

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

April 19, 2007

3:34 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair
Representative Bob Roses, Vice Chair
Representative Anna Fairclough
Representative Mark Neuman
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CS FOR SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4(HES)
Relating to public health and a health compact.

- MOVED HCS CSSCR 4(HES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 6
Relating to civics education and a citizens' advisory task
force.

- MOVED HCR 6(HES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SCR 4

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH COMPACT

SPONSOR(S): HEALTH, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES

02/21/07	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/21/07	(S)	HES
03/19/07	(S)	HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/19/07	(S)	Moved CSSCR 4(HES) Out of Committee
03/19/07	(S)	MINUTE(HES)
03/21/07	(S)	HES RPT CS 4DP 1NR SAME TITLE
03/21/07	(S)	DP: DAVIS, ELTON, THOMAS, DYSON
03/21/07	(S)	NR: COWDERY
03/28/07	(S)	BEFORE THE SENATE ON FINAL PASSAGE

03/28/07 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
03/28/07 (S) VERSION: CSSCR 4(HES)
03/29/07 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/29/07 (H) HES
04/17/07 (H) HES AT 3:30 PM CAPITOL 106
04/17/07 (H) Heard & Held
04/17/07 (H) MINUTE(HES)
04/19/07 (H) HES AT 3:30 PM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HCR 6

SHORT TITLE: CIVICS EDUC/ CITIZENS ADVISORY TASK FORCE
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HARRIS BY REQUEST

03/28/07 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/28/07 (H) HES, FIN
04/19/07 (H) HES AT 3:30 PM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

RICHARD BENAVIDES, Staff
to Senator Bettye Davis
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the changes to the House CS for CSSCR4, on behalf of Senator Davis, Chair of the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee, sponsor.

GARY FERGUSON, Doctor of Naturopathy
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SCR4.

TOM WRIGHT, Staff
to Representative John Harris
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HCR6 on behalf of Representative Harris, by request from the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB).

CARL ROSE, Executive Director
Alaska Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HCR6.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR PEGGY WILSON called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at [3:34:35 PM](#). Representatives Cissna, Gardner, Fairclough, Roses, and Wilson were present at the call to order. Representatives Seaton and Neuman arrived as the meeting was in progress.

SCR 4-PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH COMPACT

[3:35:15 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the first order of business would be CS FOR SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4(HES), Relating to public health and a health compact.

[3:35:55 PM](#)

RICHARD BENAVIDES, Staff to Senator Bettye Davis, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented the changes to the House CS for CSSCR4, on behalf of Senator Davis, Chair of the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee, sponsor, which read [original punctuation provided]:

Page 1 line 3 Insert "Whereas good health is a common goal for all Alaskans,"

Page 1 Replace lines 5-8 with "Whereas obesity and lack of physical activity can lead to long-term illnesses, such as heart disease, diabetes, and other diseases that require costly and ongoing health care; and

Page 1 line 9-16 Delete

Page 2 line 1-7 Delete

Page 2 line 8 replace "greatest" with "major"

Page 2 line 15 replace the comma with a period and delete the remaining words after the comma

Page 2 line 16 insert "Further Resolved each Alaskan is encouraged to share person-to-person or through various media, personal health successes and experiences."

"Further resolved that Legislators, as members of the Health Compact, support personal health successes"

3:38:02 PM

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES moved to adopt HCS CSSCR 4, Version 25-LS0627\0, Mischel, 4/19/07, as the working document.

3:38:46 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON objected for discussion purposes. He asked for the purpose of the "further resolved" that states that legislators support personal health success.

3:39:06 PM

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA explained that this statement was suggested by Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Commissioner Karleen Jackson. Representative Cissna said that [this confirms the] "buy-in" of legislators as leaders; there are many successful stories within the legislative body that could be shared with constituents. She informed the committee that a witness is available to further explain this part of the resolution.

3:40:48 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON then asked whether the explanation would also address the "further resolve" that states that each Alaskan is encouraged to share, person-to-person or through various media, personal health successes and experiences.

CHAIR WILSON opined that Commissioner Jackson envisioned a statewide initiative to support preventive health inspired by the personal stories of legislators. She said this might include weight-loss competitions in offices.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA added that the commissioner said this statement was for the resolution; however, supporting the resolution is a personal decision.

3:42:24 PM

GARY FERGUSON, Doctor of Naturopathy, informed the committee that he is the wellness coordinator for Eastern Aleutian Tribes Inc. (EATs), and works with many state public health advocates and agencies that promote public health and disease prevention. He said that this resolution is an exciting opportunity for the legislators to put their best step forward to encourage health

and wellness. He said that the primary focus of his practice is on health promotion and disease prevention, and in helping communities be healthier places. Good health starts with health care leaders setting examples of trying to live healthier lives. The state has supported EATs with a grant for tobacco and diabetes prevention; he is excited to see the legislators setting the standard for a "landscape" of wellness and expressed his support for the resolution.

[3:45:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH moved Amendment 1. On page 2 line 2, the amendment adds "voluntary" following the word as; on page 2 line 3 the amendment deletes "personal health success" and inserts "healthy choices made to support personal health and well-being."

[3:46:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES objected for discussion.

[3:46:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER suggested Amendment 1 to Amendment 1 that deletes "healthy."

[3:46:39 PM](#)

There being no objection, Amendment 1 to Amendment 1 passed.

[3:46:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES asked whether the signers of the resolution would be required to stop the baking of cookies in the lounge.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH said that volunteers may proceed as they wish.

