

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

March 19, 2001

1:36 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lyda Green, Chair
Senator Loren Leman, Vice Chair
Senator Gary Wilken
Senator Jerry Ward
Senator Bettye Davis

MEMBERS ABSENT

All Members Present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 86

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

EDUCATION FUNDING TASK FORCE PRESENTATION

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

SB 86 - See HESS minutes dated 3/16/01

WITNESS REGISTER

Mr. Bob Weinstein, Chair
Education Funding Task Force
Office of the Governor
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

POSITION STATEMENT: Education Task Force Presenter

Mr. Roger Chan, Vice-Chair
Education Funding Task Force
Office of the Governor
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

POSITION STATEMENT: Education Task Force Presenter

Mr. Darroll Hargraves
Education Funding Task Force
Office of the Governor

PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

POSITION STATEMENT: Education Task Force member - answered questions.

Mr. Roy Nageak, Sr.
Education Funding Task Force
Office of the Governor
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

POSITION STATEMENT: Stressed the need to do an area cost differential study and provide funding.

Dr. Bruce Johnson
Deputy Commissioner
Department of Education &
Early Development
801 W 10th St.
Juneau, AK 99801-1894

POSITION STATEMENT: Discussed regulations proposed by the state board of education to alleviate the shortage of teachers and discussed implementation problems associated with CSSB 86(HES).

Mr. Rich Kronberg, President
NEA-Alaska
114 2nd Street
Juneau, AK 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Asked that questions regarding CSSB 86(HES) be answered before it passes.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 01-25, SIDE A
Number 001

CHAIRWOMAN LYDA GREEN called the Senate Health, Education & Social Services Committee meeting to order at 1:36 p.m. Present were Senators Davis, Ward, Leman and Green. She asked Mr. Chan and Mr. Weinstein to present to the committee.

EDUCATION FUNDING TASK FORCE PRESENTATION

MR. BOB WEINSTEIN, Chair of the Education Funding Task Force, informed the committee he is the mayor of Ketchikan and a retired school superintendent. In December, the Governor appointed people from the education community and businesspersons to the task force for the purpose of making recommendations on education funding for a five-year period. The task force was not asked to rewrite the foundation formula. Task force members began by

reviewing reports and data related to the SB 36 report, including the adequacy study. The task force also looked at the report that came out of the education summit, in which school districts identified their needs and changes required to meet those needs.

MR. WEINSTEIN said that paramount in the task force's discussions was a simple vision: that all Alaska students could meet the high stakes standards if school districts were given appropriate financial and other tools. Task force members believe the result will be a well-educated group of young people who will be ready to work and take good paying jobs as they become available.

With regard to accountability, Mr. Weinstein thanked legislators for efforts in that arena in recent years. The task force worked with those in mind throughout its discussions. Examples include legislation passed in 1996 that improves teacher and administrator evaluation, legislation passed in 1997 that created the high school exit exam, legislation passed in 1998 that requires teacher competency testing and SB 36, which contains several accountability provisions. The Department of Education and Early Development (DOEED) was required to develop student performance standards in reading, writing and mathematics and to develop benchmark exams at designated grade levels. The quality schools portion of SB 36 not only required benchmark exams to test academic standards, it also required each school to complete a developmental profile on incoming kindergarten and first grade students. It provided for quality school initiative grants and it required school districts, over a three-year period, to devote a minimum of 70 percent of their budgets to instruction. In addition, beginning next year, school designators will be in place to identify schools as distinguished, successful, deficient or in crisis.

MR. WEINSTEIN informed the committee that after those pieces of legislation were passed, the state board of education adopted, through regulation, performance standards for reading, writing and mathematics and the benchmark and high school exit exams based on those standards. The task force's recommendations are intended to invest new education dollars in a very focused way in an effort to meet the standards that have been adopted for all school children in Alaska. He asked Mr. Chan to continue.

MR. ROGER CHAN, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for VECO Corporation in Anchorage, suggested the task force report may be more valuable in what it didn't do, rather than in what it actually does. It did not go back to the same old template for funding education and request funds from the legislature with no explanation of how those funds would be

spent. Instead, the task force took a business plan approach. He pointed to examples at the back of the report of increased costs that directly impact how education dollars are expended. He said he is proud of the task force's work product. It is data driven. All of the recommendations are "bottom up" formulas for increased funding. The central theme of the report is how to tie accountability to the expenditure of additional dollars.

