

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE
October 9, 2008
1:11 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Senator Bettye Davis, Chair
Senator Joe Thomas, Vice Chair - via teleconference
Senator Kim Elton

SENATE EDUCATION

Senator Charlie Huggins, Vice Chair
Senator Kim Elton
Senator Bettye Davis
Senator Fred Dyson - via teleconference
Senator Donald Olson

HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Berta Gardner
Representative Wes Keller
Representative Anna Fairclough
Representative Sharon Cissna

MEMBERS ABSENT

SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Senator John Cowdery

SENATE EDUCATION

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Gary Wilken

HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Representative Bob Roses, Vice Chair
Representative Paul Seaton

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Jennifer Dounay, Senior Researcher, Education Commission of the States - Briefing on P-16 councils across the U.S. and dropout prevention.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record.

WITNESS REGISTER

JENNIFER DOUNAY, Senior Researcher
Education Commission of the States (ECS)
Denver, CO

POSITION STATEMENT: Briefed the committee on P-16 councils and dropout prevention.

DON SHACKLEFORD
Avant-Garde Learning Foundation
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Described the Alignment Study that looks at the apparent gap between high school graduation and college entrance and high school graduation and the workforce.

LARRY LEDOUX, Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke about the upcoming educational summit and plans to improve education.

PAUL D KENDALL, representing himself
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented his concern about energy.

KAREN MARTINSON, Director
SE Alaska Career Center
Sitka, AK,

POSITION STATEMENT: Asked about the impact of career and technical education as a dropout prevention strategy.

PAULA PAWLOWSKI, Legislative Chair
Alaska PTA
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on PTAs and parental involvement.

ANDY ROGERS, CEO
PangoMedia Inc.
Legislative Affairs Committee
State Chamber of Commerce

POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed the business community's interest in working with the state to produce graduates who are ready for the workplace.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR BETTYE DAVIS called the joint meeting of the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee and the Senate Special Committee on Education and the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee to order at [1:11:54 PM](#). Present at the call to order were Senators Donald Olson, Kim Elton, Joe Thomas - via teleconference, and Bettye Davis and Representatives Berta Gardner Peggy Wilson and Wes Keller - via teleconference.

P-16 Councils

CHAIR DAVIS advised those wishing to participate that the teleconference number is 888-295-4546. She recognized that there were Anchorage School Board members in the audience and introduced Jennifer Dounay from Denver.

[1:15:13 PM](#)

JENNIFER DOUNAY, Education Commission of the States (ECS), Denver, CO, explained that ECS is a 50-state nonpartisan education organization established in 1965. Its primary constituents are all levels of state policy makers: governors and staff, legislators and staff, state board members, superintendants and higher education leaders of all types.

She said she is using the term P-16 because the majority of states that have a council use this term; it refers to preschool or pre-kindergarten to school year 16, which is the fourth year of an undergraduate degree. Other states have created P-20 councils, which is considered to be undergraduate plus the first professional or doctoral degree.

MS. DOUNAY continued; as of 2008, 38 states have created a P-16 or P-20/K-20 council. It goes beyond just the establishment of a council however; it includes data systems. Many places are trying to align the K-12 and post-secondary data systems so they can track what happens to students once they graduate from high

school. The councils are also talking about funding mechanisms. Traditionally, K-12 and post-secondary both lobby the legislature or other sources for the same pot of money and it can create some friction between the systems. There is also talk about ways of thinking about education; not separating kindergarten or early learning from the rest of the system, not thinking about school ending at grade 12, but an aligned system from preschool through advanced education. She pointed out that in many cases, parents, students and the general public has no idea that there are three different systems operating in isolation from one another; so getting that word out to the public can help to generate support. Last, they are talking about decision-making through the executive office, the legislature, state boards and other policy-making bodies in the state, so everyone is on the same page and can collaborate rather than compete.

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MS. DOUNAY said there are two or three ways of looking at the need for P-16. Parents do what they can for their children: get them into a pre-kindergarten, get them into a good school and encourage them to consider college; but in each of those different sectors, despite doing all of the right things, their children may not be ready for the next level. The preschool program may be totally misaligned with what a child needs to know when he or she enters kindergarten or first grade. A child entering middle school may find a completely different agenda and curriculum from what he or she had in the elementary grades. A child entering high school may not have been taught what he or she needs to learn to succeed in 9th grade and beyond; and the high school graduation requirements are completely disassociated from the courses and assessments that a child needs to be successful in a college program. This leads to a lot of "passing the buck." The employers are pointing fingers at the two or four year colleges because people graduated without the skills they need in business; the colleges are pointing fingers at the high schools because their graduates have to go into remediation before they are ready for the college programs; high schools are pointing at the middle schools; the middle schools are pointing behind them; and all of them are pointing at the parents for not preparing their kids for school. P-16 programs are designed to align all of the components so everyone is on the same page; everyone understands what is expected in the system before and after their component and children are ready to move up at each step.

