

MINUTES
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
April 20, 2001
9:22 A.M.

TAPES

SFC-01 # 80, Side A
SFC 01 # 80, Side B

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Pete Kelly convened the meeting at approximately 9:22 A.M.

PRESENT

Senator Dave Donley, Co-Chair
Senator Pete Kelly, Co-Chair
Senator Jerry Ward, Vice Chair
Senator Loren Leman
Senator Lyda Green
Senator Gary Wilken
Senator Alan Austerman
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Donald Olson

Also Attending:

REPRESENTATIVE HUGH FATE; KRISTOPHER KNAUSS, Staff, Senator Pete Kelly; BRUCE JOHNSON, Deputy Commissioner of Education, Department of Education & Early Development; WENDY REDMAN, Vice President, Statewide Programs, University of Alaska, Vice-President; CHARLES MASON, CEO, North Star School District; CATHERINE REARDON, Director, Division of Occupational Licensing, Department of Community and Economic Development.

Attending via Teleconference:

Dr. Robinson

SUMMARY INFORMATION

SB 86-TEACHER EMPLOYMENT & SUBJECT EXPERTISE

A committee substitute was reported from Committee.

SB 145-REGIONAL & VILLAGE PUB.SAFETY OFFICERS

A committee substitute was reported from Committee.

HB 81-DENTISTS/DENTAL HYGIENISTS & ASSISTANTS

The bill was discussed and held in Committee.

#SB145

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 145(JUD)

"An Act relating to regional and village public safety officers; relating to the expansion of the village public safety officer program to include the provision of probation and parole supervision services; and relating to retirement benefits for village public safety officers."

Senator Green moved to report work draft for SB 145, #22,LS0584\X, Cramer, 4/18/01, out of Committee with individual recommendations and with the accompanying fiscal notes.

There being no objection, CS SB 145 (FIN) MOVED from Committee with a new zero note by Department of Administration, and note #1 by Department of Public Safety and #2 by Department of Corrections.

#SB86

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 86(HES)

"An Act relating to employment of teachers who have subject-matter expertise; and providing for an effective date."

Co-Chair Kelly explained that changes had been made in the committee substitute from the Senate Health Education and Social Services Committee version of the legislation.

Senator Green moved to adopt the work draft, #22-LS0539\S, Cramer, 4/19/01, as the version before the Committee. There being no objection, it was ADOPTED as a working draft.

Co-Chair Kelly explained that Alaska is facing a shortage of competent teachers that can provide quality education for youth. SB 86 would expand the application pool by including those with subject matter experience and expertise to obtain a teaching certificate.

Under the legislation, local school districts would have the

authority to hire persons holding at least a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution. Applicants must major or minor in the area they wish to teach and have at least five years work experience in their subject matter.

Co-Chair Kelly continued, SB 86 would implement a limited teaching certificate for those subject matter teachers. Subject matter teachers are authorized to teach in a classroom pending they enroll in a post-baccalaureate teaching program. Once the program is completed, subject matter educators are qualified for a regular teaching certificate. The bill would implement safeguards that require subject matter teachers to submit fingerprints and pay fees for a criminal history background check so that the Department can deem applicants suitable for employment.

KRISTOPHER KNAUSS, Staff, Senator Pete Kelly, interjected that version "S" would require that the curriculum be completed within a two-year span.

Co-Chair Kelly explained the difference between the "S" version and the HESS version. The "S" version would require the courses first and then that person would be able to teach. He hoped that this could bring new blood into the system. He added that the proposed version would bring flexibility into the structure.

BRUCE JOHNSON, Deputy Commissioner of Education, Department of Education & Early Development, commented that the Department does support the committee substitute. He agreed that the legislation does "think outside the envelope" as a means to get teachers into the classroom. A limitation exists in that the teachers would only be able to teach subjects in their field, a provision which will be limiting.

WENDY REDMAN, Vice President, Statewide Programs, University of Alaska, Vice-President, commented that the legislation will work well for the University with the addition of a couple small amendments.

Amendment #1: #22-LS0539\S.2, Cramer, 4/19/01 [Copy on File].

Senator Olson moved to adopt

Co-Chair Kelly OBJECTED for discussion purposes.

Senator Olson explained that Amendment #1 would address the significant shortfall of teachers in the districts which he represents.

CHARLES MASON, CEO, North Star School District, spoke to the amendment. Rural Alaska has always had a shortage of good teachers. Each year, it is difficult to fill all open slots. The State needs to do all that it can to increase the pool of applicants who can address the current shortage. Amendment #1 would provide for retired teachers to return.

Senator Green stated that she did not object to that concept, however, she did not want to see it limited to certain districts. She emphasized that this is a statewide problem, not just rural. Senator Green noted that she would not support an "advantage", suggesting that district wars would result. She noted a friendly amendment to a concept recommended by Senator Leman.

Co-Chair Kelly explained that Amendment #1 resulted from discussion with Senator Olson. He feared that the larger districts, if offered the opportunity to rehire retired people, would do it, which would not bring new people into the system. He believed that the amendment would address needs in rural Alaska where the problem is more acute.

Senator Green respectfully disagreed and noted that she could not support the concept of the amendment. She reiterated that there have been many requests in the urban districts.

Co-Chair Kelly stressed that the shortage in the rural areas is much more acute.

Senator Wilken commented that he supported SB 86 as it was written. With the amendment, the Committee begins to add variables. He thought that the amendment should be the subject of its own bill.

