

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

May 7, 2002  
3:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Vic Kohring

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Representative Gretchen Guess

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING

Board of Education and Early Development

Roger Chan

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 33  
Relating to Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.

- MOVED SCR 33 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS ACTION**

BILL: SCR 33

SHORT TITLE: OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

SPONSOR(S): RLS BY REQUEST

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page		Action
04/25/02	2951	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

04/25/02	2951	(S)	STA
04/30/02		(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 211
04/30/02		(S)	Moved Out of Committee
04/30/02		(S)	MINUTE(STA)
05/01/02	3071	(S)	STA RPT 3DP
05/01/02	3071	(S)	DP: THERRIAULT, PHILLIPS, STEVENS
05/01/02	3071	(S)	FN1: ZERO(S.STA)
05/02/02		(S)	RLS AT 10:30 AM FAHRENKAMP 203
05/02/02		(S)	-- Time Change --
05/02/02		(S)	MINUTE(RLS)
05/06/02	3183	(S)	RULES TO CALENDAR 5/6/02
05/06/02	3186	(S)	READ THE SECOND TIME
05/06/02	3187	(S)	PASSED Y19 N- E1
05/06/02	3189	(S)	TRANSMITTED TO (H)
05/06/02	3189	(S)	VERSION: SCR 33
05/07/02	3415	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/07/02	3415	(H)	HES
05/07/02		(H)	HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

ROGER CHAN, Appointee  
to the Board of Education and Early Development  
VECO Corporation  
3601 C Street, Suite 1000  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503  
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as Appointee to the Board of  
Education and Early Development.

REPRESENTATIVE LESIL MCGUIRE,  
Alaska State Legislature  
Capitol Building, Room 418  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SCR 33 on behalf of the Senate  
Rules Committee, sponsor.

KIM SEXTON, Co-President  
National Ovarian Cancer Coalition (NOCC) - Alaska Division  
PO Box 90162  
Anchorage, Alaska 99509-0162  
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SCR 33.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

TAPE 02-40, SIDE A  
Number 0001

CHAIR FRED DYSON called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Representatives Dyson, Wilson, Stevens, and Cissna were present at the call to order. Representatives Coghill and Joule arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING

Board of Education and Early Development

CHAIR DYSON announced the first order of business would be the confirmation hearing for the appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development.

Number 0100

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. Chan to tell the committee why he is interested in serving in this capacity.

Number 0145

ROGER CHAN, Appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, testified via teleconference. He told the committee that he was vice chair of the governor's task force in education a little over a year ago and got some insight into the educational process and its dynamics. He enjoyed that, but said he was more interested because he has three young daughters who are in the Anchorage School District. He noted that he has 25 years of business experience and that was something of value to the task force and can be valuable to the board.

Number 0223

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS asked Mr. Chan for his thoughts on the foundation formula and how it should be used.

Number 0250

MR. CHAN replied that it has been awhile since he looked at it, but he remembered that it looked like there was room for some adjustments to the formula. The task force recommended some increases; he knows there are some regional dynamics, and he is interested in getting more involved in that.

Number 0308

CHAIR DYSON said there are challenges in delivering education in rural Alaska. He pointed out that Alaska has one of the stronger home school protection laws and has done more to encourage charter schools. There are amazing things going on with distance delivery in the cyberschools. He asked Mr. Chan to comment on his view of these alternative education options in Alaska.

Number 0400

MR. CHAN indicated that he certainly wasn't familiar with all of them. He said they seem to play a role for parents who want an alternative to public school education, and he doesn't have a problem with parents' wanting to explore other routes for educating their kids. He said, "We need to make sure that we have a strong public education that we can deliver to the parents and children of the state." But, if parents choose to do something different and can get the quality of education they want, then he said he thinks that is fine.

CHAIR DYSON pointed out that some of the alternatives do receive public funding.

MR. CHAN noted that it is a matter of getting comfortable with the different delivery systems and different curriculums being taught. He commented that there is room for a lot of the alternatives. He told the committee that he sees the school system as generating a product. That product is the education that the students demonstrate when they take tests, when they apply for jobs, and when they write a letter to the editor. He indicated that he thinks that if the educational system can deliver students who can perform well in all those areas, then the state needs to support them.

