

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
January 24, 2002
1:57 P.M.

TAPE HFC 02 - 13, Side A
TAPE HFC 02 - 13, Side B
TAPE HFC 02 - 13, Side A

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Williams called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:57 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Bill Williams, Co-Chair
Representative Con Bunde, Vice-Chair
Representative Eric Croft
Representative John Davies
Representative Richard Foster
Representative Bill Hudson
Representative Ken Lancaster
Representative Carl Moses
Representative Jim Whitaker

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Eldon Mulder, Co-Chair
Representative John Harris

ALSO PRESENT

Representative Mary Kapsner; Senator Donald Olson; P.J. Ford Slack, Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education & Early Development; Barbara Thompson, Deputy Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education & Early Development; Louie Yannotti, Charter Schools, Social Studies, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education & Early Development; Annie McIlvain, Alaska Municipal League; Tom Harvey, Executive Director, NEA-Alaska.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Candy Waugaman, President, Alaska Historical Society, Fairbanks; Mary Nordale, Fairbanks; Joan Antonson, Office of History & Archaeology, Department of Natural Resources, Anchorage; Bruce Parham, Anchorage; Judy Bittner, History & Archaeology, Department of Natural Resources, Anchorage; Steve Haycox, University of Alaska-Anchorage, Anchorage; Ed Earnhart, Anchorage; Elsa Sargento, Filipino Community & Bridge Builders, Anchorage; Kathleen Dalton, Fairbanks; Carol Comeau, Anchorage School Superintendent, Anchorage; Ernie Line, Mat-Su; Darlene Hurbert, Fairbanks.

SUMMARY

HB 171 An Act relating to a curriculum for Alaska history; and providing for an effective date.

HB 171 was HEARD and HELD in Committee for further consideration.

HOUSE BILL NO. 171

An Act relating to a curriculum for Alaska history; and providing for an effective date.

REPRESENTATIVE MARY KAPSNER explained that understanding Alaska State history is important to providing the context of where Alaskans came from and what we as Alaskan's value about the diversity and richness of our State. It is fundamental to being informed and effective participants in State and local affairs. An understanding of how Alaska's economy and form of government developed is crucial to understanding how to deal with today's issues.

Commonwealth North's study in 2000 on the urban/rural divide in Alaska found that if nothing is done to address the critical issues that divide Alaskans, the result will be an increasingly fragmented State, with discouraging economic growth and increasing social and cultural clashes. The group put forth a set of recommendations and action items, including the teaching of Alaska history at the high school level, and backed up the recommendation with an active working committee.

Representative Kapsner noted that support has grown. Resolutions were passed at the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Convention for the past three years calling for Alaska history education. The Alaska Municipal League issued a policy statement in support of civic education for students, noting that teaching children how to understand and influence their government is critical to the well being of Alaska. The Alaska Association of School Boards and the National Education Association (NEA) Alaska support the legislation. The Department of Education & Early Development has worked with the legislative group to help craft and tune the language of HB 171.

Representative Kapsner advised that Carol Comeau, Superintendent of the Anchorage School System, is currently working on a curriculum for the legislation.

Representative Kapsner referenced the proposed committee substitute, work draft #22-LS0070\R, Ford, 1/22/02. [Copy on File]. She noted that the draft would up date the effective dates from last year. The work draft also removes language

regarding special education students because federal law controls that requirement. The draft also clarifies requirements for students transferring into the Alaska school system in their junior or senior year.

Vice-Chair Bunde asked how many high schools in Alaska do not have Alaska history as a requirement.

Representative Kapsner replied that nine school districts do not require Alaska history. That does not mean that they do not offer it as an elective. However, it is not required.

Vice-Chair Bunde thought it outrageous that a law should be passed for such a small number of school districts. Vice-Chair Bunde referenced the committee substitute. He commented that the people who need to learn Alaska history are the ones that are new to the State. He asserted that those are the people that should be required to take it.

Representative Kapsner agreed, however, many of those new students will need to prepare to pass the State exit exam. She stressed that the legislation was intended to be a great first step.

Representative Hudson applauded Representative Kapsner for the legislation. He addressed the additional money that would be needed in the classroom teaching area to implement the program. He pointed out the National Education Association's (NEA) endorsement on the legislation. He asked about the development costs of the curriculum. He inquired if there would need to be additional money placed into the school system to teach the curriculum.

