

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

February 14, 2002
3:40 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gene Therriault, Chair
Senator Randy Phillips, Vice Chair
Senator Ben Stevens
Senator Bettye Davis
Senator Rick Halford

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 236

"An Act making supplemental and other appropriations for homeland security; and providing for an effective date."

MOVED SB 236 OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 22

Relating to declaring March 2002 as Sobriety Awareness Month.

MOVED OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

SB 236 - See State Affairs minutes dated 1/31/02 and 2/12/02.
SCR 22 - See State Affairs minutes dated 2/7/02.

WITNESS REGISTER

Senator Jerry Ward
Alaska State Capitol Room 423
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SCR 22

David Katzeek
Alaska Native Brotherhood
6590 Glacier Highway
Juneau, AK 99801
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SCR 22

Shaan Katzeek
6590 Glacier Highway
Juneau, AK 99801
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SCR 22

Pamela Watts

Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
Juneau, AK 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SCR 22

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 02-8, SIDE A

CHAIRMAN GENE THERRIAULT called the Senate State Affairs Committee meeting to order at 3:40 p.m. Present were Senators Davis, Stevens, Phillips and Chairman Therriault. Senator Halford arrived at 3:55 p.m.

The first order of business was SCR 22.

#SCR 22

SCR 22-SOBRIETY AWARENESS MONTH: MARCH 2002

SENATOR WARD, prime sponsor, explained that several years ago a small group of people decided they were going to become role models who did not abuse either alcohol or drugs. Sobriety month is discussed in all the schools in Alaska in the month of March and is advertised during the Iditarod as well as other venues through out the state. People are encouraged to speak about sobriety as an alternative lifestyle that is worthwhile to promote.

In committee member's packets there was a letter from Frank Dahl, President of Cabaret Hotel Restaurant and Retailers Association (CHARR) that encouraged support for SCR 22. A copy of his letter is enclosed in the bill file.

Everyone he's ever met has been touched in some way by drug and alcohol abuse. This doesn't mean individuals must give up alcohol altogether to lend their support; this resolution is simply honoring those who honor sobriety. "By making March Sobriety Month, we are enabling thousands of people in Alaska to become warriors for sobriety."

DAVID KATZEEK testified in both English and Tlingit in support of SCR 22.

My grandfather told me a man who became sober and lived a sober life was a very wise individual and could learn a lot. Sobriety is more than being able to not drink; it is looking at all the types of things that are happening to us as a people. Sobriety could mean we are becoming aware of a

problem in the State of Alaska that results in approximately 96 percent of those re-offenders that go back to jail have been involved with alcohol, resulting in a high cost to the State of Alaska and to its citizens. The cost is even greater than the money that is spent. Who hears the cry of a little child where alcohol is reigning? Who sees the broken heart of a teenager who is having a difficult time in school because of the emotional, painful and difficult kinds of things he heard the night before he goes to school.

This is called sobering up. Not just by the individual who is using alcohol, but society in general, in regarding the kinds of things that face us as a people. This is a major problem. This resolution isn't to tell everyone to quit drinking and everybody should abstain. It is a notice to the people in the State of Alaska that the state recognizes and realizes that there is a problem. We are going to take time to look at this particular issue and stand with the people in the State of Alaska regarding this. To me this is sobering up when the Legislature and the government begins to see the kinds of problems we're facing. Not just the drunk, not just the alcohol abuser or not just the alcoholic, but society in general. I appreciate this time and I like speaking in my language because this is where I come from and I'm proud of my people. But my grandfather would have said may it be as if you heard, not from me, David Katzeek, but from the elders of the Tlingit nation saying this is really really important and we need your help. This may seem like a small resolution, but it is a very big one in my personal opinion. It's like a pebble being dropped in a pond where the rings will reach out all over.

He then asked that his son be allowed to testify.

SHAAN KATZEEK introduced himself and explained his American Government class requires each student to select and follow a bill. He selected SCR 22 to follow and didn't realize his father was going to be speaking on behalf of the same bill.

He thinks it's a good thing to do because it lets everyone know

they can take that step of being sober during the month of March and then they can tell others what they did.

PAMELA WATTS, executive director of the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, expressed her appreciation to Senator Ward for sponsoring the resolution as he does every year.

She said this is a foundation piece for the strategies that are contained in the state plan for alcohol and drug abuse services. The number of communities around the state that have begun to take responsibility for the negative consequences of alcohol and drug abuse in their areas encourages them.