MR. CHAN referred to comments from the Chair and said he has been watching the high stakes testing issue, but noted he doesn't know enough about the different testing methodologies, the scoring, and how it is tabulated. He offered that his perspective is it's appropriate to benchmark the types of education that the schools are delivering to the kids, and if testing is the way to do that, it's appropriate, but it's dangerous to read too much into it. He pointed out that there are schools in areas that have different challenges to deliver the curriculum to the children, and all those things need to be accommodated, including maybe potentially adjusting test scores

in those areas. He commented that he would hate to be the person to deny someone a high school education and limit him/her for life because he/she happened to be in a challenged area or from a sociological standpoint having his/her parents not being focused or committed to an education for their children. He said those things are all problematic and open for a lot of debate, and "we should be open to finding solutions that accommodate kids in those situations."

Number 0620

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. Chan what he thinks should be done about a kid in a school that's not doing well or comes from a social or economic background that makes the kid disadvantaged.

MR. CHAN replied that he thinks what the task force recommended and what he suggested was, "We attribute extra dollars to those areas because these children are having a difficult time competing. But I don't think that's from a testing standpoint that we should say that these students [should] be allowed to graduate necessarily if they can't compete with a school in Anchorage, for example." He compared it to saying, Can you have a person who's going to college in a junior college compete with a Harvard graduate with the same curriculum? He said he thinks there are different expectations about what that student is able to do, even though they both have a four-year college degree. There needs to be some understanding of that, whatever "that" is.

CHAIR DYSON asked if he was saying that if the kid can't pass the test for whatever reason, that he should be given a diploma that doesn't mean anything.

Number 0723

MR. CHAN answered no, he is saying, "That what we should do is we should make sure that when we administer the test to this student, that he's prepared to take it, number one. But I'm saying that if these students are in a Bush village and they don't have the teacher they need, for whatever reason (indisc.), that that should somehow enter into the equation."

CHAIR DYSON agreed that that should be picked up on before the student gets to graduation.

MR. CHAN reported that it has been represented to him that there are students in schools who don't have teachers who are

qualified to teach, and that's why the task force made some of its recommendations.

Number 0779

REPRESENTATIVE STEVENS asked Mr. Chan to comment about improving teacher recruitment and teacher retention.

MR. CHAN echoed some of the things that the task force recommended. Forgiveness of the teachers' loans as an incentive and competitive compensation needs to be looked at. He indicated that there was lots of debate in the task force about what that meant. The task force recommended some salary increases because the task force findings were that the teachers weren't being compensated necessarily at the right level. There are other things that can be done, he noted. Teacher education is an issue; increasing teacher qualifications through additional education is an issue, and all of those things were addressed in the task force findings. He suggested spending additional resources on them.

Number 0873

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA commented that she has worked with people who have skills that can't be tested. She fears putting huge attention on a test that puts 12 year's worth of work on it and saying that's really a test of what kids can or cannot do. She asked if he had a way to reframe that to fit both cases.

Number 0959

MR. CHAN said he believes that every child who graduates through the Alaska school system should be able to pass a basic test. Children should be able to read, write, do arithmetic, have a conversation, and put their thoughts together logically. He admitted that he is a terrible tester. He had many tests through all of his schooling and never thought that testing was the most relevant gauge of his intelligence. He agreed that there is room for testing, and testing needs to be done. His spin on it is that testing should be more a gauge on how well the schools are doing, as opposed to how well the students are doing. If the students are doing well, it means that the schools are doing well, and that's his focus on testing. He thinks it is really unfortunate to have any student not be able to get a high school diploma because he/she happened to flunk calculus, if that's part of the exit exam. He has more of a compassionate concern for the student who's raised in a

difficult situation in which there hasn't been a lot of focus on education. He thinks the school district should put more money into those locations so those students don't get lost.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON commented:

You've covered a lot of territory that completely makes sense. We can't expect the students to graduate and be able to pass all the tests if we haven't done our job as schools to prepare them. In some areas, ... the only people that'll go out in some areas are brand new teachers, that don't have a job somewhere else, so they go there for their first couple years, make their mistakes, learn by them, and move on. Obviously, we've got ... first year teachers that are very good teachers too. But I think there's a lot of in-service that needs to be done, because we are all at once changing gears in the middle of the stream, and we have teachers out there that really don't know for sure how to teach to have children understand this switch that's happening. I think that needs to be, and unfortunately, we're not giving the schools enough money to make sure that the teachers and the schools have the equipment they need, the in-service that they need, ... so that the students can do this. I've got a feeling we're going to have some schools that are going to be coming up short because of it. The things that you've said tells me that you're kind of on the same track.