MS. DOUNAY said in June of 2008, ECS launched a 50-state database on P-16 and P-20 councils, which was summarized in the June 2008 issue of "Diplomas Count." This publication has "cliff notes" for the ECS database starting on about page 17. They've coded about 15 different data points into simple yes, no or other short answers so it's quick and easy to go through. The full database is available at ecs.org/p20. ECS has been tracking P-16s since the late '90s and it provides a very comprehensive picture of what's going on in the state. There is also a commentary in "Diplomas Count," which she authored, and in it she mentions three "A's" that are essential components of P-16: actors, agenda and appropriation of resources. She said she would try to walk through some of the indicators in the database that align with those three A's and what best practice in state policy appears to be at this time.

CHAIR DAVIS interrupted to ask whether Ms. Dounay wants the committee to hold questions or if they can ask questions as she goes through her presentation.

MS. DOUNAY invited questions during her presentation.

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SENATOR ELTON asked if the councils that have been established are executive, legislative or a mix.

MS. DOUNAY answered they are a real mix; that will be covered in the next slide.

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MS. DOUNAY proceeded to slide 6, "Who's lobbying for alignment?" This slide sets out the different entities that have pushed for the creation of a P-16 or P-20 council: in 11 states it was through executive order; in 10 it was through legislation; in 14 states it was an entirely voluntary effort; and in 2 it was through a state board resolution or state board rule. She said those have really changed over time. For example, Georgia created the first P-16 council in 1996 through an executive order of then governor, Zell Miller. In 2002 a new governor lobbied to create a totally different P-16 council with its own members and agenda. After he left office, while the statute stayed on the books, the council started to evolve away from what was in statute and is now a purely voluntary effort comprising agency heads of early learning, K-12, and post-secondary. She said there has been a similar evolution in other states, where there was a voluntary council and then legislation

was enacted that created a new agenda, new members and brought the council under the purview of the governor's office.

CHAIR DAVIS announced that Senator Charlie Huggins and Representative Sharon Cissna had joined the meeting.

MS. DOUNAY said this illustrates that these councils are by no means static. The way they are created changes; the members leading them change; they are constantly in a state of flux. Slide 7, "Who's on Board?" lists the "actors." Legislators are represented in many states. In virtually all states, chiefs and SHEEOS (State Higher Education Executive Officers) such as presidents of two and four year post-secondary institutions are represented and in a number of states independent universities or colleges also have a voice. A number of councils include a representative of the governor's office, business and labor leaders and others. In areas with a large Native American population tribal representatives may also be included. Only 18 states have an early learning representative on the council.

Once a state creates a council it's just the beginning. She referenced a draft of a policy brief in the members' packets on "landmines" to P-16 councils. P-16 and P-20 councils face many challenges. Some states may have too small a group and no policy leaders to push follow-through; some have many members but so few with authority to enact change that they have lost focus and members aren't sure of their roles on the council; some have no early-learning representation so the critical issues of early learning just aren't on the agenda. In other states that don't have legislative or gubernatorial representation, there may be parallel tracks and duplication of efforts. She also stressed the importance of including business leaders to identify for lawmakers and others the needs that are not being met in the business community and to speak to what the workforce needs are in terms of high school completion and college readiness.

MS. DOUNAY stated that when a council does not have the right actors in place it can cause confusion about what the council's mission is and the roles of its members. If a council does not meet frequently enough, it can lose momentum and urgency about moving forward with items on the agenda; most meet at least quarterly.

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SENATOR ELTON said he was trying to think of a rationale for a P-16 rather than a P-20 council. He said it seems that the challenge is how students are prepared to get the education they

need. If, for example, they are discussing how to prepare high school students for college, why isn't it equally important to discuss how to prepare college students for graduate school?

MS. DOUNAY said many of the P-20 councils don't actually go beyond the first four years of college in the scope of their agenda, which is why she uses the term "P-16" more often. A small number of states are looking at economic and workforce development as part of their P-20 council agenda and that is where the advanced degrees come in. Of those states with P-20 councils, some are looking at advanced degrees for teachers, administrators and other school staff.

