by Fred Machetanz, Eustace Ziegler, and Sydney Laurence are on display, offering a glimpse into Alaska's distinctive character and rich history. Cedar panels designed by Alaskan master carver Nathan Jackson are highlighted at the east end of the hallway.



### Points of Interest

- 1 Winter & Pond Collection  
- Historical Self-Guided Tour No. 6
- 2 Bettye Davis Committee Room
- 3 Ramona Barnes Committee Room
- 4 Max Gruenberg Committee Room



- Restroom (M)
- Elevator
- Office Space
- Restroom (W)
- Stairs
- Emergency Exit

## SECOND FLOOR

The second floor serves as the central location for legislative activity. The heart of the lawmaking process happens here in the House and Senate Chambers. Visitors have an excellent view from the designated galleries, witnessing firsthand where Alaska's laws are debated and decided.

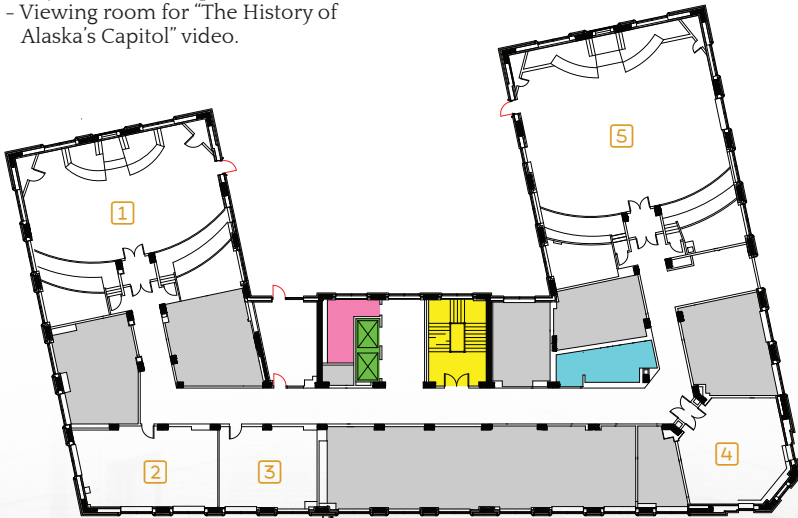
Down the hall from the House Chamber, you'll find the Speaker's Chambers. This room previously served as the meeting space for the Territorial Senate and the hand-stenciled ceiling, representative of 1930s interior design, dates back to the original construction of the Capitol.

Scattered throughout the second floor are artistic tributes that honor Alaska's history and leaders. Look for busts or portraits of Ernest Gruening and E.L. "Bob" Bartlett, two men who played a pivotal role in securing Alaska's statehood. Their dedication ultimately led them to become Alaska's first U.S. Senators after statehood was granted.

As you approach the House or Senate Chamber, note the hand-cast brass door handles. These depict a majestic eagle, a powerful whale, and a resilient bear – all iconic Alaska wildlife symbols.

### Points of Interest

- 1 Senate Chamber  
- Historical Self-Guided Tour No. 1
- 2 John Butrovich Committee Room
- 3 Bettye Fahrenkamp Committee Room  
- Viewing room for "The History of Alaska's Capitol" video.
- 4 Speaker's Chamber  
- Historical Self-Guided Tour No. 2
- 5 House Chamber  
- Historical Self-Guided Tour No. 3



- Restroom (M)
- Elevator
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- Restroom (W)
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## THIRD FLOOR







The third floor houses the offices of the governor and lieutenant governor. The Governor's Office features a unique map of Alaska crafted from a section of the 48-inch pipe used to construct the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. The intricate weld on the map depicts the 800-mile route of the pipeline from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez.



Across the hall, black birch doors, hand-carved by Alaska Natives from Haines, showcase some of the state's major economic activities, including tourism represented by a Tlingit dancer, fishing and processing, wood products, mining, hunting and trapping, and oil and gas.