MR. CHAN replied that he has a lot of compassion for kids in a situation who don't have all the opportunities somebody in Anchorage would have. He said he thinks that the school district has an obligation to bring those kids up to speed, and whatever that takes needs to be evaluated. There needs to be a formula to guarantee their success. He reiterated that the focus for testing is not how well the students are doing, but how well the school district is doing in delivering its services. That has to his focus about testing.

CHAIR DYSON announced that Mr. Chan's name would be forwarded for confirmation [to the joint session of the House and Senate].

SCR 33 - OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

CHAIR DYSON announced that the next order of business would be SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 33, Relating to Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.

Number 1234

REPRESENTATIVE LESIL MCGUIRE, Alaska State Legislature, presented SCR 33 on behalf of the Senate Rules Committee, sponsor. She told the committee that SCR 33 will designate September as Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month in the state of Alaska. She said she thinks this is one of the more important concurrent resolutions that the legislature could do. The reason why is ovarian cancer is one of those silent, deadly killers that many women don't even know about. She shared that a friend's mother died from ovarian cancer, and the sad part about it is it could have been detected earlier, and her survival rate would have been 93 percent.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGUIRE noted that one of the goals of this resolution is to make members of the community aware. Early detection is the key to survival. She shared some statistics. In the United States, more women die of ovarian cancer each year than of cervical and endometrial cancers combined. The American Cancer Society reports that ovarian cancer accounts for four percent of all cancers among women and ranks fifth as a cause of death. The American Cancer Society predicts that approximately 23,000 new cases of ovarian cancer will be diagnosed yearly with 13,000 deaths annually. Early detection is key to survival; if the cancer is diagnosed while confined to the ovary, the five-year survival rate reaches 93 percent on average. The incidence of advanced stage ovarian cancer is increasing due to the vague symptoms and the lack of a screening test for early detection.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGUIRE said often the symptoms are a stomachache, fatigue, things associated with stress, or the flu, so a lot of women don't pick up on it. She suggested that this is just a step this legislature can take to send that message.

Number 1379

KIM SEXTON, Co-President, National Ovarian Cancer Coalition (NOCC) - Alaska Division, testified via teleconference. She told the committee that she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2000. She noted she had been tested for diabetes and thyroid problems and when that came back fine, the doctor told her that her symptoms were probably just stress. Two months later she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She hadn't known beforehand

that she had a family history of it, otherwise, she would have been more aware, but that only accounts for 10 percent of the cases.

MS. SEXTON commented that she wants the public to be aware of the symptoms and what they can do, and not let the health care providers diagnose irritable bowel syndrome or stress or things like that.

Number 1436

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON referred to the Prostrate Specific Antigen (PSA) test for men and asked Ms. Sexton if there is any research that is getting close to being able to detect some kind of cancers like that in women.

MS. SEXTON replied that there are some studies being done with a test similar to the prostate test. It is a simple blood test and is proving to be about 95 percent accurate in diagnosing ovarian cancer. It is still in clinical trials and will be several years before it will be available to the public. Who will get it and how often still will need to be decided. Right now all that's available is the routine pelvic exam. If that shows anything, a trans-vaginal ultrasound is done. If that shows anything, a CA-125 blood test can be done, which is a tumor marker test, but it's only about 50 percent accurate.

Number 1530

REPRESENTATIVE COGHILL asked if this resolution would coincide with work that's being done on breast cancer.

MS. SEXTON replied that they're hoping it will because there is a link between ovarian cancer and breast cancer. Women who have had breast cancer are at increased risk for ovarian cancer, and women who have had ovarian cancer are at an increased risk for breast cancer.

REPRESENTATIVE COGHILL said that he was asking about the information highway that breast cancer has already forged out and wondered if this could be tied with any of the awareness projects that they have put together.

MS. SEXTON answered that they try to let people know there is that link, but right now there are no organizations that are working together on this. It doesn't look like there is going

to be that cooperation. In response to Representative Coghill, she indicated that breast cancer awareness month is October.

Number 1606

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON moved to report SCR 33 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying [zero] fiscal notes. There being no objection, SCR 33 was reported out of 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 3:30 p.m.