Representative Kapsner understood that the money generated by the fiscal note would be used to develop the material and curriculum. She requested that the Department address that question.

Representative Whitaker noted that he had co-sponsored the bill. He acknowledged that there would be some "tough" questions asked from legislative members. Representative Whitaker spoke to the Native & non-Native cultural clash and his concern regarding that. He referenced the findings and intent section, Section 3, Page 3, Line 19. He reflected on the diversity within the Native culture. He pointed out that the bill only indicates a Native studies component regardless of the rich and diverse cultural history of the State.

Representative Kapsner emphasized that it was not her intent that HB 171 be a "Native" bill. She acknowledged that it does reference Native people. Many people in the public school system have little or no reference at all to the Native people. Native people have an oral tradition, not a

literary tradition. Hence, most books are not written by Native people. Consequently, she stated that it is imperative to have at least one section of the curriculum devoted solely to the Native people of Alaska.

Representative Whitaker suggested that verbiage be added that is inclusive of all cultures. He added that it is not advantageous to see ourselves as culturally separate. As an institution, the State has to work toward a goal of establishing an inclusive Alaskan culture.

Representative Lancaster commended the sponsor. He voiced concern with the "pile" of significant education bills, which are stacking up for consideration this session.

Representative Kapsner voiced her concern with being "lost in the dust". She stressed that many of the issues on the table are divisive. She commented that HB 171 would act as a unifier.

Representative Davies interjected his support of the legislation. He noted that normally he would not support legislation that mandates a State requirement, however, this consideration is a central and core issue for the State. He pointed out that there is a lack of understanding in the history of Alaska, which plays a role in many of the problems currently existing in the Legislature.

He added that in terms of the budget, only \$53,000 dollars was being directed for training of teachers. He emphasized that the request is a modest amount and that HB 171 is an important piece of legislation.

Representative Foster MOVED to adopt the committee substitute for HB 171 as the version of the bill before the Committee. There being NO OBJECTION, it was adopted.

Representative Kapsner responded to comments made by Representative Whitaker. She stated that the Native Alaskan influence is unique within the State. Many of the European influences in Alaska are similar to those in other states. Alaskan Natives have an experience that is unlike any other Native group in the world because of the Native Claim Settlement Act (NCSA). There is a presumption that if you are native, you belong to one of the thirteen Native Corporations. She pointed out that all Natives born after 1971 do not belong to a Native Corporation.

Vice-Chair Bunde recommended that the Department of Education & Early Development should develop the curriculum. He asked if language would be included because there is no confidence that the Department could address that portion of the program.

Representative Kapsner stated that had been a recommendation of Commonwealth North and various leaders throughout the State both Native and non-Native.

P.J. FORD SLACK, DIRECTOR, TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & EARLY DEVELOPMENT, noted that the Department does not often get involved in developing curriculum. Alaska is unique in the way that it does things. The proposed bill does have the support of the entire Department and various groups statewide involved with the concern. Most districts have made this a requirement and if not a requirement, an elective.

She added that the legislation was developed in collaboration with various interest groups, to guarantee that it aligns with other work and is standards-based. The Department wants to facilitate the program. Ms. Slack advised that the Department has worked close with Superintendent Comeau from the Anchorage School District, has implemented the plan already.

Ms. Slack acknowledged that there are questions with the special education piece of the legislation. She assured members that the majority of special Ed students will know their portion of Alaska history as well, but it would be up to their Individual Pupil Unit (IPU) team to determine a curriculum that is appropriate for that student. Ms. Slack stated that it has been recommended that piece of the verbiage be removed. She did not recall that students from out-of-state be exempt from the requirement. She assumed that it could have been removed for those new 11th & 12th graders coming into the State, faced with the unique credit requirements that they will need to graduate.

Ms. Slack noted that as the person who oversees teacher certification throughout the State, every entering educator is required to take an Alaska focused credit.

She commented that the Department would take all pieces of the legislation "to heart". She referenced the recent Alaska Native Educational Seminar in November 2001, in which many people voiced support for the proposed legislation. She offered to answer questions regarding the fiscal note.

Co-Chair Williams noted his concern with the fiscal note. He noted that with only nine districts that do not have Alaska history requirement, why does an additional curriculum need to be designed.

