

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

April 27, 2005

1:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Fred Dyson, Chair
Senator Gary Wilken, Vice Chair
Senator Kim Elton
Senator Donny Olson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyda Green

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 225

"An Act relating to medical examiners and medical death examinations."

MOVED SCS HB 225(HES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 120

"An Act relating to safety devices and sharp instruments for the prevention of the spread of bloodborne pathogens in health care employees; and providing for an effective date."

MOVED HB 120 OUT OF COMMITTEE

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS:

University of Alaska Board of Regents - Carl Marrs, Jacob Gondeck

Board of Pharmacy - Mary Mundell, Leona Oberts

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees - Margaret Lowe

Board of Education and Early Child Development - Bonny Gaborik

Board of Pharmacy - Leona Oberts

Board of Dental Examiners - Dr. Rebecca Neslund

Board of Professional Counselors - Randy Morton, Tashawna Olson

Alaskan Dental Hygienists Association - Victoria Hauff

Alaska Board of Psychologists - Dr. Kerry Turnbow

State Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Board - Jay
McDiarmid, Alec Kay, Gary Burlson

HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 225

SHORT TITLE: MEDICAL EXAMINERS & AUTOPSIES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) MCGUIRE

03/18/05	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/18/05	(H)	HES, FIN
03/31/05	(H)	HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106
03/31/05	(H)	Moved Out of Committee
03/31/05	(H)	MINUTE(HES)
04/01/05	(H)	HES RPT 5DP
04/01/05	(H)	DP: ANDERSON, KOHRING, MCGUIRE, SEATON, WILSON
04/12/05	(H)	FIN AT 1:30 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519
04/12/05	(H)	Moved Out of Committee
04/12/05	(H)	MINUTE(FIN)
04/13/05	(H)	FIN RPT 3DP 4NR
04/13/05	(H)	DP: HAWKER, FOSTER, MEYER
04/13/05	(H)	NR: HOLM, STOLTZE, KELLY, CHENAULT
04/13/05	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/13/05	(H)	VERSION: HB 225
04/14/05	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/14/05	(S)	HES, FIN
04/27/05	(S)	HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: HB 120

SHORT TITLE: SAFETY FOR HEALTHCARE EMPLOYEES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) WILSON

02/02/05	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/02/05	(H)	HES, L&C
02/24/05	(H)	HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106
02/24/05	(H)	Moved Out of Committee
02/24/05	(H)	MINUTE(HES)
02/25/05	(H)	HES RPT 4DP 1NR
02/25/05	(H)	DP: CISSNA, GARDNER, SEATON, WILSON;
02/25/05	(H)	NR: KOHRING

03/22/05 (H) L&C AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17
03/22/05 (H) Moved Out of Committee
03/22/05 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
03/23/05 (H) L&C RPT 4DP 2NR
03/23/05 (H) DP: CRAWFORD, LYNN, GUTTENBERG,
ANDERSON;
03/23/05 (H) NR: LEDOUX, ROKEBERG
04/12/05 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/12/05 (H) VERSION: HB 120
04/13/05 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/13/05 (S) HES, L&C
04/25/05 (S) HES AT 2:00 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/25/05 (S) Scheduled But Not Heard
04/27/05 (S) HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE LESIL MCGUIRE

Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 225.

DR. RICHARD MANDSAGER, Director
Department of Health & Social Services
Division of Public Health
PO Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99801-0601

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 225.

DR. FRANK FALLICO, Chief Medical Examiner
Office of the State Medical Examiner
4500 S. Boniface Parkway
Anchorage, AK 99507

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 225.

DR. DON ROGERS
Former State Medical Examiner
No Address Provided

POSITION STATEMENT: Supports SB 225.

REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON

Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 120.

DR. BETH FUNK, Acting Chief Section of Epidemiology
Division of Public Health

Department of Health and Social Services
Box 240249
Anchorage, AK 99524-0249

POSITION STATEMENT: Available to answer questions on HB 120.

GREY MITCHELL, Director,
Labor Standards and Safety Division
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD)
POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 120.

JOHN BITNEY
Alaska Nurses Association
Palmer AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 120.

