

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 28, 2001  
10:10 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Fred Dyson, Chair  
Representative Peggy Wilson, Vice Chair  
Representative John Coghill  
Representative Gary Stevens  
Representative Vic Kohring  
Representative Sharon Cissna  
Representative Reggie Joule

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CS FOR SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 149(HES)  
"An Act relating to reemployment of retired teachers, to eligibility for major medical insurance coverage for beneficiaries of the teachers' retirement system, and to teacher certificates; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HCS CSSSSB 149(HES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS ACTION**

BILL: SB 149

SHORT TITLE:TEACHER INCENTIVES

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) LEMAN

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page		Action
03/19/01	0717	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/19/01	0717	(S)	HES, FIN
03/30/01	0880	(S)	SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE INTRODUCED-REFERRALS
03/30/01	0880	(S)	HES, FIN
03/30/01	0880	(S)	COSPONSOR(S): DAVIS
04/02/01		(S)	HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/02/01		(S)	Heard & Held MINUTE(HES)

04/20/01		(S)	HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/20/01		(S)	Moved CS(HES) Out of Committee MINUTE(HES)
04/24/01	1235	(S)	HES RPT CS 4DP NEW TITLE
04/24/01	1235	(S)	DP: LEMAN, WILKEN, WARD, DAVIS
04/24/01	1236	(S)	FN1: (ADM)
04/24/01	1236	(S)	FN2: ZERO(EED)
04/25/01	1257	(S)	FIN RPT CS(HES) 9DP
04/25/01	1258	(S)	DP: DONLEY, KELLY, GREEN, AUSTERMAN,
04/25/01	1258	(S)	HOFFMAN, OLSON, WILKEN, LEMAN, WARD;
04/25/01	1258	(S)	FN1: (ADM)
04/25/01	1258	(S)	FN2: ZERO(EED)
04/25/01		(S)	FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
04/25/01		(S)	Moved CS(FIN) Out of Committee
04/26/01	1277	(S)	RULES TO CALENDAR 4/26/01
04/26/01	1282	(S)	READ THE SECOND TIME
04/26/01	1282	(S)	HES CS ADOPTED UNAN CONSENT
04/26/01	1282	(S)	ADVANCED TO THIRD READING UNAN CONSENT
04/26/01	1282	(S)	READ THE THIRD TIME CSSSSB 149(HES)
04/26/01	1283	(S)	PASSED Y20 N-
04/26/01	1283	(S)	EFFECTIVE DATE(S) SAME AS PASSAGE
04/26/01	1289	(S)	TRANSMITTED TO (H)
04/26/01	1289	(S)	VERSION: CSSSSB 149(HES)
04/26/01		(S)	RLS AT 10:45 AM FAHRENKAMP 203
04/26/01		(S)	MINUTE(RLS)
04/27/01	1263	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/27/01	1263	(H)	HES, FIN
04/27/01	1288	(H)	CROSS SPONSOR(S): WILSON, STEVENS
04/28/01		(H)	HES AT 10:00 AM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SENATOR LOREN LEMAN  
Alaska State Legislature  
Capitol Building, Room 516

Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as sponsor of SB 149.

BRUCE JOHNSON, Deputy Commissioner of Education  
Office of the Commissioner

Department of Education and Early Development  
801 10th Street

Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 149.

GUY BELL, Director

Division of Retirement & Benefits  
Department of Administration

PO Box 110203

Juneau, Alaska 99811

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 149.

CYNTHIA MARTIN, Staff

to Representative Peggy Wilson

Alaska State Legislature

Capitol Building, Room 409

Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions pertaining to Amendment  
1 to SB 149.

MELISSA HILL

(No address provided)

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 149.

DEBBIE OSSIANDER, Member

Anchorage School Board

PO Box 670772

Chugiak, Alaska 99567

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 149.

PAUL ROETMAN, Staff

to Senator Loren Leman

Alaska State Legislature

Capitol Building, Room 516

Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on behalf of the sponsor, Senator  
Loren Leman, on SB 149.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

TAPE 01-52, SIDE A

Number 0001

CHAIR FRED DYSON called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Representatives Dyson, Wilson, Coghill, Stevens, Cissna, and Joule were present at the call to order. Representative Kohring arrived as the meeting was in progress.

SB 149-TEACHER INCENTIVES

[Contains discussion of HB 242]

Number 0052

CHAIR DYSON announced that the first order of business would be CS FOR SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 149(HES), "An Act relating to reemployment of retired teachers, to eligibility for major medical insurance coverage for beneficiaries of the teachers' retirement system, and to teacher certificates; and providing for an effective date."