Down the hall, toward the Lieutenant Governor's Office, is the "Hall of Governors." This space honors Alaska's past leadership and displays portraits of both territorial and state governors and lieutenant governors. Both the governor and lieutenant governor serve four-year terms and are limited to two consecutive terms.



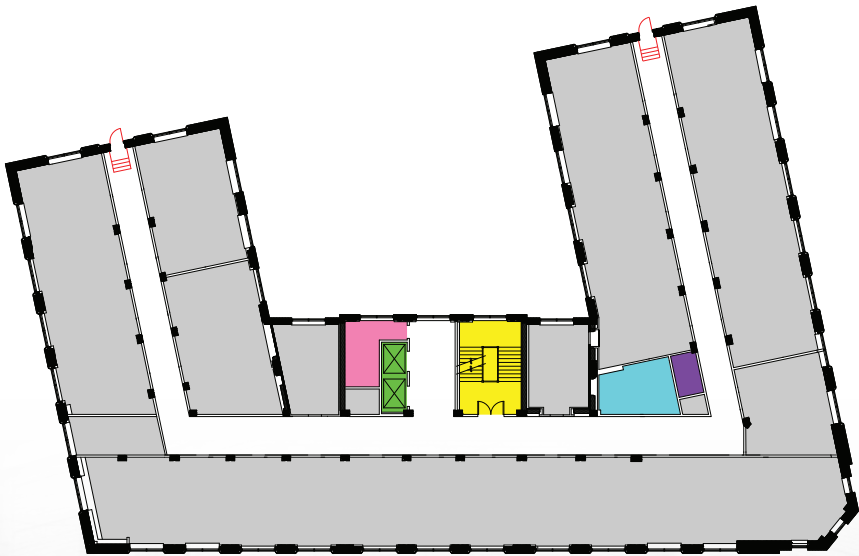
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## FOURTH FLOOR

This floor is dedicated to the behind-the-scenes work that keeps the Capitol functioning. Lawmakers' offices line the halls, where the vital work of crafting Alaska's laws takes place.

As you walk the halls, historic events in Alaska's timeline are displayed using newspapers and headlines. Visitors can delve into debates surrounding statehood, the discovery of natural resources, or the fight for civil rights, all through these printed snapshots from the past.

These historical newspapers serve as a bridge between the past and present, a record of the long, sometimes arduous road Alaskans have traveled to realize great successes in our young state.



- Restroom (M)
- Restroom (W)
- Restroom (ADA)
- Elevator
- Stairs
- Office Space
- Emergency Exit

## FIFTH FLOOR

The fifth floor offers a unique blend of history and highlights the building's changing uses. As you step off the elevator, historical photographs showcase the state's different judicial divisions, a reminder of the floor's former judicial purpose.









Approaching each committee room, you'll find photographs revealing the room's appearance before renovations restored their historical character. The Senate Finance Committee room once served as the Superior Court of Judicial District One, and the benches and lighting are from those original courtroom days.

While the legal legacy and current finance committee operations take center stage, the walls are also adorned with original oil paintings. These captivating artworks depict Alaska's varied landscapes and rich history, a beautiful reminder of the state's natural wonders and the stories they hold.

### Points of Interest

- 1 Al Adams House Finance Committee Room  
- Historical Self-Guided Tour No. 5
- 2 Senate Finance Committee Room  
- Historical Self-Guided Tour No. 4



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## STATE SEAL

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In 1867, Russia sold its interest in Alaska to the United States, and for nearly fifty years the region was known as the District of Alaska. The first governor designated a Seal featuring icebergs, northern lights, igloos and an Alaska Native ice fishing. In 1910, this Seal was replaced with a design by an “unknown designer” more representative of the District’s industrial and natural wealth.



This Seal was retained through Alaska’s territorial days and by adoption of Alaska’s constitution in 1956 became the State Seal when Alaska joined the Union on January 3, 1959.

