

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE RULES STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 4, 2003

1:34 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Norman Rokeberg, Chair  
Representative Pete Kott  
Representative Mike Chenault  
Representative John Coghill  
Representative Carl Morgan  
Representative Ethan Berkowitz  
Representative Beth Kerttula

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE IN LONGEVITY POLICY IN THE  
HOUSE/SENATE EMPLOYMENT POLICY

**PREVIOUS ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

PAM VARNI, Executive Director  
Legislative Affairs Agency  
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the proposed change to the  
longevity policy.

SKIFF LOBAUGH, Human Resource Manager  
Personnel  
Legislative Affairs Agency  
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Noted the possible savings that could be  
realized with the change in the longevity policy.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

**TAPE 03-1, SIDE A**

Number 0001

**CHAIR NORMAN ROKEBERG** called the House Rules Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. Representatives Rokeberg, Kott, Coghill, Chenault, Morgan, and Berkowitz were present at the call to order. Representative Kerttula arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CHAIR ROKEBERG announced that the contract approval for Ron Somerville has been canceled.

ORGANIZATIONAL

Number 0021

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT moved that Representative John Coghill be elected the Vice Chair of the House Rules Standing Committee. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT moved that the House Rules Standing Committee delegate authority to calendar all measures to the Chair of the House Rules Standing Committee.

REPRESENTATIVE BERKOWITZ objected for discussion purposes. He inquired as to why this [motion is being made]. "What's the matter with the way we calendar now," he asked.

Number 0041

CHAIR ROKEBERG explained that legislative counsel informed him that this committee has failed to adopt this motion in the past. Therefore, the motion merely places on the record the Chair's authority to perform calendaring duties.

REPRESENTATIVE BERKOWITZ pointed out that one of the problems in the past has been the release of the House calendar late in the evening, which places all legislators at a disadvantage. Representative Berkowitz surmised that the motion adopts what has been the practice. Representative Berkowitz expressed the need for communication, particularly to the Minority, with regard to which legislation is scheduled for the House calendar.

Number 0070

REPRESENTATIVE BERKOWITZ proffered an amendment to the motion before the committee such that it would include a proviso that all members of leadership be informed [of the House calendar] at

a time certain, preferably by 5:00 p.m. of the preceding legislative day.

CHAIR ROKEBERG objected for discussion purposes. He agreed with Representative Berkowitz that the motion before the committee is one of custom and tradition that will achieve precisely what Representative Berkowitz desires; that is to expedite the calendar and its delivery to members for review. Chair Rokeberg provided his personal commitment to have a calendar distributed to members in an orderly fashion and communicate to [Representative Berkowitz] what will be on the calendar. Chair Rokeberg maintained his objection to Representative Berkowitz's conceptual amendment because of his belief that it may slow the process.

REPRESENTATIVE BERKOWITZ related that although he has had good experiences with some of the House Rules Standing Committee chairs, he has also encountered some sandbagging in terms of which legislation was headed to the floor. Although Representative Berkowitz was comforted by Chair Rokeberg's assurances, he maintained his motion [for the adoption of a conceptual amendment to the motion before the committee].

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Berkowitz and Kerttula voted in favor of the adoption of the conceptual amendment to the motion before the committee. Representatives Kott, Coghill, Chenault, Morgan, and Rokeberg voted against it. Therefore, the conceptual amendment failed to be adopted by a vote of 2-5.

CHAIR ROKEBERG noted that the original motion delegating the authority to calendar all measures to the Chair of the House Rules Standing Committee was before the committee.

CHAIR ROKEBERG announced that he would do everything he could to cooperate with the Minority leader, as he believes he has demonstrated in his activities as the Chair of the House Rules Standing Committee over the last two months. He further announced his intention to continue the cooperation between the Majority and the Minority so long as there is reciprocal cooperation.

There being no objection, the motion delegating the authority to calendar all measures to the Chair of the House Rules Standing Committee was adopted.

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE IN LONGEVITY POLICY IN THE  
HOUSE/SENATE EMPLOYMENT POLICY

CHAIR ROKEBERG turned to the next order of business, which was the consideration of the proposed change in the longevity policy in the House/Senate employment policy. He noted that the Senate adopted the aforementioned policy yesterday.

Number 0152

PAM VARNI, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs Agency, pointed out that the committee packet should include a memo explaining the change in the longevity policy. The House/Senate employment policy that has been in effect since 1988 has worked well with the exception of the longevity steps J-[M] due to the "continuous" language in the statutes. Due to the "continuous" language, legislative staff who have left employment with the legislature for a short period of time or have gone down in ranges can't be placed in the longevity steps. Therefore, long-term staff with institutional knowledge are being penalized.

MS. VARNI specified that by not adopting this statute for longevity and adopting the policy being proposed, legislative staff would not be penalized. At this time, there are three [House] staff members that have been identified as being impacted by this. The total cost is \$4,400. Ms. Varni highlighted that this situation impacts staff of the Minority, Majority, and Records Office. She informed the committee that the Finance Committees and Legislative Council will also be requested to make this change. She noted that although the actual employment policy can't be changed without a joint meeting of the House and Senate Rules Committees and a joint meeting of the House and Senate, this longevity policy can be changed by any committee. She said there is plenty of money under session expenses because last year \$300,000 was reappropriated and \$67,000 lapsed. She also said that adoption of the proposed longevity policy could be a cost saving measure.

Number 0219

SKIFF LOBAUGH, Human Resource Manager, Personnel, Legislative Affairs Agency, pointed out that this change in the longevity policy can save money with training and retention and result in keeping staff long-term.

Number 0230

REPRESENTATIVE COGHILL moved that the committee not adopt AS 39.27.022 but instead adopt [the plan as proposed by Ms. Varni], which would be effective January 16, 2003. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Rules Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:48 p.m.