

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

March 4, 2003

3:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair
Representative Carl Gatto, Vice Chair
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Kelly Wolf
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Mary Kapsner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Cheryll Heinze

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Board of Education and Early Development

Shirley Holloway - Juneau
Richard Mauer - Delta Junction
Tim Scott - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 8

Requesting the Governor to declare March 16 - 22, 2003, to be Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week.

- MOVED HCR 8 OUT OF COMMITTEE

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Board of Education and Early Development

Sylvia Reynolds - Soldotna
Rex Rock - Point Hope

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS ACTION

BILL: HCR 8

SHORT TITLE: INHALANTS AND POISONS AWARENESS WEEK

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KAPSNER

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page		Action
02/19/03	0246	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/03	0246	(H)	HES
03/04/03		(H)	HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

SHIRLEY HOLLOWAY, Ph.D., Appointee
to the Board of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of
Education and Early Development and answered questions from the
committee.

RICHARD MAUER, Appointee
to the Board of Education and Early Development
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of
Education and Early Development and answered questions from the
committee.

TIM SCOTT, Appointee
to the Board of Education and Early Development
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of
Education and Early Development and answered questions from the
committee.

ZOANN MURPHY, Health and Social Services Planner
Community Health and Emergency Medical Services Section
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 8 and answered
questions from the committee.

SYLVIA REYNOLDS, Appointee
to the Board of Education and Early Development
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development and answered questions from the committee.

REX ROCK, Appointee
to the Board of Education and Early Development
Point Hope, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development and answered questions from the committee.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 03-21, SIDE A
Number 0001

CHAIR PEGGY WILSON called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. Representatives Wilson, Gatto, Seaton, and Wolf were present at the call to order. Representatives Cissna and Kapsner arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Board of Education and Early Development

CHAIR WILSON announced that the first order of business would be confirmation hearings for the appointees to the Board of Education and Early Development. Chair Wilson announced that the appointees would be testifying via teleconference.

Number 0072

SHIRLEY HOLLOWAY, Ph.D., Appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, gave a brief history of her 40-year career in education, 33 years of those in Alaska. She said that she hopes her experience, passion, and energy can help to continue to shape the best public education system for Alaska.

Number 0174

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if a new commissioner of the Department of Education and Early Development would be someone who had worked for her in the past.

DR. HOLLOWAY replied that is a distinct possibility.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if it would be a problem working for someone she previously had working under her.

Number 0243

DR. HOLLOWAY replied that the commissioner of the Department of Education and Early Development serves at the pleasure of the governor and the Board of Education and Early Development. She added that the board is a governance and policymaking body, not an administrative or management body as the department is. Dr. Holloway said that there is a distinct line drawn between those who manage and those who set policy.

Number 0294

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON made a motion to advance the confirmation of Shirley Holloway, appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, the confirmation of Shirley Holloway was advanced.

Number 0377

RICHARD MAUER, Appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, told the committee he looks forward to serving on the board because he believes the education system needs to be fully accountable. Mr. Mauer said he wants to assure that the state has adequate facilities and equitable funding. He told the committee he sees the new federal legislation, "No Child Left Behind Act," (NCLB) as an opportunity to work for the advancement of the State's goals in improving public education. He said there needs to be some accommodation for Alaska's uniqueness. Mr. Mauer told the committee he has invested many years in education and would like to continue his service to the State of Alaska.

Number 0486

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked Mr. Mauer if he belongs to any other organizations that the committee would be familiar with.

MR. MAUER replied that he is the past president of the Association of Alaska School Boards [and continues to be a director] and has served on the local school board in Delta Junction.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if Mr. Mauer sees a conflict in serving on the Board of Education and Early Development and still serving as a member of the Association of Alaska School Boards.

MR. MAUER said he sees no conflict whatsoever; in fact, he told the committee he believes one role complements the other.

Number 0545

CHAIR WILSON asked if there is a specific focus he would want to pursue in his service on the Board of Education and Early Development.

MR. MAUER told the committee he is very interested in the school designator program and efforts to redesign it to meet the NCLB requirements. He told the committee this program will be going to the peer review committee at the U.S. Department of Education on March 12. He said this is a critical element in assisting schools to improve student achievement. Mr. Mauer told the committee he sees this program as very constructive and he wants to see it through.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked Mr. Mauer if NCLB would make the school designator program unnecessary.