MR. CHAN reviewed the report. Page 8 contains a summary of the expenditures recommended by the task force for increases in the annual funding formula. The net result in year 1 in the per student funding formula is \$164; in years 2 through 5 the increase would be relatively nominal. One of the real drivers for the business decision-making that went on within the task force was trying to figure out how to accomplish one objective, that being: how to increase the educational quality of our students in the state?

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked if the task force's recommendations are prioritized.

MR. CHAN said they are not and that no order was contemplated. He pointed out the second item calls for curriculum alignment and acquiring instructional materials consistent with the realignment. The task force estimated a cost of \$500,000 for year one and two, with costs dropping off in years 3, 4 and 5 because the task force believes curriculum alignment is a relatively short process. The task force then calculated the average price of a textbook at \$40 and multiplied that by 135,000 students for a total of \$5.4 million. The task force expects that expenditure to be made after the curriculum is aligned to get maximum benefit from that expenditure.

MR. CHAN explained that the task force then took a look at special needs students, and came up with \$5.3 million. That number was actually formula driven from the foundation formula. The task force believes that over a period of time, enough funding has been diverted from special needs students to satisfy other needs. Alaska needs to realign those percentages again.

MR. CHAN said he feels very enthusiastic about the task force's recommendation to create direct student intervention programs at a cost of \$10 million. The task force calculated that amount by estimating that 250 schools would offer instruction to one-third of all students (44,000). That expenditure should have direct consequences on students' test scores.

MR. CHAN pointed out the other recommendations included in the

task force's proposal.

- \$4 million for facilities upkeep, calculated by applying a 5 percent facilities upkeep cost to an estimate of the total cost of all facilities in the school districts. That number meets normal industry standards.
- \$9.4 million for teacher salaries. That amount does not represent an inflationary adjustment or a "catch-up" payment. It applies a 2 percent salary increase for teachers designed to keep Alaska current.

The total amount of expenditures recommended by the task force for the first year is \$34.6 million. Per student, that equals an increase in the per pupil allotment of \$164 for a total of \$4104. The second item in the recommendations is outside of the annual funding formula. Its purpose is to reward students for performing at a higher level, to develop a center of excellence, and to provide funding for schools that are having difficulties. The total cost of those items will be \$7 million. Mr. Chan explained the cost of the incentives for high performing schools was calculated at 50 schools at a cost of \$40,000. Money will be needed to coordinate these activities so a center of school excellence would have to be developed. The center would be the mechanism from which other funding within the initiative would be allocated. It will help determine whether or not the high performing schools receive additional money or whether it should be committed to low performing schools. Mr. Chan pointed out the money proposed for the high performing schools will increase from \$2 million per year in year one to \$3.6 million in year five because the assistance for low performing schools is likely to decrease.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked if that approach was modeled after another state.

MR. CHAN said he did not know the answer to that question. He summarized by saying the task force believes the conclusions it came to are the natural progression of all of the different initiatives taken by the legislature already. All of the legislation led the task force to this logical point. Now that the task force has determined what issues remain, it needs to identify funding sources. DOEED has come up with a work plan describing how the task force's recommendations could be implemented. He suggested committee members review that work plan.

Number 1123

SENATOR LEMAN noted a few things stand out in the task force's report, the first being that the task force assumed the existing delivery system is an appropriate one and should be continued. He asked if the task force discussed alternative delivery systems that are lower cost.

MR. CHAN said from his perspective, the state is on a course of action set in 1997 that put some requirements into law. That model requires one additional step - funding. The task force's discussion focused on how to take the current model to the next step.

MR. WEINSTEIN added that the focus of the task force's work was looking at what existed in terms of elementary and secondary schools. Members were aware of alternatives, which were also provided for in statute, but the task force did not focus on the latter.

SENATOR LEMAN said that is one of the things he saw as a void. He stated some of the most successful things the state has done have the added benefit of a lower cost so we should learn from and apply more of them. He said he recognizes constraints related to community size and geographical location, but he believes the benefits of those programs should be seriously considered.