Confirmation Candidates:

CARL MARRS, Nominee
University of Alaska Board of Regents

MARY MUNDELL, Nominee
Board of Pharmacy

MARGARET LOWE, Nominee
Alaska Mental Health Trust

BONNIE GABORIK, Nominee
Board of Education and Early Childhood Development

LEONA OBERTS, Nominee
Board of Pharmacy

DR. REBECCA NESLUND, Nominee
Board of Dental Examiners

RANDY MORTON, Nominee
Board of Professional Counselors

TASHAWNA OLSON, Nominee
Board of Professional Counselors

VICTORIA HAUFF, Nominee
Alaskan Dental Hygienists Association

DR. KERRY TURNBOW, Nominee
Alaska Board of Psychologists

JAY MCDIARMID, Nominee
State Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Board

ALEC KAY, Nominee
State Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Board

GRAY BURLESON, Nominee
State Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Board

JACOB GONDEK, Nominee
University of Alaska Board of Regents-Student Seat

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR FRED DYSON called the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at [1:33:13 PM](#). Present were Senators Elton, Wilken and Chair Dyson. Senator Olson arrived at 1:40.

HB 225-MEDICAL EXAMINERS & AUTOPSIES

CHAIR DYSON announced HB 225 to be up for consideration.

REPRESENTATIVE LESIL MCGUIRE, sponsor, explained that the understaffed condition of the Alaskan Medical Examiners office causes some unexplained deaths to go unexamined; it also diminishes the state's ability to acknowledge and react to the outbreak of communicable diseases. Last year over 1,100 cases were filed and the office has only one state medical examiner. His duties are multifaceted. One of the most important is performing autopsies, but he also has to testify in court in cases of a suspicious death. This becomes an important public issue because a lot of autopsies are suspicious and crimes cannot come to light and because deaths can be caused by contagious diseases. HB 225 requires the Medical Examiner's Office to be staffed with at least one medical examiner and one deputy medical examiner.

CHAIR DYSON asked if staff to this office could be increased without this legislation.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGUIRE replied that it could.

CHAIR DYSON asked if the additional position mandated in this bill is reflected in the Governor's budget.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGUIRE replied:

It is reflected in the House version and I believe it will be reflected in the ultimate version that comes out of the conference committee. That is why there is a zero fiscal note. An additional \$100,000 was put in for this position.... I think from conversations... with members of the your body it may well have been an oversight.

She did not want to create more government, there are few very important areas that should be left to the state and this is one of those areas. She did not want to see this position contracted out or left unfilled.

CHAIR DYSON asked Dr. Mandsager if the administration has taken a position on this bill.

DR. RICHARD MANDSAGER, Director, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) testified that he supported the bill; however he clarified that the division's budget currently does have just enough money in it for minimal operation by two medical examiners and he has been recruiting for the other position for about six months now. He explained the reason for the \$100,000 increment in the Governor's budget was to begin building the capacity of the Medical Examiner's Office to more fully meet its missions including attempting to answer questions from the bereaved as to why their loved one died.

CHAIR DYSON said he understands that the administration supports the bill and the administration has established funding for the addition to the examiners office and the Division of Public Health is currently recruiting the additional staff.

DR. MANDSAGER replied that that is correct.

SENATOR ELTON said this bill not only provides for a deputy, but it also establishes his general duties and he asked if the department would establish his duties if it had one at this time rather than having those duties established in law as they would be doing under this bill.

DR. MANDSAGER replied that he thought the department would establish those duties without this bill in that case. The only other difference this bill would make is that under current statute the department could recruit for a second person who might not be totally qualified to be a deputy. This bill

requires recruiting someone who is qualified to serve as a deputy medical examiner.

1:43:29 PM

SENATOR ELTON asked whether the department has looked at the possibility of having contract positions throughout the state to carry out some of the duties of the medical examiner.

1:44:43 PM

DR. FRANK FALLICO, Chief Medical Examiner, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), replied that the department has considered that option and determined that it is too difficult to find enough staff who are qualified to perform forensic autopsies.

CHAIR DYSON said he has heard that the Medical Examiner's Office misses the cause of some accidental deaths, particularly those involving carbon monoxide, because it does not have sufficient manpower to perform autopsies.

DR. FALLICO, replied:

As a matter of fact, we have investigated those deaths very thoroughly and when an autopsy is required we do it. I do not believe that we have missed any of those deaths. However, I will say that they are very difficult death determinations sometimes and they can be missed even under the best of circumstances.