MR. MAUER replied that the school designator program is set in state law, so the state would be working on this program even if there were no NCLB.

Number 0756

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON made a motion to advance the confirmation of Richard Mauer, appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, the confirmation of Richard Mauer was advanced.

Number 0842

TIM SCOTT, Appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, gave the committee a brief history of his educational and professional background. He told the committee he currently is the chief executive officer for a charter school and has been intimately involved in school reform for the past four years. He said that he believes his diverse background

will enable him to meet the complex challenges facing the state in the implementation of the NCLB.

Number 0926

CHAIR WILSON asked Mr. Scott at what point he sees it necessary to institute charter schools versus working with the traditional public schools to improve education.

MR. SCOTT replied that he sees no point where the state should ever stop trying to improve public education in the traditional schools. Charter schools are statutorily available and an outstanding option. The approval process for instituting a charter school is a long and involved process. Local school districts are the sponsoring agent and he believes that is a good thing, although with some of his peers that is not a popular view. Mr. Scott also said he believes charter schools are helping traditional schools to make changes to improve education.

Number 1029

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if he was a participant in the creation of a charter school.

MR. SCOTT replied that he has been involved with the creation of Frontier Charter School in Anchorage.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked how many charter schools are in Anchorage not including Frontier Charter School.

MR. SCOTT replied that there are only three.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked Mr. Scott if he considers them to be successful.

MR. SCOTT said that depends on how success is defined. If success is defined by enrollment, then the schools have been successful. He explained that when it comes to charter schools, they each have their own flavor. He cited one case where a charter school closed because it got into a financial bind. He said that particular charter school served an important population, had some good ideas, and did some good things. However, it was unsuccessful financially.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if charter schools excel over traditional public schools.

MR. SCOTT replied that he knows Family Partnership does because it is involved in the performance review in the district.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked how many students are typically in a charter school classroom.

MR. SCOTT said that depends on the makeup of the charter. He said that Family Partnership School serves home school kids, so all the school has is four walls and a desk. He said he knows that other charter schools in the district tend to have 20 and less.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if the charter school Mr. Scott is involved with has a building.

MR. SCOTT told the committee the charter school has an office building in mid-town, and is set up like a business with a records office and support to parents. He said the children do not meet at that location.

Number 1198

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON made a motion to advance the confirmation of Tim Scott, appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, the confirmation of Tim Scott was advanced.

CHAIR WILSON told the committee the two remaining appointees are not on line yet, so the committee will come back to their confirmation as they are available.

HCR 8-INHALANTS AND POISONS AWARENESS WEEK

Number 1250

CHAIR WILSON announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 8, "Requesting the Governor to declare March 16 - 22, 2003, to be Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week."

Number 1275

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER, sponsor of HCR 8, explained the importance of the resolution before the committee, which asks the governor to proclaim Inhalant and Poison Abuse Awareness Week. She told the committee the proclamation would coincide

with the national Inhalant and Poisons Awareness Week on March 16-22. Representative Kapsner said she knows many of the members are aware of the serious problem inhalant abuse is for Alaska; however, she believes there is a long way to go in educating Alaska and the nation in understanding the prevalence of inhalant abuse and the resulting damage that can occur.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER pointed out that inhalants are not drugs; most of the substances people huff are not contraband. There are over 1,400 commonly used and legal household, office, and classroom products that can be used to get high. Inhalant highs are the result of intensive penetration of toxic chemicals into the brain tissue, where they are capable of causing irreversible damage. She told the committee there is a perception that this may be a rural problem or a Native problem, but it is not. It is a national epidemic. In a 1999 nationwide survey of 8th graders 19.5 percent said they had used inhalants, compared with 22 percent who have tried marijuana and hashish. The use is comparable.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER told the committee that in addition to brain, liver, lung, and bone marrow damage, there is evidence that chronic abuse of some inhalants causes chromosomal and fetal damage. Inhalant abuse can occur in children as young as four, five, or six years old, if they are huffing with their older brothers and sisters. Inhalant abuse is very common in adolescent years, and it is often recognized as a gateway to abuse of other illicit substances. Seventy percent of one group of substance abusers who were in treatment indicated they started with inhalants. Seventy percent said they would go back to inhalants if alcohol was not available. Many treatment facilities employees use gas tank locks for their automobiles, because so many people in treatment go out looking for a high and go to their gas tanks.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER explained that because the chemicals and inhalants enter the lungs in such high concentrations, they have a higher toxic profile than other types of drug abuse. It actually takes four to six weeks to detoxify inhalant abusers just so they can start treatment.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER said she hopes awareness of the signs of use become widely known. Some of the common signs include paint or stains on the body, clothing, rags, or bags; missing abuseable substances from the home; spots or sores around the mouth; red or runny eyes or nose; a chemical breath or odor, and a dazed, drunk, or dizzy appearance. Other signs which may