MR. WEINSTEIN pointed out that one of the task force's recommendations is that funding be provided to expand the state's offerings of high school level courses to small secondary schools throughout the state via distance delivery. That is one way to address Senator Leman's concern.

SENATOR LEMAN acknowledged that he had read that recommendation. He said he supports the idea of paying the highest performing teachers something additional as he believes that would improve education in Alaska. He expressed concern that some of the ideas with the most promise get lost in the politics of education and that the task force had such a limited timeframe in which to do its work.

MR. WEINSTEIN contended the task force did not spend time on the pay for performance issue. One of its main concerns was the growing national teacher shortage and its potential impacts on Alaska. He felt the task force dealt with teacher salaries in a broader manner, keeping in mind that teacher compensation is decided by local school boards. He noted nothing would prevent a school board from instituting the idea that Senator Leman suggested.

SENATOR LEMAN maintained that the task force suggested a mechanism to provide a cash flow stream that would eventually find its way to school districts. He was suggesting that perhaps a mechanism ought to be available to inspire school districts to implement things that may revolutionize education in Alaska.

Number 1504

SENATOR WARD referred to page 12 of the executive summary of the task force report, and noted the task force recommended that funds be provided to develop a new and appropriate methodology to calculate district cost factors. The task force considers the current methodology to be flawed because it is based on expenses rather than costs, yet the task force report is based on district expenses, not costs. He asked what the task force discussed regarding area cost differentials.

MR. WEINSTEIN said that was of concern to task force members. He explained that he was involved in the McDowell Group's work prior to the passage of SB 36. Because of the short timeframe for the study, the McDowell group could not determine what it costs school districts to provide the same services.

Number 1504

SENATOR WARD questioned why the timeframe was insufficient.

MR. WEINSTEIN recalled the McDowell Group was given two or three months to make recommendations to a legislative committee.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked if that was done during the interim.

MR. DARROLL HARGRAVES, Alaska Council of School Administrators, informed the committee that the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee put out a request for bids.

MR. WEINSTEIN stated,
But again, as a marker if you will, especially for the non-personnel costs, the actual expenditures were used as a guide to the relative cost of doing business statewide under the theory that school districts typically would not spend more on fuel or electricity than they absolutely needed to. It was that kind of data that was available at that time. The adequacy study for SB 36, as well as other reviews of that, including by the McDowell Group itself apparently, is that that methodology for the reason stated is flawed

and should not be used to perpetuate the flaws into the future. One of our recommendations, which aligns with Representative Wilson's, is frankly to have a very thorough district cost factor study be done and, related to that, we recommended that the current funding floor erosion be suspended pending the completion of that district cost factor study.

SENATOR WARD commented that the task force recognized a flaw because the cost differential is based on spending, not on actual costs, yet the recommendations of the task force are to spend more money on a flawed system.

[SENATOR WILKEN arrived.]

MR. WEINSTEIN responded by saying the task force believes the system in place is in need of increased funding in order to meet some of the accountability measures that have been mandated. However, the task force is also recommending that, in short order, the district cost factor issue be reviewed so that by the legislative session next year, which would be the beginning of the second year of a five-year plan, the legislature would have the information in hand to make a decision as to whether the district cost factors currently contained in the foundation formula should or should not be revised. He suggested the information coming back might show that the district cost factors are largely aligned with current data. He noted a majority of the districts in the state, including Anchorage, Ketchikan and others, do not have the cost factor adjusted by any significant amount. Anchorage is the base and probably under any system would remain so.

SENATOR WARD asked, if the legislature is to fund this study, whether it would be wise to spend precious dollars to fund a flawed system in the meantime.

MR. CHAN told the committee that the first inclination of task force members was to tinker with the funding formula and they headed in that direction until they realized it was out of the scope of the Governor's request. The Governor asked the task force to review all of the reports that had been generated in the past, to identify needs and to rationalize those needs into dollars and apply the dollars to the areas of highest need. The task force did not intend to discriminate against any student in any area based on the funding formula. It was to determine whether intervention was appropriate in certain areas and, if so, recommend that part of the \$10 million in the funding formula be spent on intervention. For example, if districts need curriculum alignment, part of the \$500,000 should be spent on a plan to do that.