Co-Chair Kelly pointed out that Senator Leman does have a bill currently resting in Senator Green's Committee.

Senator Olson addressed comments by Senator Green, reiterating the intensity of the need in rural Alaska. The retired teachers are the only ones "semi-available".

Senator Austerman aligned his comments with Senator Wilken. He asked if the Committee would see the "other" bill this year.

Senator Green noted that bill was scheduled for this afternoon's meeting; she assumed it would be moved out of Committee.

Senator Leman explained that Senator Olson had approached him regarding this concern. He agreed with Senator Green that the

problem is not just a rural issue.

Co-Chair Kelly concurred that the issue is "hot". He agreed that the question is which vehicle should be used to address the concern.

Senator Olson respectfully withdrew Amendment #1. There being no objection, it was WITHDRAWN.

Senator Green offered a motion to report CS SB 86 (FIN) out of Committee with individual recommendations and with the accompanying fiscal note. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

CS SB 86 (FIN) MOVED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with fiscal note #1 by Department of Education & Early Development.

#HB81

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 81(FIN)

"An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Dental Examiners; relating to the Board of Dental Examiners and regulation of the practice of dentistry; and relating to dental hygienists and dental assistants."

REPRESENTATIVE HUGH FATE, sponsor, introduced HB 81. He stated that until Title 8 of the Alaska Statutes (AS), the Board of Dental Examiners would terminate on June 30, 2001. A report released by the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee (LBA) recommended that the Legislature extend the Board's date to June 30, 2005, which is the focus of HB 81. He claimed that the regulation and licensing of qualified dentists and hygienists would benefit the public's safety and welfare.

Representative Fate added that HB 81 also addresses issues of concern to the Dental Board of Examiners and the Alaska Dental Society. HB 81 attempts to clear up some duplicate and confusing language, reduces paperwork, expands the definition of dentistry, addresses dental testing and equivalency options, Board appointments and increases the allowable civil fine penalty that the Board can impose.

CATHERINE REARDON, Director, Division of Occupational Licensing, Department of Community and Economic Development, addressed the statute changes. She added that there are items in the bill that were requested by the Dental Society.

Representative Fate offered to go through the statute changes. He detailed the changes in version B of the bill. [Copy on File].

In response to Co-Chair Kelly, Representative Fate explained that the State of Alaska had signed onto the Central Licensing Agency regional examining board. Throughout the United States, there are regional examining boards and each of those boards have different standards.

Senator Wilken asked if the legislation would affect the ability of smaller communities from hiring traveling dentists on a part-time basis.

Representative Fate did not believe that the bill would address that concern. There are public health circumstances requiring them to have a license to practice. There are areas that they could practice, however, it would not be possible without a waiver for a private practitioner.

Ms. Reardon added that the process of obtaining an Alaska license as a dentist is complete and extensive and that this bill does not address that. The only people who are exempt from the licensure are those that work for the U.S. Public Health Service as federal dentists. She added that the addition of the Central Regional test to the Western Regional test would increase the pool of dentists who can move into Alaska without having to retake their boards. That will make Alaska a more receptive State.

Representative Fate noted that there have been retired dentist returning to the State to work part-time. The more dentists that are licensed in the State, the more likely that there will be dentists working on a part time basis.

Senator Wilken referenced Page 3, Line 22 and 27, asked what would stop an agency from hiring part-time service.

Representative Fate responded that if the person was a new licensed dentist, nothing would stop them from working.

Ms. Reardon explained that the bill would not make it easier or more difficult for people in that situation. There are several other requirements besides passing the test. One of those requirements is engaged in continuous active clinical practice averaging at least 20 hours a week for each of the five years immediately preceding the application.

Senator Wilken believed that there appears to be a very real need for temporary dentists in the more remote areas. He asked if the

bill could be held over for further consideration.

Senator Olson commented on the dental needs of the low-income rural families. He stressed the need for qualified dentists being sent to the village areas.

Senator Green noted the number of doctors and dentists doing mission work all over the world, while Alaska still is not able to get our own needs meet.

Co-Chair Donley voiced his appreciation to Representative Fate for sponsoring the bill. He noted his concern with the fiscal note. He thought he had requested that the agencies not use numerical abbreviations for other fund sources and instead list everything in layman terms.

Ms. Reardon clarified that message had not gotten through to the Department. She indicated that she could change the language.

Senator Lemman referenced Section 4.

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Senator Lemman commented that the condition for dental hygienists is worse than it is for dentists.

Representative Fate acknowledged that to be true.

Senator Austerman asked if Representative Fate would favor changing "shall" to "may".

Representative Fate replied that he had no objections to that change.

Senator Lemman moved to adopt Amendment #1, Page 2, Line 16, deleting "shall" and inserting "may". There being no objection, it was ADOPTED.

Senator Lemman moved to adopt Amendment #2, Page 6, Line 24, deleting "relating" and inserting "related". There being no objection, it was ADOPTED.

DR. ROBINSON, [Testified via Teleconference], offered to answer questions of the Committee. He commented that the doctors have the same concerns regarding health care providers and patient access. The doctors have been working two years with the Division of

Medical Assistance and have made progress. The intent of the bill is to make more acceptable standards so that a person that has taken the proper exams could apply for a license and get one.

Co-Chair Kelly stated that HB 81 would be HELD in Committee for further consideration.

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ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Pete Kelly adjourned the meeting at 10:30 A.M.