accompany abuse are nausea, loss of appetite, anxiety, excitability, irritability, relentlessness, unexplained moodiness, slurred or disoriented speech, and outbursts or anger.

Number 1530

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked what a common profile of an inhalant abuser would be.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER replied that there are no typical profiles for inhalant abusers. She said sniffers and huffers are represented by both sexes; they are urban and rural; and they come from all socioeconomic groups throughout the country and Alaska. She told the committee inhalant abusers range in age from elementary and middle-school age children to adults.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO agreed that adults use inhalants - smoking, for instance. He noted that perfumes are also a form of inhalant.

Number 1566

CHAIR WILSON said as a nurse, she has worked in the emergency room when an individual has come in who has been involved in a chemical spill. She said in a case when victims have inhaled fumes, they may appear fine initially, hospital staff watch the victims closely because the damage to the lungs may appear later when they may start experiencing breathing problems. Chair Wilson asked if inhalant abusers experience the same type of symptoms.

Number 1599

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER said she believes with accidental inhalants there may be a delay before the effects would appear; however, with huffing the response is much quicker. There is an instant high, which is the reason why some people prefer inhalants to contraband drugs. The inhalant goes through the lungs, and is an instant high. In talking with village public safety officers [VPSO], [she has found] they are very concerned about inhalant abuse. One reason is that it is not illegal and it is not even a violation of state law to huff. Another reason is that inhalants dull the pain receptors. She told the committee VPSOs are only equipped with a billy club, and even if they are only trying to subdue the victim or inhalant abuser,

such a person is almost unstoppable because his/her pain receptors are not working.

Number 1672

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER told the committee that with this limited amount of knowledge, most Alaskans do not know enough about inhalants and the seriousness of its abuse. She said her primary concern is for the young people who abuse inhalants, not knowing there can be irreversible brain damage, bone marrow damage, and lung damage. She said young children are setting themselves up to have developmentally disabled children, and the cost to the state is really quite exorbitant when people become retarded from the abuse. The symptoms are a lot like Fetal Alcohol Syndrome [FAS]. One of the major differences that she has heard from Jim Henkelman [Statewide Outreach Coordinator, Tundra Swan Treatment Program, Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation] is that FAS children do not have a long-term memory and do have a lot of childhood memories. Most people who are inhalant abusers say that they lost their memory after they started huffing. They have the long-term memory; they just do not have the short-term memory. Representative Kapsner told the committee Jim Henkelman, who is the state's expert on inhalant abuse, would like to give the committee a presentation on this subject. Representative Kapsner said she would like to see this resolution pass and hopes the governor proclaims March 16 through the 22 as Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week.

Number 1741

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER noted that some statistics that were provided to the committee in a brochure say that children five years and under account for the majority - 53 percent - of the exposures to poison. The graph of substances involved like cleaning supplies in household exposures shows 125 cases in people over 20 years old. Representative Kapsner said this does not appear to be accidental poisoning. It looks more as though huffing was involved.