MR. CHAN said the task force painted everything with a broad brush. It looked at the total of 135,000 students in the state as having the same needs. Instead of looking at each district and tinkering with their funding formulas, the task force decided to provide the funds and let the school districts decide how to expend that money.

Number 1827

SENATOR WARD said he appreciates Mr. Chan's explanation, but when he looked at the recommendation regarding the district cost factors because the current methodology is flawed, he questioned why the task force recommended putting more money into it.

MR. CHAN said he does not believe that is what the task force did. The task force is recommending that the Governor get the funding formula in alignment. Once that is done, he assumes the funds requested by the task force will be realigned pursuant to that exercise. He felt the task force may have put the cart before the horse a little bit, but not so much in front that the carriage won't go because the task force identified what requirements need to be funded. If the cost factors are aligned, everything should work properly. The task force took that approach simply because it couldn't do anything else.

SENATOR WARD said if the funding is aligned and the area cost differential is not adjusted, then the legislature will be giving a dollar to some entity that should be getting 80 cents or \$1.20 and taking from another entity.

MR. CHAN said he does not believe dollars will be taken from anyone under this proposal; it only adds dollars.

MR. WEINSTEIN commented that the bulk of the foundation formula funds are outside of the district cost factor. He ventured to guess that were there to be a comprehensive study of the differential cost of doing business in each school district, there would be some changes but, again, it would be for a limited portion of the total distribution of dollars.

SENATOR WARD said his district just lost a teacher and that every single dollar is very important.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN acknowledged the presence of Senator Wilken and then asked the other task force members present to introduce themselves. Mr. Roy Nageak, Sr., Mr. Ernie Hall, Mr. Darroll Hargraves, Mr. Rich Kronberg and Ms. Alison Knox, who was sitting in for Mr. Carl Marrs, introduced themselves.

Number 1975

SENATOR WILKEN felt it was important to provide a history of this issue. He stated that when he worked on education reform, he found that the 1987 instruction unit formula was based on a Department of Labor market basket survey done in 1984. 19 of the voting districts of Alaska were surveyed. That information was used to establish the district cost factors. Not only was the information partial and flawed, it was adjusted by legislators at the committee table at that time, resulting in district cost factors that were suspect at best. The state lived with those for 12 years. Under education reform, the thought was to find out what the real costs were, which resulted in the McDowell Group study. The McDowell Group came back and said it couldn't tell what goes on in the school districts because using the principle that school districts should decide how to spend their money, the basics of accounting have been neglected - that being the chart of accounts. The varied accounting procedures used made a comparison impossible. That drove the McDowell Group to do a de facto cost analysis of what districts were actually spending.

SENATOR WILKEN said he believes that is what the task force is saying, that being the next step is to define what it costs to deliver education across the 53 school districts. The task force report speaks to the cost of doing a district cost factor analysis based on the cost of delivery education across the state but that is not possible until all districts use a uniform chart of accounts. He pointed out the fairest way to proceed is to set a model of the costs of education delivery that can be analyzed on a regular basis. He felt that is where the task force is trying to head so that the district cost factor issue can be resolved.

Number 2071

MR. ROY NAGEAK, SR., informed the committee that he is a member of the local school board on the North Slope. He noted that the study will determine the actual costs of delivering education and that, regarding Senator Ward's comment, more funds have been reallocated under SB 36. A new student in a rural area will receive 60 percent funding compared to an urban student. He also pointed out the formula has not been adjusted for inflation and the cost of doing business continues to rise each year. He stated he does not believe a study would take money away from school districts and reallocate it, like SB 36 did. He said it is important to provide adequate funds for districts across the state so that all children can pass the exit exam. He thanked all involved in the development of the exit exam because his district is now seeing student improvement. He expressed concern about the need for teachers in rural areas and the crisis that may occur if that need is not met soon.