The rays above the mountains represent the famous Alaska northern lights, also known as aurora borealis. The smelter symbolizes mining, the train stands for Alaska’s rail transportation, and ships denote marine transportation. The trees symbolize Alaska’s wealth of timber and other forest products, and the farmer, his horse, and the three shocks of wheat portray Alaska’s agriculture. The fish and seals signify the importance of seafood to Alaska’s economy.

## STATE FLAG

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In 1926, Alaska students, grades 7-12, participated in a contest to design the territorial flag. The winning design submitted by a 13 year-old Alaska Native, Benny Benson, consisted of eight gold stars on a blue background. The stars represent the Big Dipper, or Great Bear, and symbolize strength. The North Star depicted future statehood. In 1927, the design was adopted as the official flag for the Territory of Alaska.



In 1959, the drafters of the Alaska Constitution stipulated that the territorial flag would become the official state flag.

## STATE SONG

The words to the song *Alaska's Flag* were written by Marie Drake, a long-time employee of the Alaska Department of Education, and set to music composed by Elinor Dusenbury. The Territorial Legislature adopted *Alaska's Flag* as the official state song in 1955.

*Eight stars of gold on a field of blue,  
Alaska's flag, May it mean to you,  
The blue of the sea, the evening sky,  
The mountain lakes, and the flowers nearby,  
The gold of the early sourdough's dreams,  
The precious gold of the hills and streams,  
The brilliant stars in the northern sky,  
The "Bear," the "Dipper," and, shining high,  
The great North Star with its steady light,  
O'er land and sea a beacon bright,  
Alaska's flag to Alaskans dear,  
The simple flag of a last frontier.*

## MORE ABOUT ALASKA

Alaska, the largest state in the United States, covers 663,267 square miles. Its landscapes provide an ideal backdrop for viewing the northern lights between September and April and feature around 100,000 glaciers, including the famous Hubbard Glacier, North America's longest tidewater glacier. The state's diverse ecosystems support wildlife such as brown bears, polar bears, moose, caribou, wolves, and marine mammals. With more than 30,000 bald eagles, Alaska has the highest concentration in the U.S., and they have been a spiritual symbol for indigenous people for far longer.

Alaska's rich cultural history is rooted in the traditions of indigenous peoples like the Iñupiaq, Yup'ik, Tlingit, Haida, Aleut, and Athabaskan tribes. These communities have inhabited the region for thousands of years, and their languages, arts, and customs continue to be celebrated and preserved, contributing to the state's unique heritage.

## STATE TRIVIA

### BIRD

Willow Ptarmigan

### FLOWER

Alpine Forget-me-not

### GEM

Jade

### LAND MAMMAL

Moose

### MINERAL

Gold

### NICKNAME

The Last Frontier

### SPORT

Dog Mushing

### FISH

Chinook Salmon

### FOSSIL

Woolly Mammoth

### INSECT

Four-spot Skimmer Dragonfly

### MARINE MAMMAL

Bowhead Whale

### MOTTO

"North to the Future"

### SONG

Alaska's Flag

### TREE

Sitka Spruce



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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✉ [lio.juneau@akleg.gov](mailto:lio.juneau@akleg.gov)

## ADDRESS & HOURS

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📍 120 4th Street, Juneau, AK 99801

🕒 8am - 5pm (Monday - Friday)

🕒 Closed on Saturday, Sunday and State Holidays

## PLANNING A VISIT TO THE CAPITOL?

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Alaska Capitol Website

🔗 [alaskacapitol.gov](http://alaskacapitol.gov)

Visit this website for current information regarding a visit to the Alaska State Capitol.

## THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Bills, Laws, Statutes and more

🔗 [akleg.gov](http://akleg.gov)

Interested in legislation and politics? Visit this website to find out more.

## 100 YEARS OF ALASKA'S LEGISLATURE

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From Territorial Days to Today

🔗 [100years.akleg.gov](http://100years.akleg.gov)

An archival website containing the legislative and territorial history of Alaska's political landscape.