Number 1754

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA commented that Representative Kapsner's statement about the pain receptors made her realize what might have happened with a foster daughter. She told the committee as a teen, her foster daughter was exchanging a jar of gasoline and huffing with a cousin who was burned badly when the cousin took a drag on a cigarette, it fell into the jar, and it flamed up,

melting one side of her face. Representative Cissna said she believes impairment of the girl's pain receptors contributed to this tragic event. In a normal situation an individual would drop the jar, but if a person were huffing he/she would have lost that instant reaction. She asked if there is any record of these kinds of accidents, and if so, how many there are.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER said Jim Henkelman might know the answer.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA said inhalant abuse and the effects on kids is much more extraordinary than alcohol. It is far worse than can be imagined.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER agreed and said it is a silent epidemic and is claiming the lives of a lot of people nationwide.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO said that the more volatile a substance is, the more valuable it is to someone that is an inhalant abuser. If the substance is volatile then it becomes a gas very easily, and is flammable and very hazardous. Representative Gatto pointed out that once it gets into the lungs it is transported quickly to an individual's heart and then to the brain. It takes only seconds to have an impact on individual's brain - anesthetizing it. He said inhaling alcohol is also pretty instantaneous, not ethyl alcohol that is normally ingested, but wood alcohol. Representative Gatto said it is an enormously horrible thing to do to anything that is alive. He expressed concern for a method of changing abusers' behaviors, and said he believes this resolution is a start.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER noted that there is a zero fiscal note on the resolution. She shared one more point with the committee, that inhalants are the fourth most abused substances [following alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana] among high school students.

Number 1952

ZOANN MURPHY, Health and Social Services Planner, Community Health and Emergency Medical Services Section, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, testified in support of HCR 8. She told the committee her duties include injury prevention and she would like to speak about the poison prevention portion of the resolution. Ms. Murphy [holding up a highlighter pen] told the committee this would be very valuable to a teen who wanted to huff. All the other substances the committee spoke about are dangerous, but so is a highlighter and it can be picked up for \$.99. She told the

committee she puts together the annual report for poison control for the State of Alaska. Poisoning is the tenth leading cause of injury death and the eighth leading cause of non-fatal hospitalized injuries to Alaskan children ages 0-19 from 1994 through 1998 [the most current statistics available]. Ms. Murphy told the committee the national fatal poisoning rate for the years 1994 through 1999 is 6.5 for 100,000. Alaska has a very small population with a very large problem. She urged the committee to pass HCR 8. Ms. Murphy provided the committee with background information on the injury surveillance and prevention program.

Number 2092

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked about the map on Alaska for the rate per 100,000 [population] by region from 1994 through 1999 and asked if the rate was a total for all five years or an average yearly rate.

MS. MURPHY responded that it is for the entire time period from 1994 through 1999.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON responded that if these rates are for a five-year period and if the committee wanted to look at it per year, then, for example, the total for the "Interior (Rural)" - which is 51.31, divided by 5, gives a rate of 10 per year.

MS. MURPHY said she does have a chart that shows approximately nine children under the age of four are injured severely enough to be hospitalized [statistics from trauma registry data]. She told the committee the statistics are dated and the department is still working on the 2000 and 2001 data.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked if the comparison with the United States that she provided was based on an annual rate.

MS. MURPHY replied that it was also a five-year rate.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked if there is any substantial research done on this subject. She asked where the department gets most of the information on kinds of incidents and prevention efforts.

Number 2148

MS. MURPHY replied that the information comes from a variety of sources. The report provided to the committee was put together by the Oregon Poison Center [an organization the state is

collaborating with]. She told the committee her rate information came from the Alaska Trauma Registry which is a registry that lists all hospitalized patients and fatality information, which is provided by the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked if there is any effort in Alaska to look for funding sources to do extensive research on this subject. She said when Alaska finds it is the leader in the nation in some indicator, it is important to find solutions and export that knowledge.

MS. MURPHY responded that the department is in the process of doing that under a federal HRSA [Health Resources and Services Administration] grant. In fact, this is how the poison center collaboration effort came about. She said currently education has focused on getting the word out on the 1-800 number, but expressed hope that the next round of federal grant funding will allow the department to expand that into more community outreach. Ms. Murphy said she is currently attending as many health fairs as possible to get the word out.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER said she believes the numbers are very low. She asked how the department is characterizing fatal and nonfatal poisonings in Alaska. She told Ms. Murphy that it seems artificially low to find only 20 people in her region having a fatal or non-fatal poisoning during a five-year period.

Number 2243

MS. MURPHY replied the number is a rate per 100,000, not a number of individuals.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER said the figure still seems very low.

MS. MURPHY said the numbers vary from year to year.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER asked if poisonings would including people who die of inhalant abuse.