Number 2232

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN informed Mr. Nageak that the Senate Finance Committee recently had an interesting discussion about the teacher shortage. Representatives from the University of Alaska said there is not a net loss of teachers in the state, but there is by location. She noted she is not sure whether the problem is a teacher shortage nationwide or whether the problem is the choice of teaching locations. She then drew the committee's attention to the Governor's directions to the task force and pointed out that committee members might have charged a task force with a different mission. She asked task force members whether they received any information regarding the 70/30 funding of school districts and the extension of waivers.

MR. WEINSTEIN said the task force discussed those issues and was aware of the 70 percent requirement.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked, "Did you see any anomalies out there or anything - you know, these guys really better get with it and bring their school in alignment or do you feel like that was more of the department's chore?"

MR. WEINSTEIN said the task force felt that was more of the department's prerogative. The task force did not focus on a given district, it dealt with the issue globally, recognizing that with rising fuel costs in the past year, those school districts that may have been borderline may need to request a waiver.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN said, regarding student loan payment waivers for teachers, whether the task force has assumed that will be paid for with general funds rather than expecting the student loan program to waive repayment.

MR. WEINSTEIN said the task force did not identify the funding source for any of its recommendations; it felt that is the job of the Governor and the Legislature.

TAPE 01-25, SIDE B

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked Mr. Chan if he could identify the single most important issue raised in the report that needs to be confronted immediately.

MR. CHAN said the task force did not establish priorities but, if one looks at the rationalization for the creation of the task force, the priority issue would be the crisis created by the number of students who have been unable to obtain passing test scores on the practice exit exam. Based on that, the highest

priority to improve scores would be the intervention expenditures.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN noted those expenditures would be for summer school, an extended school day, and tutoring. She asked if each district would prioritize which intervention measure to take.

MR. CHAN said that is correct.

Number 2309

SENATOR DAVIS thanked task force members for their work and asked what members plan to do to help get their recommendations funded and whether they had suggestions for committee members.

MR. CHAN explained that a number of task force members are in Juneau for the day and are spending time with individual legislators to explain the task force's recommendations. He said they would be happy to make their presentation to anyone who can help to provide positive funding for education in Alaska.

SENATOR DAVIS asked if task force members are talking to groups other than the legislature, particularly to the public.

MR. WEINSTEIN told the committee that a few weeks ago the task force recommendations were the subject of discussion at a Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce luncheon, which the Governor attended. In addition, the Alaska Municipal League's legislative committee will meet in Juneau next week and will discuss this subject as well. The Anchorage Assembly recently adopted a resolution supporting the recommendations. The task force views its role as being available to present and advocate for this report and other proposals which address the needs of students in Alaska.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked, in the task force's process of addressing its mission, if it identified anything that is blatantly wrong with the education system.

MR. WEINSTEIN said Alaska's education system was fairly traditional until 1997 when the Legislature and the Governor instituted a number of accountability measures. Although those measures have not revolutionized education in the state, they have helped it to evolve to the next level where every school is being asked to educate students to the same statewide standards. Before that, there was no state standardized measure to know whether students were gaining competencies in given areas. He said the task force tried to tie each of the recommendations back to accountability and student performance.

Number 2166

MR. CHAN added that the task force chose not to address issues such as inflation. It chose to take a needs-driven approach because it believed that was the only way to get bi-partisan support and essentially, at the end of the day if students are not meeting requirements, funding must be provided to eliminate the shortfall in the process. The task force is recommending that some money be spent on education and it believes the mechanisms for accountability are in place to determine whether the legislature is getting a return on its investment. That is different than traditional funding models for education.

SENATOR WILKEN said he agrees with Mayor Nageak's comments about inflation; that is the subject of another bill. However, he does not agree with the assertion that SB 36 moved money from rural to urban schools. Of the school districts that received a five percent increase in funding under SB 36, 46 percent were rural. Only one school district lost money under SB 36. He noted the floor was the result of a negotiated agreement to get SB 36 passed. Nothing has changed. Some school districts were advantaged under the old formula; this is simply a transition from one to another. The transition could be a lot faster, as it was designed to be when it left the Senate, but it was modified in the House. The floor needs to remain in place until a different system is put in place. He felt that ignoring the floor is something that should be considered because otherwise, all of the work put into SB 36 would be thrown out. He asked task force members if they looked at the question of whether every school district should have some local participation.

