

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

March 3, 2003
1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Fred Dyson, Chair
Senator Lyda Green, Vice Chair
Senator Gary Wilken
Senator Bettye Davis

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gretchen Guess

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Confirmation Hearings:

Board of Regents

James C. Hayes
Cynthia Henry
Mark K. Hughes
Michael Snowden
Derek Miller

Board of Education and Early Development

Patsy DeWitt
Esther Cox
Shirley Holloway
Richard I. Mauer
Sylvia Reynolds
Rex Rock
Tim R. Scott

CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

PREVIOUS ACTION

No previous action to consider

WITNESS REGISTER

Mr. Rick Luthi

North Slope Borough School District
PO Box 1978
Barrow AK 99723

POSITION STATEMENT: Commented on the nominees in general.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 03-7, SIDE A

CHAIR FRED DYSON called the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. and announced the committee would take up the confirmation hearings. Present were Senators Dyson, Wilken, Green and Davis.

MS. SHIRLEY HOLLOWAY, nominee for the State Board of Education and Early Development, said she is just completing her 40th year as a professional educator and 33 of them had been in Alaska. She has devoted much of her professional life to trying to improve public education.

SENATOR WILKEN said it had been a privilege to work with Ms. Holloway and he looked forward to continuing to work with her.

MS. ESTHER COX, nominee for the State Board of Education and Early Development, said that all of her educational background has been in Alaska and she wants to be involved in helping provide the best educational path for every child in our state.

SENATOR WILKEN asked her to comment on alternative schools in Alaska.

MS. COX responded that she has very positive feelings about options for children. Alaska's education delivery systems must reflect the changes that are happening in our schools, such as more young mothers in school.

SENATOR WILKEN asked her if she is comfortable with Alaska's home schooling laws.

MS. COX replied that she is not very familiar with those laws, although she had dealt with home school students at the King Career Center. From that experience, she believes they are working well.

SENATOR WILKEN said he wished they could replicate the situation at the King Career Center.

MS. CYNTHIA HENRY, nominee for the Board of Regents, testified that she had taught English in the early '70s and completed a Masters Degree at UAF in education guidance and counseling. She worked with the Fairbanks Borough Assembly as well. She views this appointment as a good opportunity to use her experience.

SENATOR WILKEN thanked her for her service to the Fairbanks community and now on a statewide basis. He hoped that she would become the K-12 person on the Board of Regents to direct the Board's efforts to provide a benefit that should come out of the University but isn't there today. He asked if she would do that.

MS. HENRY replied, "Absolutely."

SENATOR WILKEN said Alaska doesn't grow its own superintendents because the University doesn't have a doctoral program. He asked her to look into what it would take to get one.

MS. HENRY replied that she would do that. She elaborated that the administrative training program was moved to Anchorage but should be in both places.

CHAIR DYSON asked how she would maintain her independence while faced with a powerful personality like the President.

MS. HENRY replied that she has experience working with different styles of leadership and that it's very important that the relationships work together. She does her homework and bases her decisions on what the facts say.

MR. JAMES HAYES, nominee for the Board of Regents, said he felt it would be very rewarding to work in Alaska's educational system at this statewide level.

SENATOR WILKEN thanked him for his previous service to the public listed on his resume' and said he thought Mr. Hayes would do a good job.

MS. MARY HUGHES, nominee for the Board of Regents, said she is a graduate of the University and has always wanted to be a member of the Board of Regents. She felt that higher education should be accessible to all Alaskans, but the university needs to balance accessibility and quality of education.

CHAIR DYSON thanked her for her willingness to serve.

MR. MIKE SNOWDEN, nominee for the Board of Regents, said he realizes the value of the education that he got at the University of Alaska and appreciates the challenge of serving on the Board.

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. Snowden whether he would have trouble charting his own course given the University has such a powerful president.

MR. SNOWDEN replied that he is outspoken and has met with the president who impressed him. However, a challenge to board members is to treat their positions like they were in their own businesses.

MR. RICHARD MAUER, nominee for the State Board of Education and Early Development, said the reason he wants to serve is to be able to continue the great work that has been done statewide in the last few years regarding student achievement, educator preparedness and some other changes to public education.