Ms. Slack responded that she did not know if the Department could reduce the cost of the fiscal note. She pointed out that the note takes into consideration developing a CD and active web site, while making sure that there is ownership for the curriculum throughout the State. It is not a high

stakes credit, but there be consistency. She emphasized that it is important to keep that integrity. She noted the various pieces creating one cohesive piece of information, technologically based.

Co-Chair Williams asserted that there currently are 44 districts that have already taken ownership. He reiterated to the Department that the Committee was looking for ways to reduce the fiscal note.

BARBARA THOMPSON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & EARLY DEVELOPMENT, clarified that in meeting the provisions of the bill, including a Alaska Native studies component, the State could not guarantee that all 44 districts qualify for that requirement. Each district currently teaches differently. Through the proposed legislation, it would unify what was taught.

Representative Hudson questioned if this was a course that could be assumed by existing staff at various schools.

Ms. Slack responded that adding the class would be no different from adding something else more complicated to the list. An Alaska study component is required of each teacher in Alaska to have before they receive a Type A license. Many resources are available and it would not be something where an additional burden would be placed on the school staff. The only impact concern to staff would be to have the flexibility to take it into the middle or high school level.

Representative Hudson clarified that there would be no new staff and that existing staff would not be replaced.

Ms. Slack responded that was correct.

Vice-Chair Bunde referenced Page 4, Line 2, "special education". He asked if that should be deleted.

Ms. Slack did not know if that language should remain.

Vice-Chair Bunde commented that if there are 44 districts that already have an Alaskan history component, why would a new course need to be created. He questioned the curriculum and the diversity within the State of the Native culture. He asked if it was the Department's intent to develop a curriculum that would focus more on each area individually.

Ms. Slack envisioned that the Alaska history component would have a section for each cultural component throughout the State, such as Native groups, Russian, Polish-American, etc. She referenced the Alaska Native Network website developed

out of Fairbanks. She acknowledged that the Department could cover a broader vision.

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Ms. Slack was not sure what each component would look like but reiterated that it should include all pieces within the Alaska history. The specifics would be left to each individual committee.

Vice-Chair Bunde asked how long the course would be taught.

Ms. Slack replied that it would be a one-semester course, approximately 12 weeks long.

Ms. Thompson interjected that it could be either a stand-alone course or specific pieces incorporated and taught through other courses.

Vice-Chair Bunde interjected that would be an interesting challenge for the standard-based curriculum.

Representative Croft asked about the nine districts that currently have an Alaska studies course. He noted that some districts teach the course at the elementary school level. He noted that the course would need to be substantially changed to be used for high school level.

Representative Croft asked what the curriculum challenges would be in Anchorage with the transfer of juniors and seniors.

Ms. Thompson did not know what had been decided.

ERNIE LINE, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), MAT-SU, thought that it would be difficult to accomplish the legislation by July 1, 2001. He asked if a textbook would be included in the curriculum.

Representative Kapsner commented that the Department would determine the materials to be used. She noted that the first class that would be affected by the legislation would be the graduating class of 2007.

Mr. Line agreed that the Alaska studies program should be executed in only high school.

JOAN ANTONSON, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), OFFICE OF HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ANCHORAGE, offered to answer questions of the Committee. She noted that a textbook had been created and currently is being used. That textbook was complete in 1986.

JUDY BITTNER, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ANCHORAGE, noted that the Department does support the legislation.

Representative J. Davies asked if the Historical Commission had discussed the bill.

Ms. Bittner stated that it has been discussed and that a resolution had been submitted in support.

STEVE HAYCOX, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA-ANCHORAGE, ANCHORAGE, testified support for the legislation. He supported having a textbook for the curriculum. He referenced Commonwealth North's report in support of a curriculum as proposed. He elaborated that Alaskans need greater ways of connecting and that the proposed legislation would help with that concern. History provides people a way to be human and how we share our place on the planet, which helps us make better judgments. He stressed that the legislation would be valuable for the young people of the State.

ED EARNHART, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), ANCHORAGE, voiced support for the legislation. He emphasized that the State has not yet come together politically. He pointed out that HB 171 calls for history and government to come together. He voiced caution with the State taking advantage of the local school districts.

ELSA SARAGENTO, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), FILIPINO COMMUNITY & BRIDGE BUILDERS, ANCHORAGE, voiced support for the legislation. She urged that the Alaska studies program be mandated for all Alaskan children. An Alaska studies requirement is one way to teach many things to a child. Not only will our youth learn about Alaska and their heritage, they will understand that they are part of Alaska's history.