Number 2032

MR. WEINSTEIN said the task force did not talk about that. It was aware, due to personal experiences, that some districts have a large local tax contribution while others have none.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN thanked all task force members for their presentation and the work they have done. She then took a brief at-ease.

#SB 86

SB 86-TEACHER EMPLOYMENT & SUBJECT EXPERTISE

SENATOR PETE KELLY, sponsor of SB 86, informed the committee that he introduced SB 86 in response to the widespread need for teachers in the state. SB 86 does not attempt to cure the shortage; instead it gives school districts another arrow in their quiver to deal with this problem. He noted the American Federation of Teachers and the Alaska Teacher Preparedness websites both make reference to graphs they have prepared that

show a significant decrease in the number of teacher applicants and the number of people attending teaching job fairs. One reason for the shortage in Alaska is that it simply is not as competitive as it has been in previous years. SB 86 would allow school districts to hire people with Bachelor's degrees and five years experience in subjects they are hired to teach. Subject-matter teachers would not be treated the same regarding tenure, because if a district eliminates a certain class from its curriculum, that teacher would not have tenure over teachers who are certified to teach a broader range of subjects. Subject-matter teachers would be held to the same level of accountability when it comes to security matters, which are already in statute and regulation.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked Senator Kelly if he is referring to criminal background checks.

SENATOR KELLY said that is correct and includes fingerprinting. He commented that many people with teaching degrees work in different professions, and many people in other professions wish to be teachers but do not have teaching credentials. SB 86 is an attempt to put qualified people who have a lot to offer the system in the classroom to alleviate the teacher shortage Alaska is experiencing right now.

SENATOR WILKEN asked how a fee would be established for subject matter teachers, whether they would be eligible for retirement, and whether a school board or DOEED would determine whether they are qualified.

SENATOR KELLY said the local school board would determine whether an applicant is qualified and would require that person to take a competency exam. He tried to leave the other issues Senator Wilken raised up to the local school boards. It is his intention to allow school principals to either opt into this program or remain out of it.

SENATOR WILKEN asked for clarification of pay and retirement.

SENATOR KELLY said they would be considered teachers as far as school districts are concerned.

SENATOR WILKEN asked if they would fall under the pay scale at the time of hire.

SENATOR KELLY said he knows of nothing in the legislation that would preclude that and it was not his intention to do otherwise. Regarding retirement, he said they are teachers in every sense

except for tenure.

SENATOR WILKEN asked if they would become members of the bargaining unit.

SENATOR KELLY said that is correct.

SENATOR WARD asked if subject-matter teachers will have to pass a test.

SENATOR KELLY referred to page 2, line 17, and pointed out the bill requires the local school board to administer a competency test [page 2, line 27 of the committee substitute].

SENATOR LEMAN referred to Martin Gross, an author who wrote about failures in the American education system, and said Mr. Gross recommended that undergraduate schools of education be done away with because they are turning out generalists that do not know their subject matter well enough. He suggests that people get undergraduate degrees in subject areas and then get a graduate degree in education. Senator Leman said he tends to agree with that approach. He asked why not allow school districts to reach into the communities to find people with the right expertise to teach.

SENATOR KELLY mentioned the committee substitute has a provision for a mentoring program to last at least one year for secondary school teachers. He felt that provision to be a good idea.

SENATOR WARD moved to adopt CSSB 86(HES), Version L, as the working document of the committee. There being no objection, the motion carried.

SENATOR KELLY noted the University has a one year Master's level teaching program but that program will not work for the people he has in mind.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN pointed out the one-year program is a fast-track program, while the mentor program will teach the incoming teacher the systems and protocols of the district. She added that she could see value to mentoring with several teachers. She then asked for public testimony.

Number 1470

DR. BRUCE JOHNSON, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Education and Early Development, said DOEED appreciates Senator Kelly's concern for the teacher shortage issue and the changes

made in the committee substitute, particularly the mandated competency exam, the mentoring program and Professional Teachers Practices Commission (PTPC) oversight. The state board of education has also been working on the teacher shortage issue and has issued three regulations. It has proposed a provisional certificate, which will allow DOEED to request it to recognize a teaching certificate from any other state for up to a two-year period of time. During that two-year period, the teacher would have to fulfill Alaska requirements. Another proposal is for specialty endorsement so that with a minor in special education, a person could qualify for an endorsement in special education. The state board will also be looking at adjusting some of the certification fees for licensure.

