

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE
May 5, 2006
1:33 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Senator Bert Stedman, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Thomas Wagoner

SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Senator Fred Dyson, Chair
Senator Lyda Green
Senator Kim Elton
Senator Donny Olson

MEMBERS ABSENT

SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Senator Johnny Ellis
Senator Albert Kookesh

SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Senator Gary Wilken, Vice Chair

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Peggy Wilson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Overview Presentation: U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia, Pamela J. MS. SLUTZ - "A Broader Partnership with Mongolia"

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record.

WITNESS REGISTER

Pamela J. Slutz, U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia
Washington D.C.

POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered Mongolia Overview

Lt. Colonel Mark Boor, Coordinator
American People of Mongolia

POSITION STATEMENT: Mongolia Overview Participant

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR FRED DYSON called the joint meeting of the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee and the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee to order at [1:33:12 PM](#). Present from the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee were Senators Gary Stevens and Chair Bert Stedman; Senator Thomas Wagoner arrived shortly thereafter. Present from the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee were Senators Donny Olson, Kim Elton and Chair Fred Dyson; Senator Lyda Green arrived shortly thereafter. Also in attendance was Representative Peggy Wilson.

Overview: U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia, Pamela J. Slutz - "A Broader Partnership with Mongolia"

[1:33:45 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON announced the committees would hear an overview from Pamela J. Slutz, U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia.

SENATOR GREEN arrived at [1:34:29 PM](#).

PAMELA J. SLUTZ, U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia, thanked members and introduced Lt. Colonel Mark Boor. She related her professional history with particular emphasis on her time spent in Mongolia.

She explained that Mongolia is a democratic country that is beginning to privatize its economy, which makes the pursuit of future economic relationships particularly attractive. She related that her purpose is to increase interest in Mongolia.

LT. COLONEL MARK BOOR, Alaska National Guard, explained that he helped General Campbell initiate the Alaska-Mongolia State Partnership Program, which has been a broad-spectrum non-combat informational exchange. The relationship between the Alaska

National Guard and the Mongolian military is mature and expansion of the partnership beyond the military is anticipated. That is in keeping with the life cycle of the State Partnership Program, which calls for bringing in civilian entities and expanding the relationship once the military is engaged.

SENATOR WAGONER arrived at [1:38:19 PM](#).

LT. COLONEL BOOR related he and Ms. Slutz have visited Fairbanks, Anchorage, and now Juneau to talk about cultural and educational opportunities for the Mongolians. That will benefit Alaska through increased trade and educational exchanges. He opined that the Alaska-Mongolia relationship is strong and very much appreciated by Mongolia.

CHAIR DYSON asked who supplied military hardware to Mongolia.

LT. COLONEL BOOR responded those programs are outside the State Partnership Program.

MS. SLUTZ said the U.S. doesn't provide Mongolia much in the way of hard equipment, but it has helped Mongolia become a UN-qualified peacekeeping support unit that currently has peacekeepers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sierra Leone. Members of the officer corps are American-educated and a program to reform their military and develop a non-commissioned officer corps is underway.

She offered the following facts: the economy is based on mining and livestock herding with a recent focus on rural development; 120 Peace Corps volunteers are in the country teaching English; half the population is under the age of 20; and the country is about the size of Alaska with a population of approximately 2.5 million. She suggested that the U.S. is competing with the Russians and the Chinese for their hearts and minds, but for the most part Mongolians would prefer a U.S. alignment.

[1:43:05 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked about trade opportunities between Alaska and Mongolia.

MS. SLUTZ replied Mongolia wants a free trade agreement with the U.S. largely for textiles and apparel, which is controversial and isn't likely to happen. She is encouraging American companies to help Mongolia develop niche markets so it can sell to China.

SENATOR THOMAS WAGONER remarked he was in China last fall and his party was never allowed into rural areas, but he understands it's quite primitive. He asked if the government structure is the same in Mongolia.