SENATOR WILKEN said Mr. Mauer is familiar with the situation in which some school districts don't contribute anything. He asked what his philosophy is on how and whether unorganized boroughs should participate in the funding of their schools if capable.

MR. MAUER responded that he thought the rural school districts make a contribution in part, through the federal moneys that come to them, even though it doesn't come out of their pockets. He said further:

I have already told you and other members of the legislature for years that I am willing to have you act on my behalf as my assembly. If you feel we should be taxed, which you may do, you may tax me. That is an immediate source of revenue for the state as opposed to mandatory boroughs that may take 5-7 years for you to derive any form of benefit at all financially to the state. So, I know there are folks out there in the unorganized areas who agree with my philosophy...and there are other folks who disagree....

SENATOR WILKEN asked if the federal money is Impact 8874 money.

MR. MAUER said that is correct.

SENATOR WILKEN asked if he is of the opinion that the Impact 8874 money is a local contribution.

MR. MAUER replied:

I am - in that the rural districts don't receive all that money. As you are probably well aware that most of that goes elsewhere and we only receive a percentage of that.

SENATOR WILKEN asked:

You would then agree that if indeed we count it as local contribution in unorganized Alaska, it would then be fair to count it as local contribution in organized Alaska.

MR. MAUER replied

Absolutely.... I don't even want to start that because my perspective is from a statewide perspective on what we can do with all kids and to go on with this, my term on this board is going to have that perspective. Yes, I am from a rural district and I do represent the interests of the folks...but I also work in Fairbanks. That's where I'm calling you from now. I make that drive every day.

SENATOR WILKEN said he wanted to share a letter from the federal government with Mr. Mauer that shows that 8874 money cannot be used in unorganized Alaska. He clarified, "It can only be used in proportion to local contributions."

SENATOR WILKEN added that he looks forward to working with Mr. Mauer.

SENATOR GREEN said she was glad they were going to have another voice of experience on the high school qualifying exit exam and expertise on the "No Child Left Behind" mandate.

MR. REX ROCK, nominee for the Board of Education and Early Development, said he comes from Point Hope, which has been in existence for over 2500 years. He worked closely with his community in the past and wants to continue giving back to it.

CHAIR DYSON asked how he thought the state should provide choices to parents and students in rural Alaska if a school is not producing competent students and No Child Left Behind requires the state to give the parents another alternative.

MR. ROCK replied that his community has a can-do attitude and wants to see its kids go on to college and succeed. He felt that community involvement is important.

CHAIR DYSON asked if he thought regional boarding schools might be part of the solution for some of the children, particularly in small villages.

MR. ROCK replied that he would say no.

CHAIR DYSON thanked him for his willingness to serve.

MS. SYLVIA REYNOLDS, nominee for the Board of Education and Early Development, said she has been involved in education for 24 years and 18 of them have been in Alaska. She is familiar with the issues and has lived in different parts of Alaska.

SENATOR GREEN said she looked forward to having her on the Board and highly recommended her.

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. Luthi to testify.

MR. RICK LUTHI, North Slope Borough School District, responded via teleconference that he just wanted to listen to the next leaders who would be charting the course. He endorsed Ms. Reynolds.

MS. PATSY DEWITT, nominee for the Board of Education and Early Development, said she felt like she is the parent representative. She has five children and has been very involved in their education. She opined, "I think that education is the foundation of our society and for our state...."

She said the Phoenix Program that was tried in Juneau was an exciting way to deliver education. She believes the educational system needs to do a better job of making sure everyone meets the new standards and assessments.

MR. DEREK MILLER, nominee for the Board of Regents, said the University plays an integral part in the future of this state.

CHAIR DYSON asked him what he wanted to accomplish.

MR. MILLER replied that he was going to graduate from the University this year and his term may expire, but now he was working on an increase in student employee wages.

SENATOR WILKEN commented that he thought Mr. Miller was "one great kid."

CHAIR DYSON asked if Mr. Scott was available, but there was no response. He informed the committee that he had received favorable references from several people about Mr. Scott and he didn't know why the committee couldn't make contact with him today.

SENATOR GREEN moved to advance all of the nominees' names to the full body for consideration. There were no objections and it was so ordered.

CHAIR DYSON adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.