DR. JOHNSON said, in response to Chairwoman Green's comment about licensure, that the Type M Certificate is available for military science, vocational education and Native culture and language. He recently noticed that Alaska has in excess of 200 of those certificated teachers. A few districts have 35 or 40 such individuals, primarily in rural Alaska, certified in Native culture and language. That has proven to be a useful tool. He noted the concept of SB 86 has been tried in other states with success and failure. One of the challenges other states have faced is a high number of attrition. He cautioned that it appears to be a little easier than it actually is and the result has not been improved student achievement. DOEED suggests that if SB 86 moves forward, that the legislature require these people to enter into a professional development program that would provide teacher education training. He suggested that DOEED could work with the University of Alaska (UA) to design a set of courses that could be delivered in convenient ways so that it would not place a huge burden on these teachers but would qualify them for a Type A Certificate.

Number 1196

SENATOR WILKEN asked, if DOEED is proposing a two-year window for out-of-state certification, when the teacher would have to take the competency exam.

DR. JOHNSON said they would have to do that within the two years. He said right now, DOEED allows teachers one year because it is inconvenient for teachers in rural areas to take the exam.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN said she understood that to be a requirement before a person could be hired.

DR. JOHNSON said DOEED is finding that, during this time of

teacher shortage, people are hired one day before school starts, so DOEED cannot require the test in that time. He noted the test is not administered on a daily basis.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN said that practice needs to be looked at. She then asked if a person could obtain credit for working with a mentor, as is done with internship programs. She questioned whether all of the subject-matter teachers need to return to college to take methods courses or whether they could obtain credit in other ways.

DR. JOHNSON said he believes Chairwoman Green is suggesting the concept used by the Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program at the University in which teacher trainees spend almost all of their time working with students under a mentor. They attend seminars one day per week and attend classes full time for two summer sessions. The difference between what Chairwoman Green is suggesting and the MAT program is that MAT students are not paid during that time. MAT students make a tremendous financial sacrifice. He informed committee members that the state board of education worked through another regulation over a 12-month period. That regulation was targeted primarily for rural Alaska where some instructional aides have been working at their jobs for 12 to 15 years but they are unable or unwilling to leave their communities to enter a university program. The regulation would allow the University to secure a cohort of students with a provisional certificate, have a mentor, be paid by the district, and be engaged in a distance delivery teacher education program. All of those things would provide good incentives, but DOEED is finding it is not very cost effective for the University until a certain number of individuals are interested.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked if a teacher needs six hours of credits to be re-certified every five years.

DR. JOHNSON said that is correct.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN felt that standard is too low compared to other professional re-certification requirements. She noted the discrepancy between the requirements to get certified and the requirements to maintain certification is very big. She then asked if any of the mandates in SB 86 could be implemented without legislation and whether DOEED could only implement them with emergency regulations.

DR. JOHNSON said he would have to review all of those regulations but explained the state board of education has fairly broad-based discretion in terms of the types of certificates they issue.

Number 827

SENATOR LEMAN asked if the fact that he has a Masters degree in engineering would qualify him to take the competency exam and teach physics or mathematics. He wanted to know whether SB 86 provides enough flexibility in the writing of the regulations to allow for that.

DR. JOHNSON said he believes so and he thinks the example Senator Leman provided is a logical conclusion to draw. He suspects that if SB 86 passes, DOEED would ask the district that wants to hire such an individual to document that individual's background and subject matter expertise and propose the courses that individual would teach.

SENATOR LEMAN then asked, regarding the work experience, if a legislative aide with five years of experience would qualify to teach as a subject-matter expert in government.

MR. RICH KRONBERG, President of NEA-Alaska, said he finds CSSB 86(HES) intriguing. NEA-AK agrees it is necessary to deal with the teacher shortage issue and appreciates Senator Kelly's efforts to put together a packet that clearly demonstrates that need. He believes it is clear that one of the factors behind the problem is that salaries have not kept pace, but the fact that working conditions in many school districts are extremely difficult also accounts for a 40 percent turnover rate in certain districts.