CAROL COMEAU, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), SUPERINTENDANT OF ANCHORAGE SCHOOLS, ANCHORAGE, stated that the Anchorage School Board unanimously passed the recommendation that all students take a one semester class in Alaska studies. She pointed out that she personally had been working on this issue since 1978.

Ms. Comeau added that many of today's young people do not know how the State has gotten to where it is today. She stressed that the Alaskan young people need to be educated regarding concerns such as the fiscal gap, Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), subsistence and other concerns throughout the State. Ms. Comeau maintained that this is a major responsibility of the school districts. The time has come to require it in every school. There should be a State content standard and then each district should develop their

own piece. The diversity of the State must be honored. She urged that the bill pass from Committee.

Vice-Chair Bunde questioned how local school districts would look at the proposal. He asked if they would consider it a non-funded mandate.

Ms. Comeau replied that some districts might feel that it is an un-funded mandate. She stressed that the value of the issue is so important that it should be mandated. The on-going cost will result from doing solid teacher training.

Vice-Chair Bunde observed that it would be a 12-week course. He questioned how much depth could be reached during that time frame. He thought that the elementary civic programs could do some of the preparatory work. He commented that it will be challenging to achieve the intended success.

Ms. Comeau acknowledged the difficulty of having a quality course in the time allotted. She responded that the topics would need to be narrowed down to critical areas. Ms. Comeau emphasized that standards need to be the core of the program. She did not anticipate a struggle with the Department of Education and Early Development on the curriculum.

Vice-Chair Bunde wondered if the Anchorage area would have a section on the Native contribution to the State as part of the course curriculum.

Ms. Comeau replied that they absolutely would.

In response to queries by Representative Lancaster, Ms. Comeau did not think the teacher shortage would impact the program. She stated that it was the districts obligation to develop an excellent training package for the course and keep it going locally on an on-going basis. There are many community builders who are willing to work in keeping it going.

DARLENE HURBERT, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), FAIRBANKS, voiced support of the legislation. She emphasized the importance of sharing Alaska history and expressed hope that it would reduce prejudice.

CANDY WAUGAMAN, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), PRESIDENT, ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, FAIRBANKS, voiced support for HB 171. She emphasized that the legislation would provide an understanding of Alaska's past. She maintained that the fiscal cost is reasonable. The legislation would not add to credits needed to graduate or take away from other programs.

MARY NORDALE, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), FAIRBANKS, testified in support of HB 171. The State Board of

Education stated that a student should be able to integrate historical knowledge with historical skill to fully participate as a citizen. Among the tests used to define that standard, a student should be able to define a personal position on issues while understanding the historical outcome of positions and rules. It is crucial for Alaska that we develop a way to understand one another and have a common ground. HB 171 would be a start.

ANNIE MCILVAIN, ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE, JUNEAU, spoke in support of the bill. She noted that the League has contracted for the development of a curriculum that could be used. The curriculum would consist of modules for teachers to use in K-12 throughout Alaska. It would be a web-based module that any teacher could use for Alaska history.

TOM HARVEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEA-ALASKA, JUNEAU, testified that the National Education Association (NEA) is in support of HB 171 because it is:

- State standards based;
- Provides for a local delivery and development mechanism;
- Does provide a means for NEA to provide children the essential resources of knowledge to be good citizens, which addresses Alaska's diversity.

Mr. Harvey noted that NEA has learned many collaboration lessons. He stated that NEA believes that the fiscal note could be reduced. There are resources around the State that could address those resource and delivery issues.

Vice-Chair Bunde expressed his appreciation for NEA's willingness to help with lowering the costs. He questioned how the standards-based idea could be developed.

Mr. Harvey felt that State-based standards could be addressed as long as there was an understanding of what those standards are and then there was cooperation within the staff.

Vice-Chair Bunde observed that there will need to be an assessment.

Mr. Harvey explained that NEA-Alaska is not in support of high stake testing, however, agreed that the assessments could be made.

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Vice-Chair Bunde MOVED to delete language on Page 4, Line 2:
(3) "special education" has the meaning given in AS
14.30.350". There being NO OBJECTION, the language was
deleted.

Co-Chair Williams expressed his desire to hear more
testimony from the school districts affected by the change.
He encouraged the Department to address the proposed costs
associated with the fiscal note.

HB 171 was HELD in Committee for further consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:33 P.M.