SENATOR LOREN LEMAN, Alaska State Legislature, came forth as sponsor of SB 149. He stated that [the committee] will probably hear testimony about the challenges that school districts have had this year in filling "slots" for teachers. This bill will make it easier to rehire retired teachers and provide incentives that, he believes, will increase the pool of available applicants. He stated that this started out as legislation that reached farther and provided more incentives; however, to reduce the fiscal note and increase the chances of passage, some of those provisions were "stripped" out. He explained the three remaining provisions: one is the simpler recognition of out-of-state credentials, the second is an incentive for a retired teacher to return to employment, and the third is improved medical coverage. He noted that this received strong support in the Senate.

CHAIR DYSON asked what has been the main criticism of the bill, and who has opposed it.

SENATOR LEMAN responded that there has been no criticism of the bill other than by some people who have said they would like the bill to reach some of the areas that were initially included.

CHAIR DYSON stated that he understands there is a somewhat similar bill - HB 242. He asked Senator Leman if he anticipates that there will be a compromise between these bills.

SENATOR LEMAN remarked that he is not familiar with HB 242. He said he has been told there is some overlap.

Number 0315

REPRESENTATIVE JOULE asked Senator Leman if he has seen the amendment [the committee is proposing].

SENATOR LEMAN answered that he is aware of the amendment and has no objection to it.

BRUCE JOHNSON, Deputy Commissioner of Education, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), came forth and stated that the EED supports this concept and thinks it will add to the tools allowing for school districts to have the best-qualified people in front of [Alaska's] children.

REPRESENTATIVE JOULE asked Mr. Johnson [how he feels about the amendment].

MR. JOHNSON responded that he had just received the amendment and believes that this is attempting to provide a one-year certificate to individuals who have held a certificate in Alaska at one point in time, but have allowed it to lapse.

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. Johnson if he sees that as being a problem.

MR. JOHNSON answered no, that it appears to him that the person would have to meet all the current requirements within that one year, and would be fingerprinted ahead of time.

Number 0428

GUY BELL, Directory, Division of Retirement & Benefits, Department of Administration, came forth in support of SB 149. He stated that [the Division of Retirement & Benefits] does not foresee any administrative problems. He noted that there is a small fiscal note that would address education, ensure that people know the choices being offered on their "retiree return piece," and develop some educational materials.

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. Bell if he sees any problem with the amendment.

MR. BELL responded that [the Division of Retirement & Benefits] is not involved with the issue associated with the amendment. He added that HB 242 has equivalent sections to SB 149 relating to teachers' retirement. House Bill 242 includes public employees as well. He stated that there are very small differences between the teacher provisions in SB 149 and in HB 242.

Number 0600

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON made a motion to adopt Amendment 1, 22-LS0769\T.1, Cramer, 4/27/01, which read:

Page 1, line 14:

Delete "a new section"  
Insert "new sections"

Page 3, following line 3:

Insert a new section to read:

**"Sec. 14.20.017. Grace period for issuance of regular teacher certificates to previously certificated teachers.** (a) The

department shall issue a teacher certificate as described in AS 14.20.020, subject to revocation, to a teacher who meets the requirements of this section. To be eligible for a revocable teacher certificate under this section, a person shall

(1) have held a valid teacher certificate issued under AS 14.20.020 that expired more than 12 months before the teacher applied for a certificate under this section;

(2) have paid the fee required by the department under AS 14.20.020(c).

(b) A revocable teacher certificate issued under this section is valid for one year, during which the teacher shall complete any requirements for the issuance of a regular teacher certificate under AS 14.20.020 that the teacher has not already met. The department shall expedite the procedures required of teachers holding revocable teacher certificates who are seeking certification under AS 14.20.020.

(c) A teacher holding a revocable teacher certificate under this section who previously passed the competency examination designated by the board under AS 14.20.020(i) is not required

to retake the examination before being eligible for a regular certificate under AS 14.20.020. A teacher holding a revocable teacher certificate who did not previously take or pass the competency examination shall take and pass the examination within one year after the date the revocable teacher certificate was issued. If the teacher does not pass the examination, the department shall immediately revoke the revocable teacher certificate.

(d) A teacher holding a revocable teacher certificate under this section may not receive a teacher certificate issued under AS 14.20.020 until the teacher submits fingerprints to the department to be used for a criminal history background check and the teacher has been found by the department to be suitable for employment as a teacher under AS 14.20.020(f).

(e) The revocable teacher certificate issued under this section must contain the same endorsements as those on the teacher's expired teacher certificate.

(f) Employment on the basis of a revocable teacher certificate issued under this section shall be considered in determining whether a teacher qualifies for tenure under AS 14.20.150.