We have a problem with the transportation of bodies and doing this sort of work within our budget. However, we have special sensitivity to carbon monoxide deaths. As you know, there have been quite a few of them here under tragic circumstances and I do not believe that we have missed any of them. However, one sometimes does not know what one misses, if you will, and we certainly would have a better opportunity to pick up those accidental deaths to which I am now deferring if indeed we had one more medical examiner here.

You know this office really can't run with one examiner because I am stretched to the point where I have to triage or turn away cases that would, perhaps, be done in other good jurisdictions. Once again, I do not believe that we have missed any carbon monoxide

deaths that are of a level of suspicion such that others would disapprove of us having turned them down.

CHAIR DYSON said that he has heard that the department often gets requests to examine cases on behalf of family members whose recently deceased relatives had made suspicious changes to their will immediately before their deaths.

DR. FALLICO responded:

In forensic cases an autopsy is done if it will help solve the case; it is not done solely at the request of family members or even at the request of police or troopers unless we both agree to do it. I always work through the proper police or trooper agencies to see if the investigation really warrants an autopsy. In cases where autopsies are not warranted, I do not do them at the request of families because that is not the purpose of this office and it is certainly out of the question given our current staff level.

CHAIR DYSON asked if he is correct in believing that the death of an elderly person does not trigger a police investigation and all that is required to close a case is a physician's signature on the death certificate.

DR. FALLICO replied that if the death is a natural death that occurs in a hospital, it does not trigger an investigation from his office. If that same death occurs outside of the hospital, there are two ways in which it can be handled. The first is that the police will go to the home and investigate to determine whether or not it was a natural death. If so, that death is reported to him and he makes a determination of the cause of death and signs the death certificate. He said that in the great majority of cases, that does not require an autopsy and if the family asks him for one, he tells them that he is not able to do it. He refers them to a private pathologist who is able to perform the autopsy.

[1:52:05 PM](#)

He said the second way involves what is called an expected home death where paper work is set up in advance. In these cases there is no real investigation by police and no autopsy is performed. Sometimes with these expected home deaths, however, the troopers disagree and they actually investigate the case, but nothing happens with his office except that the paper work is filled out.

CHAIR DYSON asked if the police must respond to a death that has occurred in an assisted living home or a private home where hospice care was provided.

DR. FALLICO responded that it depends on whether or not the death is reported and on the individual circumstances. Assisted living home deaths push a very sensitive button because of certain recent deaths and issues of elder abuse. The police certainly show up in some of those cases.

He said that in every case he reviews the paper work and makes an independent determination about the cause and manner of death and he will require an autopsy in some of those cases - for example, if they die in certain nursing homes - because of the possible political and legal pressure that may arise from the deaths.

CHAIR DYSON supposed:

Here is a scenario that I have heard of, an 87-year old man who has been non ambulatory for six years and who is incompetent, miraculously decides to marry his 29 year-old personal care attendant whose boyfriend is the supervising physician and two weeks after the magic marriage, he ups and dies. But in the interim his will has been changed; but arguably he has died of natural causes and the supervising physician signs the death certificate. Is there anything in our process that looks at recent changes in status such as in marriages or in wills that may make you and the troopers decide that a case needs greater consideration?

DR. FALLICO responded that his office is not a primary investigation agency and would refer such a case to the primary investigative agents and offer its assistance.

[1:56:13 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked if recent changes in a will or in marital status automatically trigger an investigation.

DR. FALLICO replied he believes that the police or troopers would investigate such cases because that is part of their job. He believes that they would inform him of such changes before he made any decision regarding the case. He added that he must ultimately rely on the judgment of the police and troopers and

if they are not willing to go forward on a case, he cannot perform an independent investigation.

SENATOR WILKEN said he was puzzled about why this bill is necessary if the issue was already being taken care of.

DR. MANDSAGER replied he thought the reason Representative McGuire introduced this bill was because she believes the department hasn't paid enough attention to making sure to has the two positions filled. Even, if the bill doesn't pass, he would continue to try and staff the office with two medical examiners with the current budgetary amount and it is a bit of an improvement over current practice in that it states very clearly that the state needs two medical examiners. He stated, "My personal opinion is that that's a correct statement and this bill would put it into statute rather than leaving it as an opinion."