MS. SLUTZ responded the government structure is very different. She's free to travel anywhere. The government is a parliamentary democracy and the elections are free and fair with peaceful transfer of power. There is poverty in the rural areas but in stark contrast to China, access isn't restricted.

SENATOR KIM ELTON asked if Alaska might be able to help with programs addressing the issues of avian flu and global warming.

MS. SLUTZ replied any and all assistance would be welcome. Avian flu has been found in some migratory birds so Mongolia is on the State Department's watch list as a potential incubator. The Alaska National Guard has been involved in several disaster mitigation emergency preparedness exercises.

LT. COLONEL BOOR interjected the Mongolians have asked for help and the National Guard has started to branch out with help from emergency management and homeland security personnel.

SENATOR ELTON mentioned that people at the University of Alaska Fairbanks have become very interested in global warming.

MS. SLUTZ said Mongolia has had drought conditions for the last 6 or 7 years and is facing desertification. The aquifers are sinking and the permafrost is melting so there's a lot of opportunity for collaboration.

[1:48:11 PM](#)

SENATOR ELTON agreed that Alaska has the same permafrost issues.

MS. SLUTZ said there are American companies that are currently invested in Mongolia primarily in the services sector, but there is a market for more information management systems. The other area of interest would be environmental technology to deal with mining impacts, water treatment, and air pollution. Mongolia could certainly benefit from what Alaska already knows.

SENATOR DONNY OLSON mentioned Inner and Outer Mongolia and asked about borders in terms of geo-political problems and the economy.

MS. SLUTZ informed members that Mongolia is celebrating the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Mongol state when Genghis Khan was crowned king of all the united Mongol tribes. Now Mongolians are trying to reclaim their roots and identity. Giving a little history she explained that modern Mongolia is what was called Outer Mongolia before it declared independence from China in July 1921. Then during the Sino-Soviet dispute Mongolia sided with the Soviets. For all intents and purposes it was independent but a satellite of the Soviet Union. It went through glasnost and perestroika and by 1992, all the Russians were gone and Mongolia drafted a new constitution.

Inner Mongolia is a province in China and although there are Mongols that live in China they're regarded as Chinese rather than Mongolian.

[1:51:55 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked if the country is Muslim.

MS. SLUTZ said it's Tibetan Buddhist. They prefer to be associated with the Koreans, they tolerate the Russians, and they hate the Chinese. There's an ethnic linguistic cultural connection to the Koreans, but it was a Warsaw Pact associate and an East German associate. There is little contact with central Asia because those are Muslim countries and were never independent. It's a unique country with a unique language that's spoken nowhere else. The U.S. views Mongolia as a democratic rather than a strategic base and it's often cited as an example of a successful democracy in a post communist transformation.

CHAIR DYSON asked what Alaska can do to help.

MS. SLUTZ said she'd like more people to visit Mongolia and a sister-city relationship has been discussed between Fairbanks and some Mongolian city.

CHAIR DYSON asked about the latitude.

MS. SLUTZ replied most of the country is below the 48th parallel and it has a rather cold continental climate.

SENATOR WAGONER asked if there are service clubs in the country.

MS. SLUTZ replied about 600 Americans live in Mongolia and many are missionaries. The country has eight Rotary clubs, something

akin to a Junior League, and a number of youth and community development programs.

[1:55:49 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON mentioned that the committee was going to consider a resolution in support of Taiwan being an observer at the World Health Assembly. He noted that Ms. Slutz had served in Taiwan for a number of years and asked if it would be a good idea.

MS. SLUTZ replied the World Health Assembly considers this issue every year and for the last several years the U.S. government has supported Taiwan being an observer.

LT. COLONEL BOOR introduced Major Steve Wilson as his replacement.

CHAIR DYSON thanked the participants and he and CHAIR STEDMAN adjourned the joint meeting at [1:57:27 PM](#).