NEA-Ak believes the teacher shortage issue should be solved using a three-pronged approach. Alaska needs to recruit, retain, and retrain teachers. He believes CSSB 86(HES) falls into the last category. NEA-Ak has many questions about the retraining aspect. NEA-Ak agrees with Dr. Johnson's comments that a future commitment is important from people who attempt to get subject-matter endorsements so that they will engage in continuing education to develop their skills as educators. He believes NEA-Ak would be very interested in working with the University to develop an apprenticeship program if this legislation passes.

MR. KRONBERG said NEA-Ak has the following questions:

- What will the fiscal note be for CSSB 86(HES)? The original bill had a zero fiscal note, but a mentoring program will have costs associated with it in terms of time and wages. NEA-Ak suggests that mentors mentor teachers in the culture in rural areas. This could provide an opportunity for instructional aides to do the mentoring if they are from a

village.

- Would this program be for secondary school teachers only?

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN said she believes people could also teach at the elementary level.

MR. KRONBERG thought Senator Kelly was clear that all people who get hired under this program would have to meet all of the requirements and that they would be part of the bargaining unit. He asked if they would be required to also meet all of the performance standards that exist for other teachers. He noted some of those standards clearly deal with pedagogy.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN said she thought it would go without saying that would be a requirement.

MR. KRONBERG said that is the answer NEA-Ak wanted to hear.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked that Mr. Kronberg and Dr. Johnson talk to the sponsor about their concerns.

MR. KRONBERG agreed to do so. He pointed out that, regarding the competency test, it is his understanding that a teacher could be hired without taking it but could not get a contract because a contract requires licensure. He stated some teachers were hired by the Anchorage School District on substitute pay and when they did not pass a portion of the test, they had to continue on substitute status because they were unable to get a contract. He felt the basic concern is that this legislation may not do what it is intended to do. He said NEA-Ak's data agrees with Dr. Johnson's statement that many other states have found that subject-matter teachers do not remain in the profession for more than three years unless there is some coherent program of induction, including mentoring. Without that, Alaska may just be creating a "revolving door". He also believes the state needs to deal with the problems that drive teachers out of certain districts, such as inadequate housing and lack of community support. He stated that NEA-Ak is not opposed to CSSB 86(HES), but it has serious questions about its implementation and would like them answered before it can lend its support to this legislation.

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CHAIRWOMAN GREEN noted that several years ago, her daughter graduated from college as a Spanish major. At the time, Wasilla High School could not find a foreign language teacher. Her daughter could have successfully filled that position for one

year, but the high school was unable to hire her. Chairwoman Green felt Alaska has lost a lot of opportunities to put qualified people in the classroom.

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SENATOR LEMAN questioned whether the competency exam is a multi-subject test or whether a person would only have to pass the one subject area he or she plans to teach.

MR. KRONBERG said it covers the subjects of reading, writing and math.

CHAIRWOMAN GREEN asked if it requires any subject area expertise.

DR. JOHNSON explained that DOEED only requires the basic competency test but the Educational Testing Service offers a test in each subject area as well, so a district could use that vehicle to require a subject area test.

MR. KRONBERG commented that NEA-Ak has not had any discussions about pay for performance in Alaska but he cannot imagine that if a district brought a serious proposal to the table, any of NEA-Ak's bargaining units would reject it out of hand. He noted the difficulty with pay for performance is the need to measure the added value of an individual teacher. A teacher cannot just be held accountable for the absolute results in a classroom because, for example, what a 7th grade teacher is able to do depends on what happened during the first six years of that student's education. Alaska does not have any systems available to measure the value a teacher is adding. Other states are working on those systems but they are not fine tuned yet.

SENATOR LEMAN said he knows a system is in place to choose the teacher of the year by both districts and the state. He has participated in that process and has been very impressed with the people who have been the finalists. He agreed that a pay for performance program may be difficult to implement, but he believes it is a worthy idea.

There being no further business to come before the committee, CHAIRWOMAN GREEN adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

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