[2:00:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCGUIRE commented that it's not uncommon for the legislature to set out in statute a series of standards in areas if wants to - even within the departments of the Executive Branch there is precedent for it. She said further:

And then secondly, I would just say that I do respect what you have to say and as I have said earlier I tread lightly in this area, but I do think it's a matter of such importance that it should be in statute.

The concern that I have, Senator Wilken is that when you look back at the history, it's been an interesting one. There was a point in time where the Medical Examiner Office had as many as five physicians throughout the state that were doing autopsies. We were rated in the top tier of medical examiner offices in the United States. And over the years we have simply have eliminated those positions or they have fallen off and we have not filled them....

[2:03:22 PM](#)

SENATOR ELTON asked if the word "or" should be placed between "Medical Examiner" and "Deputy Medical Examiner" on page 3, line 19, to form the phrase "Medical Examiner or Deputy Medical Examiner."

REPRESENTATIVE MCGUIRE thanked Senator Elton for pointing out the drafting error and said that the suggested corrections would be made.

SENATOR ELTON moved on page 3, line 19, to insert "or" after "Examiner". There were no objections and Amendment 1 was adopted.

2:04:46 PM

DR. DON ROGERS, former State Medical Examiner, supported HB 225 saying that autopsies should be performed on all the coroner's cases because if one solely relies on police departments and witnesses, one will often be misled. Accurate determination of the cause of death is a requirement on the death certificate and if one does not do the examination and signs the certificate without looking at the body, one is going to be wrong in a substantial number of cases. Medical examiners also have a duty to alleviate the concerns of the families of the deceased.

2:07:11 PM

DR. ROGERS stated that the Medical Examiner's Office lab needs a toxicology component because it currently is not able to perform carbon monoxide tests.

SENATOR ELTON asked if the Office of the Medical Examiner generally provides autopsies on the bodies of people who die in hospital.

DR. ROGERS replied that the Medical Examiner does not perform autopsies for natural deaths that occur in the hospital. He explained that the law requires an autopsy for deaths that occur under anesthesia or that occur shortly after admission to a hospital.

SENATOR OLSON asked whether the investigation of those deaths is a matter of the Medical Examiners discretion or if they automatically fall under the purview of the Medical Examiner by law.

2:09:42 PM

DR. ROGERS replied that when he worked for the Medical Examiners Office, it performed autopsies for all deaths involving anesthesia or a possible medical error because most of the time the physicians and the families wanted someone besides the hospital personnel performing the investigation. He said that in a state as small as ours with as few deaths as we have, it is possible to perform most, if not all, autopsies.

[2:11:35 PM](#)

SENATOR OLSON asked what level of education and experience is required to perform the duties of the Medical Examiner and the Deputy Medical Examiner.

DR. FALLICO replied:

The answer is to be fully qualified as a forensic pathologist certified in the sub-specialty of forensic pathology, one must go to medical school, obtain an MD or a DO degree, followed by at least certification in anatomic pathology, which is a branch of pathology and that takes two to three years, followed then by certification in forensic pathology and that's an additional year of training.

Now, another way to do it would be to become certified in anatomic pathology and clinical pathology, like I am, followed by another year of forensic pathology. So you know there's a long arduous course for getting there - many years. And for a variety of reasons that I won't get into, very very few people go into this field. There are about 300 fully qualified forensic pathologists practicing in the country full time. Those are the numbers. So, with these great shortages and so forth, we are not talking about top-rated people. It is possible that people with lesser training could do this work, but we've all read about the disasters across the country in medical examiner's offices where less-than-well-qualified people perform the work. What we have done is set the highest standards here no matter what, because we don't want to go back to the old ways of doing partial autopsies, of not weighing certain organs and having my reports reflect that certain things in the past that may have been acceptable, but today I would be criticized for. When I get up on the stand - you probably all know me - you read about what I do. I was just down there in Juneau earlier this week and I'm under very, very detailed cross examination with experts that are flown up here by the defense and others to certify my work and try and attack defense. So, I feel what we need are fully qualified people as I've described in those qualifications.

SENATOR OLSON asked how this bill would apply to foreign graduates and that, "Obviously, there are pathologists there."

DR. FALLICO answered that he is a foreign medical graduate from the University of Bologna. As long as the graduate passes the qualification to practice medicine in the United States, and specifically holds a valid bona fide state license, he is just as qualified as anyone else.

SENATOR WILKEN moved to report SCS HB 225(HES) out of committee with individual recommendations. There were no objections and it was so ordered.