(g) A revocable teacher certificate and any endorsements issued under this section are valid for one year and may not be renewed under this section. The department may not issue a provisional certificate or a temporary certificate to a teacher who has held a teacher certificate issued under this section."

There being no objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON explained that Amendment 1 addresses the fact that there are teachers who may have let their certification lapsed.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS asked if this bill primarily discusses retired teachers, or if it includes other [employees].

CYNTHIA MARTIN, Staff to Representative Peggy Wilson, Alaska State Legislature, came forth and replied that if (the Department of Education and Early Development) would entertain a larger discussion, it could pertain to administrators as well.

Number -742

MELISSA HILL testified via teleconference. She stated that she has gathered some comments from some of the school districts at the job fair [in Anchorage]. She read the following to the committee:

Rich Carlson, assistant superintendent, Lower Yukon [School District]: "The situation is that at this point any ... chance that we can get the legislature to pass what ... would benefit education would assist us. The situation has passed a nervous state and is critical, and it can only get worse. School districts should be determining who is qualified, and not the certification office. These roadblocks are hindering us from certifying qualified teachers, and it does not benefit our children."

Kim Langton, Superintendent, Iditarod [Area School District]: "This is drastically worse than last year. I met with a woman who had 29 years of experience in special education and would make [\$]8,000 more in Texas."

Gary Baldwin (ph), Lower Kuskokwim [School District]: "We need to be recognizing out-of-state certification. We spend more money and time at the beginning of the year trying to get good people emergency certificates; some work as substitutes for up to three months with no benefits only to qualify for an emergency certificate."

Gary Lindman (ph), Personnel Director, North Slope [Borough School District]: "Because of the national (indisc.) it is critical that Alaska allows us to build an incentive that would allow us to be more competitive with the Lower 48. ... We still are going to have to address the issue of salary to compete with the Lower 48."

Todd Syverson, Assistant Superintendent, Kenai [Peninsula Borough School District]: "Last year we had 75 teachers fill in teaching waivers without benefits in the process of receiving (indisc.) certification."

CHAIR DYSON asked Ms. Hill if she has any negative comments.

MS. HILL stated, "We are in favor of SB 149. ... I think the message coming from the people I am working with is that this needs to go as soon as possible."

CHAIR DYSON asked Ms. Hill whom she represents.

MS. HILL answered that she represents the 53 school districts in Alaska.

Number 0954

DEBBIE OSSIANDER, Member, Anchorage School Board [ASB], testified via teleconference in support of SB 149. She stated that this bill particularly addresses some legislative priorities [the ASB] has had, and [the ASB] particularly appreciates the temporary certificate and retirement provisions.

Number 1022

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON moved to report CSSSSB 149(HES), as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS stated that he is not clear whether people who have received a RIF (reduction in force) from the system would be allowed to return.

PAUL ROETMAN, Staff to Senator Loren Leman, Alaska State Legislature, came forth on behalf of the sponsor of SB 149, and responded that teachers, principals, or administrators who have been in a RIP (Retirement Incentive Program) are eligible for this election under subsection 3(c).

Number 1085

REPRESENTATIVE KOHRING objected [to the moving of the bill]. He stated that he likes the concept of recognizing teachers' credentials and the retirement-benefits election option that would allow for retirement-benefit payments to be suspended. However, he said he is concerned about increasing the benefits because he is not sure that putting more money into the public education system is necessarily going to equate to a better system. He stated that in his district, the average salary-and-benefit package is over \$60,000 a year. He remarked that he relates his arguments to the private sector and the fact that

there are some very happy teachers who are doing a very good job in the private system. For example, at Anchorage Baptist Temple there was a teacher he knew who was making about \$1,500 a month and was very happy. He added that he supports Representative Stevens' legislation that puts more money into the foundation formula under the condition that it is monies that are directed toward offsetting the effects of inflation.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON commented that she disagrees with Representative Kohring. She said this is a real and critical problem, and in the next few years it will be so massive that [Alaska] is going to be in dire straits to find teachers. She stated that teachers' pay will have to increase, because [Alaska's] pay will not even come close to the Lower 48's.

Number 1275.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS stated that he does respect what Representative Kohring has said, but [Alaska] is facing an enormous problem in the near future. He said he knows people who have retired after 20 years, moved to Oregon or Washington. and are teaching down there. He stated that this allows for people to take their retirement after 20 years and come back [to Alaska] and teach, which will attract a large number of professionals.

REPRESENTATIVE KOHRING removed his objection.

CHAIR DYSON announced that there being no further objection, HCS CSSSSB 149(HES) was moved from the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.