The benefits of taking responsibility for the negative consequences of alcohol include improvement in the quality of life for individuals, families and communities. When communities take responsibility, there is a reduction in the recidivism rate in the criminal justice system. The reduced burden on government by not having to exhaust its resources to pay for the pervasive problems caused by alcohol and drug abuse is another issue. Not only is there the high economic cost to be paid to keep an individual incarcerated but also the un-quantified cost of separating parents from their children.

A recent McDowell report conservatively estimates that the economic cost of alcohol abuse comes to about \$453,000 million per year. She urged committee members to seriously consider the pieces of legislation that will come before them this session that address alcohol related problems.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT noted there was no prepared CS, no proposed amendments. The bill had a zero fiscal note.

He asked for the will of the committee.

SENATOR PHILLIPS made a motion to move SCR 22 and zero fiscal note from committee with individual recommendations.

There being no objection, SCR 22 moved from committee.

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#SB236

SB 236-HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT drew member's attention to the spreadsheet with color-coded categories. They asked Legislative Finance to go through the appropriation bill and separate the expenses. First

items that are supplemental to the 2002 budget were separated then further broken into operating and capital expenses. Next, items that were clearly 2003 operating budget items were separated and finally 2003 capital requests were separated.

He said his frustration with trying to deal with the bill is that it isn't really an appropriations bill it's a finance bill and probably should have been sent to the Finance Committee as part of a budget package. It's difficult to deal with because the Governor has just submitted his 2002 supplemental requests so anything they would consider supplemental for 2002 has to be balanced with the Governor's other supplemental requests. Additionally, anything they do in 2002 that impacts the operating budget must be considered in the 2003 operating budget. If this isn't done, there won't be funds to continue that program or activity in fiscal year 2003.

According to the spreadsheet, the total supplemental general fund operating total is \$7.6 million. To annualize that amount, it would take \$26.6 million in FY03 and there simply aren't the funds available to build that into the budget.

He recommended forwarding the bill and the spreadsheets to the Finance Committee accompanied by a letter explaining the segmentation process. That committee must decide whether there is room for any of this in the FY02 supplemental budget then whether they want to build any of it into the FY03 budget.

He said he was open to discussion on other ways to handle this.

SENATOR PHILLIPS thought standing committees should give general guidance to the Finance Committee so they can develop the numbers. He recommended asking the various departments to categorize and prioritize their requests. He said he feels that communications should be at the top of the list

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked whether communication should be at the top or should it be prioritized according to what is affordable.

SENATOR PHILLIPS said he wouldn't attach a dollar amount; rather he would ask the departments to categorize according to importance in dealing with any natural or man made disaster. This list should then be sent to the Finance Committee.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT remarked that, in finance, the numbers drive policy. How much can you afford? This committee doesn't know what the constraints are on the numbers.

He said he has no problem with asking the various departments to prioritize their requests, but he doesn't know whether that would make much difference in finance's deliberations.

SENATOR STEVENS expressed the thought that the items that are mandated by federal policy should be given top priority. At the same time, they should find out whether federal funds are available to pay for those mandates. If they aren't available, then he doesn't understand why they would need to be in the supplemental budget for FY02.

SENATOR DAVIS point out that as the reports were handed out, the overall theme was that there were some priorities that had been set, but she didn't know whether there were dollar amounts attached or not. There are also federal funds that have been designated for the state and that amount has been set. Perhaps they could figure what the state match would be when coupled with the federal funds.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT reiterated he had no objection to asking the departments to prioritize. Because there are clearly some items on the spreadsheet where money has already been spent, those had better be at the top of the list. If they don't get those dollars, they have a huge hole in their FY02 budget. Perhaps that will cull out some of the "fluff" federal dollars because if they don't believe the federal dollars are going to be there, they won't put those items very high on their list.

SENATOR HALFORD agreed with Senator Stevens. The federal dollars in hand have to be considered as do the federal mandates. That information will lead any action.

SENATOR STEVENS added he questioned how many times some of the requests have been made prior to being incorporated into the appropriation request.

SENATOR DAVIS didn't think the departments would prioritize their requests and even if they did, someone would still have to sort out the various lists. She agreed with Chairman Therriault that they should forward the bill to finance.

SENATOR HALFORD made a motion to send the Chairman's recommendation to the Finance Committee.

SENATOR DAVIS seconded the motion.

There being no objection, the bill was forwarded to the Finance Committee accompanied by the spreadsheets and a letter from the

Chairman.

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CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT adjourned the meeting at 4:15 p.m.