HB 120-HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEE PROTECTION

CHAIR DYSON announced HB 120 to be up for consideration.

REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON, sponsor of HB 120, explained that this bill repeals two exemptions from Alaska's Blood Borne Pathogen Protection Standards to bring Alaska standards into compliance with federal standards. Alaska adopted its blood borne regulations in 2000 and in 2001 the federal government adopted theirs. Overall, Alaska's regulations are stronger and tighter than the federal regulations except in two areas. Those are dental and health care offices with less than 25 full time employees. This bill is really a housekeeping bill that ensures that state statutes are equal to the federal guidelines and it is mainly for the purpose of qualifying for certain federal grants.

CHAIR DYSON asked if the medical community has weighed in on this bill.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON replied that the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Nurses Association, the Alaska Dental Society and the Alaska Hygienists Society all support this bill and no one is against it.

CHAIR DYSON asked if the Alaska Medical Association has taken a position on it.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON replied that they have not commented on the bill.

CHAIR DYSON asked Dr. Funk, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), if she is aware of anyone who takes exception to this bill.

DR. BETH FUNK, Acting Chief, Epidemiology Section, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), replied that she is not aware of anyone.

GREY MITCHELL, Director, Labor Standards and Safety Division, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), said:

Currently we are having some difficulty with our federal counterparts who provide us with grant funds to carry out our program - and that is specifically because under the agreement that the Alaska Occupational Safety and Health Program was created under in 1970, we agreed that we would maintain standards that were at least effective as federal standards. And this is an area where we are not meeting the minimum federal standards because we are exempting dental offices and small medical offices. So, to kind of straighten that out, we've taken those two exemptions off of the list and essentially we haven't heard any negative comments. The dental community has come out in support of the bill. Small medical offices haven't voiced any opposition to it. Our in-the-field personnel in the industrial hygiene area have essentially been guiding these businesses toward compliance with federal requirements already. And the overwhelming consensus is that they are already in compliance with federal standards.

[2:22:12 PM](#)

SENATOR ELTON asked if he is correct in believing that all of the entities that fall under the scope of this bill are already required to be in compliance with federal regulations and thus this bill is not going to aggrieve anyone any more than they are already aggrieved.

MR. MITCHELL replied that he is correct.

JOHN BITNEY, Alaska Nurses Association, supported HB 120.

SENATOR OLSON asked if a particular problem caused this issue to come to light.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON replied there was none that she was aware of and that, "This is just something that needs to be taken care of." The impact of this legislation is not expected to be significant for two reasons. One is that the businesses

currently exempt under the Alaska law are already complying with federal requirements and also the participation required for the front-line health care workers in the evaluation process is automatic.

SENATOR OLSON asked how this bill would affect health aides in rural Alaska who are minimally trained and under-funded and often do not have adequate, much less state-of-the-art, equipment. He said one village he visited last year didn't even have sterile suture equipment.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON replied that she was not sure. She assumed they are required to be trained and that would fall back under the umbrella of who is in charge of them and who oversees what they do.

SENATOR WILKEN asked Representative Wilson to state her professional background for the record.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON replied that she is a registered nurse and a former Emergency Medical Technician III who practiced in rural Southeast Alaska. She personally understands the importance of protection for yourself and your patients.

SENATOR WILKEN moved to report HB 120 out of committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note. There were no objections and it was so ordered.

[2:31:28 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. Marrs why he wants to serve on the Board of Regents for the University of Alaska.

CARL MARRS responded that he has spent a significant amount of time developing a scholarship fund for the University of Alaska (UAA) and he would like to see that fund put to good use. He said that the UAA system has the potential of becoming one of the leading fisheries schools in the country and he would like to see it achieve its potential.

[2:39:24 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked Ms. Mundell why she wants to serve on the Board of Pharmacy.

MARY MUNDELL replied that as a pharmacist and a business owner she would bring a unique perspective to the board.

CHAIR DYSON asked her how she feels about allowing physicians to delegate prescription authority to pharmacists.

MS. MUNDELL responded that her attitude depends on the degree of delegation. She added that it is an issue of great concern for all parties and it deserves thorough consideration by the members of the board.

[2:42:17 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked her if she believes that there should be a direct relationship between the patient and the physician who is giving the pharmacy prescriptive authority.