[3:47:22 PM](#)

MR. BENAVIDES asked for a reading of the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH read:

Further Resolved that individual legislators, as [voluntary] members of this compact, support choices made to promote personal health and well being.

[3:47:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER clarified "voluntary."

[3:48:10 PM](#)

MR. BENAVIDES read Amendment 1 back for clarity.

[3:48:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES removed his objection to the amendment.

[3:48:43 PM](#)

There being no objection, Amendment 1 [as amended] passed.

[3:48:49 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH thanked the sponsors for quickly responding to the suggestions made by the committee.

[3:49:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN moved to report HCS CSSCR 4, Version 25-LS0627\0, Mischel, 4/19/07, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and a zero fiscal note. There being no further objection HCS CSSCR 4(HES) was so moved.

HCR 6-CIVICS EDUC/ CITIZENS ADVISORY TASK FORCE

[3:50:14 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 6, Relating to civics education and a citizens' advisory task force.

TOM WRIGHT, Staff to Representative John Harris, Alaska State Legislature, presented HCR 6 on behalf of Representative Harris, sponsor by request of the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB). He paraphrased from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

HCR 6 follows the work of the Alaska Civic Learning Assessment Project. This group of 19 Alaskans from many walks of life agreed in a recent report that Alaska schools could improve civics learning among K-

12 students - indeed, that such an improvement is imperative to the health of our democracy - and made several recommendations for follow-up work. The citizen's advisory task force created by HCR 6 would help advance that follow-up work by focusing on well-articulated civics curriculum and effective professional development strategies for teachers, as well as review existing civics content standards.

[3:52:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN asked whether civics courses are history courses.

[3:52:09 PM](#)

CARL ROSE, Executive Director, Alaska Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), answered that civics is very precise in terms of the governance of our country: history is history. He stressed that civics is critically important to a democracy and its neglect is borne out by less attention given to civic responsibilities and the impact seen now in [low] voting percentages. His experience is that civics is not commonly discussed and this resolution is critically important at this point in time. He said, "Democracy doesn't happen on its own. Democracy is learned. If we are not teaching it in our schools, I think we are subjecting our next, next generation to chance." Mr. Rose explained that this resolution allows for volunteer citizens, who have an interest in this subject, to examine the existing articulated curriculum and successful professional development opportunities and make recommendations for improvement.

[3:54:01 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON asked whether this resolution will create an unfunded mandate to schools.

[3:54:28 PM](#)

MR. ROSE explained that the intent is to have volunteer citizens make recommendations to the legislature. This will not create a mandate, but will direct the volunteers to look at the existing standards and make recommendations, if necessary. He opined that this is information that would benefit the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development. Recommendations to better articulate the curriculum or to identify successful

professional development will be made to schools; that is their responsibility.

[3:55:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER recalled attending a civic engagement roundtable discussion at the University of Alaska where she realized that civic engagement is more than paying attention to government and voting; it involves a wide range of volunteer participation in the community, such as serving the community in a political way, and other activities. Civic engagement includes citizens who are uninterested in politics, but who are active in the community. She stated her support for SCR6.

[3:56:47 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES observed that, at one time, there was concern that students were not being taught Alaska history. When teachers were told to teach more Alaska history, the reaction was that other subjects will be have to be cut; academic choices are limited by the number of required courses and exit exams. There are fewer academic options now. He stated his support for SCR6, but asked if the intent of this review is that more civics courses will become a graduation requirement.

[3:57:51 PM](#)

MR. ROSE called the committee's attention to the report by the Alaska Civic Learning Assessment Project, Advancing Civic Learning in Alaska's Schools. Findings were that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has schools concentrating on reading, writing, and mathematics at the expense of other critical subjects. He opined that civics can be taught "across the curriculum"; it can be taught, and measured, as part of reading, writing, and math requirements. He recommended re-introducing civics in a feasible way and to elevate its importance. Mr. Rose opined that the concentration on reading, writing, and math in the last ten years has caused schools to neglect standards.

[3:59:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES provided a personal history of his teaching that incorporated history, government, and civics. He recommended that civics be taught in middle school, before students have to accumulate credits for graduation from high school. He opined that middle school age is an especially

appropriate time to be exposed to positive information about the student's community.

[4:00:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER drew the correlation of Representative Roses's three years of civics courses in school and his service as a legislator.

[4:01:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked whether the recommendations will be a broad review of ideas.

[4:01:50 PM](#)

MR. ROSE stated that he is speaking on behalf of retired teacher Mary Bristol, the state coordinator for civics, who would have the responsibility of organizing and administering this activity. He noted that there will be an outside source for funding the administration of the task force. The intent is to make a curriculum review and report back to the legislature and the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development as to how civic learning can be ingrained in education. The recommendations will include identifying appropriate grade levels and incorporating statewide and community civic activities as well.

[4:03:23 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON pointed out the omission of "writing" as one the subjects referred to in the sponsor statement. She asked whether Mr. Rose would object to the addition of "writing" into page 1, line 11 of the resolution.

MR. WRIGHT said no.

[4:04:01 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON moved Amendment 1 that proposed on page 1, line 11, following the word "reading" inserting ", writing".

Hearing no objection, Amendment 1 passed.

[4:04:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN suggested everyone take the test on page 36 of the Alaska Civic Learning Assessment Project Report.

[4:04:57 PM](#)

MR. WRIGHT explained one of the questions.

[4:06:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN moved to report HCR 6, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no further objection, CSHCR 6(HES) was so moved.

[4:06:29 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced the next meeting is scheduled on Tuesday.

[4:06:46 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:06 p.m.