MS. MURPHY replied that it would include inhalant deaths, but most of the poisonings that are reported to the poisoning center do not include inhalants, because generally by the time the victim has gotten to the hospital the condition is classified as a poisoning. She said that could change, but it would require going back over the numbers.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER said a number of years ago, five or six people died in one of the villages because the person who was running the water treatment facility put too much fluoride in the water. Would that be classified as a poisoning?

MS. MURPHY replied that it would be classified as a poisoning.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said he does not think the statistics relate to the problem the Kenai Peninsula is experiencing. This rate of 28.43 per 100,000 people for five years would reflect less than one person per year. He said if it was just his district it might be plausible; however, there are three districts on the Kenai Peninsula. Representative Seaton said he does not believe these statistics reflect the issue of recreational huffing. He said he believes Ms. Murphy's report is dealing with a different problem.

Number 2358

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA moved to report HCR 8 out of committee with individual recommendations and a zero fiscal note. There being no objection, HCR 8 was reported from the House Health, Education and Social Services Committee.

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Board of Education and Early Development

TAPE 03-21, SIDE B

Number 2315

CHAIR WILSON announced that the committee would return to confirmation hearings for appointees to the Board of Education and Early Development.

SYLVIA REYNOLDS, Appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, gave the committee a brief history of her 24 years of service in public education, 18 of those in Alaska. She told the committee she has served in numerous positions throughout the state including schools in Nome, Juneau, and Soldotna. She said the experience she has provides her with a background of working with students from early education through postsecondary education. Ms. Reynolds highlighted her background and experience in teaching and administration.

Number 2275

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF asked if her service on the board would prevent her from continuing her work at K-Beach Elementary School.

MS. REYNOLDS told the committee she has taken that into consideration and believes that with the help of a young woman who is doing her administrative internship; she will have someone to cover for her while she attends meetings.

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF told the committee that Ms. Reynolds has done an excellent job as principal and that he believes she would be an excellent choice.

Number 2229

CHAIR WILSON asked if she sees a difference in education in Alaska as opposed to other states she has worked in.

MS. REYNOLDS responded that is a difficult question. She believes the great challenge facing Alaska will be meeting the NCLB requirements. She said while everyone supports that concept, there are many paths to achieve this goal. She pointed out that some students need to leave school in April to go whaling, and she sees a benefit to bringing that activity into the curriculum. That approach is very different compared with how school curriculum is administered in Anchorage or the Kenai Peninsula.

CHAIR WILSON shared her experience with a school system where classes started three weeks early so many of the students could go moose hunting and build a cabin. She said that activity was done in the first three weeks of school.

MS. REYNOLDS agreed that anytime there is hands-on learning outside the institution, it will be beneficial.

Number 2139

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked why she changed from being a principal at Soldotna High School to K-Beach Elementary School.

MS. REYNOLDS said she believes that after five years in a leadership role a principal needs to evaluate if the school has moved ahead. She said after seven years she believed it was time to give someone else a chance to come in and give the school other gifts that she may not have had. She told the

committee both high school and elementary schools are equally challenging.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked what the "710" budget means.

MS. REYNOLDS responded that the 710 budget is the activities budget. She said the funds could roll over. Ms. Reynolds said with budgets declining, these funds made it possible for her to do things for Soldotna High School that she would otherwise not be able to do.

Number 2048

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF made a motion to advance the confirmation of Sylvia Reynolds, appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, the confirmation of Sylvia Reynolds was advanced.

Number 2024

REX ROCK, Appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, gave the committee a brief history of his service in public education. He told the committee he graduated from high school in Point Hope and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He said he has been serving on the Point Hope Advisory Council for the past 12 to 15 years and has been the basketball coach at the Point Hope High School. Mr. Rock said he has two children who are currently attending school at the University of Alaska. He said he loves to work for kids and that is his main reason for wanting to serve.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked how Point Hope is doing in basketball. He noted that Mr. Rock was honored by being named State Coach of the Year.

MR. ROCK replied that their current record this year is 15 and 4.

Number 1963

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF made a motion to advance the confirmation of Rex Rock, appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development, to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, the confirmation of Rex Rock was advanced.

ADJOURNMENT

Number 1955

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.