MS. MUNDELL responded that there must be some sort of interaction between physicians and patients. She said that there must, however, be some consideration of conditions in rural Alaska.

CHAIR DYSON thanked her for her statements.

[2:44:47 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON then asked Ms. Lowe why she wants to serve on the Alaska Mental Health Trust Board.

MARGARET LOWE said that she has actively participated in the development of the Alaska Mental Health Trust over the past several years and she feels that the proper management of it is important to the state's ability to assist people with special needs.

[2:46:01 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON then asked Ms. Gaborik why she wants to serve in her prospective position.

BONNIE GABORIK replied that she has been involved at the elementary level of education for almost 30 years and she is currently a principal. She said that over the years she has served at all administrative levels gaining considerable knowledge of school administration; this experience and her enthusiasm would be an asset to the board.

[2:47:58 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON then asked Ms. Oberts why she wants to serve on the Board of Pharmacy.

LEONA OBERTS replied that she is concerned with health issues and has considerable administrative knowledge to offer the board.

[2:52:11 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked Dr. Neslund why she wants to serve on the Board of Dental Examiners.

DR. REBECCA NESLUND answered that she initially became interested in the board when she discovered how difficult it was to obtain a dental license in Alaska. She joined the board so that she could work towards expediting the process of obtaining a dental license, which she has accomplished. She wanted to remain on the board to contribute to its ongoing discussion about dental assistance personnel and living in a rural area she believes it is important that the board has someone who understands rural conditions in Alaska.

CHAIR DYSON asked what are the biggest challenges facing the dental community of Alaska.

DR. NESLUND replied that one of the big issues is the difficulty that rural communities have in recruiting dental professionals.

CHAIR DYSON thanked her for her comments.

[2:56:44 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. Morton why he wants to serve on the Board of Professional Counselors.

RANDY MORTON replied that he believes in community service and this interest has led him to become a member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club in Nome. He has had a number of careers throughout his life and has been involved in a number of organizations; this speaks to his ability to learn and adapt to new positions.

CHAIR DYSON thanked him for his willingness to serve.

[2:59:09 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked Ms. Olson why she wants to serve on the Board of Professional Counselors.

TASHAWNA OLSON responded that she has been a counselor in the state of Alaska for 24 years serving at the Homer High School and in private practice. She grew up in a funeral home with her father who was a remarkable grief counselor and counseling has been her passion since childhood. She said that counseling is important for Alaskan communities and she wants to see that the best possible services are offered in the state.

CHAIR DYSON thanked her for her comments today.

CHAIR DYSON asked Ms. Hauff why she wants to serve on the Alaskan Dental Hygienists Association.

VICTORIA HAUFF replied that she has been president of the association for the past three years and this experience gives her an important perspective on the practice of dental hygiene.

[3:02:13 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON then asked Dr. Turnbow why he wants to serve on the Alaska Board of Psychologists.

DR. KERRY TURNBOW replied that he has been a licensed psychologist since the inception of the program and he is passionate about counseling.

SENATOR WILKEN noted that he is a personal friend of Dr. Turnbow's and wanted the committee to know that it could not find a better guy for the board.

[3:03:25 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked Mr. McDiarmid why he wants to serve on the State Physical and Occupational Therapy Board.

JAY MCDIARMID answered that all of the board members are from Anchorage and members of the Fairbanks physical therapy community feel that they should have a voice on it as well.

[3:05:29 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON thanked him for his willingness to serve and then asked Mr. Kay why he wants to serve on the Alaskan Board of Physical Therapy.

ALEC KAY replied that he has been in physical therapy for the past 15 years and wants to contribute to the betterment of the field at the board level.

CHAIR DYSON thanked him for his willingness to serve and asked Mr. Burleson why he wanted to serve in this capacity.

GARY BURLESON answered that he really doesn't have an agenda, but he was asked to join by other board members. He said that he retired from being a physical therapist after practicing for 35 years.

CHAIR DYSON the asked Mr. Gondeck why he wants to serve on the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska system.

3:08:00 PM

JACOB GONDEK replied that he has had the chance to represent UAA as a student body president and he wants to serve the University system at the state level.

CHAIR DYSON thanked the witness for his testimony and announced that Gregory Gurse, nominee for the Board of Dental Examiners, was the only one who wasn't able to join the committee today. He then adjourned the meeting.