

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE RULES STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 3, 2003

1:05 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator John Cowdery, Chair  
Senator Ben Stevens  
Senator Gene Therriault  
Senator Johnny Ellis  
Senator Gretchen Guess

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

Longevity Pay Increment Policy

Chair's Authority to Calendar Legislation

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

**TAPE 03-1, SIDE A**

Number 0001

**CHAIR JOHN COWDERY** called the Senate Rules Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. All members were present. Chair Cowdery announced the purpose of the meeting was to discuss two issues, the first being a change to the longevity pay increment policy.

MS. PAM VARNI, Executive Director of the Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA), told members that the Senate and House employment policy in effect since 1988 has worked well with the exception of the longevity step provision. When a legislative staff member is re-employed at a lower range or an employee is re-employed after leaving a job at a high longevity step, those employees must be rehired at a lower step. The employment policy only allows step increases if employment is continuous.

MS. VARNI said she will be asking the House Rules Committee to approve the same change to this policy. She noted that the Senate and House Rules Committees would be affected, as well as the Legislative Council, the House and Senate Finance

Committees, and the Administrative Regulation Review Committee. The Human Resources Division has identified 10 employees who will be affected. She estimated that the change would cost the Senate Rules Committee about \$5,000. She advised members that this change will help retain long term employees with institutional knowledge.

MS. VARNI explained that the entire employment policy cannot be changed without the support of the joint Rules Committees and a vote of the full legislature. However, the employment statute allows the committee to decide whether to approve the longevity policy, one section of the statute, which negates the need for legislation.

SENATOR GENE THERRIAULT said he was aware, from serving as the Chair of the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee, that staff who leave for a year or two cannot be hired back at the same range because the policy requires seven continuous years. He asked what other employees will be affected.

MR. SKIFF LOBAUGH, Director of the Human Resources Division, explained the policy requires an employee to work seven years at a given range so that if a person works at a range 21 for a year, his or her continuous employment at a given range is broken.

SENATOR THERRIAULT asked if an employee bounces back and forth from a range 19 to a 21, he or she will never get seven years of continuous service in either of those ranges.

MR. LOBAUGH replied there are two types of continuous service, but the end result is that employee would not get two continuous years at the final step, which is F.

MS. VARNI commented that the current policy is difficult for the Human Services Division to administer.

SENATOR THERRIAULT stated:

I move that the Senate Rules Committee not adopt AS 39.27.022 - Pay increments for longevity for State service - but instead adopt their own plan which better applies to legislative service. This new policy is before the members and would be effective January 16, 2003.

CHAIR COWDERY announced that without objection, the motion carried. He then told members he served in the House as the House Rules Committee Chair and does not believe the Rules Committee was designed to be a committee to do the state's business. He said if legislation comes to the Rules Committee that needs further work, it should be sent back to another committee. He asked members to delegate to the Senate Rules Committee Chair the authority to calendar legislation.

SENATOR JOHNNY ELLIS objected and said the Senate has always operated in a different fashion from the House when it comes to the Rules Committee. He believes that calendaring bills is an important function that should stay with the committee. He felt such a change would be a step backward in the public process and take the business of the Rules Committee behind closed doors.

CHAIR COWDERY said the process works well in the House and he has never heard any complaints. He noted that any decisions the Senate Rules Committee Chair makes would be shared with the Senate President and the Senate Majority Leader, as is done in the House.

SENATOR THERRIAULT moved that the Senate Rules Committee delegate authority to calendar all measures to the Chair.

SENATOR ELLIS objected.

CHAIR COWDERY noted the motion carried with Senators Stevens, Therriault, and Chair Cowdery in favor, and Senators Guess and Ellis opposed.

SENATOR ELLIS asked if this issue was announced on today's Senate Rules Committee calendar.

CHAIR COWDERY said it was not as it was not a piece of legislation.

SENATOR ELLIS felt it is a matter of public interest and should have been noticed.

With no further business to come before the committee, CHAIR COWDERY adjourned the meeting at 1:15 p.m.