CHAIR DAVIS said Alaska can decide whether it wants to create a P-16 or a P-20 council. The current commissioner of education is very interested and an education summit is planned for later in the year to determine a direction. Alaska wants to put it in statute.

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MS. DOUNAY acknowledged that most states that have created councils in the last 5 years, have created P-20 councils; however some people think they aren't doing well enough with P-16 and question the move to P-20.

In terms of the work councils do, she said she would recommend that they initially limit their agenda to five or fewer items. As results come in the agenda can be expanded. She highlighted Indiana, which has had a council in place for about 10 years. It has a larger agenda but it started out smaller.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said Alaska has so many groups that want so many different things to happen, it seems to her that if all those groups could be involved in this one program, perhaps they could accomplish more together.

MS. DOUNAY strongly agreed. She talked about the success of Indiana's and Georgia's programs, where it's clear they are doing things together that they couldn't be doing by themselves. In Georgia, the post-secondary is involved with early learning because they are developing programs to get highly trained staff into those pre-kindergarten early learning programs; K-12 and post-secondary are working together to reduce the need for remediation; and teaching quality is a major part of their P-16 agenda. 16 states have set numerical goals with attainment dates in mind. For example, the goal may be to increase the graduation rate by 12 percent by a specific year, or for an additional "X"

number of students to enter two or four year institutions by a specific year, or perhaps the goal is to double the number of bachelor's degrees granted by a set date. Georgia has created a balanced score card (slide 11) listing specific targets and has assigned a staff person to be responsible for overseeing each of those components.

Slide 12 presents "Appropriation of Resources," financial and human. About half of the states [that have councils] have legislative appropriations or some funding built into agency budgets to support the work of the councils. A small number of states receive private funds from foundations. Arizona requires tribal groups to donate a certain percentage of their casino winnings to charitable, non-profit, or civic organizations and at least one contributes to the P-16 council to support some of the work it is doing.

Nebraska has a three-tiered system of support:

- First tier - K-12 and postsecondary agencies and a non-profit foundation to provide basic operating expenses.
- Second Tier - Smaller organizations such as state superintendents provide a small part of the money.
- Third Tier - Civic and other organizations provide "in-kind" support like meeting rooms, food for meetings, staff as needed.

Wyoming is the only state that has a sustainability subcommittee whose goal is to identify and receive funds from three types of entities: governmental, foundation and business.

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MS. DOUNAY said in terms of human resources, 21 councils have at least a .5 full time employee (FTE) supporting the council. Kentucky is talking about creating a council through legislation so it can get appropriations for staff to get the work done.

North Carolina and Georgia have a two-tiered approach with a small number of agency heads meeting quarterly or less often and another cabinet that meets every six to eight weeks. In North Carolina it is called the "kitchen cabinet" and each member is a staff member for the higher education cabinet.

CHAIR DAVIS asked if Shirley Holloway is off-net, as she has done a lot of work on P-16 councils.

DON SHACKLEFORD said he would speak later in place of Ms. Holloway.

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CHAIR DAVIS talked about the statewide education summit scheduled for November.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked for the date in November.

CHAIR DAVIS said she'd get dates for her.

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SENATOR ELTON referred to the slide "Appropriation of Resources" and wondered how private funds are handled. He asked if there are issues if a major funding source isn't happy with the council's decisions.

MS. DOUNAY answered yes. Because so many councils are relatively new, it isn't clear yet whether the people providing the funds are calling the shots; but some states are so strapped for funds, it is a challenge to find staff to keep work moving forward.

SENATOR ELTON asked how other councils handle staffing.

MS. DOUNAY replied it varies and pointed out that one data point in the database addresses that under the minimum .5 FTE. She said she can't remember how it breaks out; but they also have yet to determine whether it makes a difference who provides staff.

CHAIR DAVIS commented that's why it is so important that each state decide how it wants to do this. She said she has heard from many people who want the council and guidelines to be established in statute. When she went to a meeting in Boston, Alaska also sent one member from the state Chamber of Commerce and one from the Anchorage Chamber. She stressed the importance of alignment to ensure that children are prepared to move from one educational level to the next and then into the workforce.

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CHAIR DAVIS invited the public to ask questions.

[1:50:38 PM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS, via teleconference from Fairbanks, asked why states don't include this type of council or committee in their existing department of education rather than setting up something outside the department.

CHAIR DAVIS said she doesn't know if other states do it that way; but they can discuss whether they want to do that in Alaska. She looks forward to looking more closely at the way Colorado's new P-16 council is doing and assured Senator Thomas that there will be many examples available at the upcoming summit.

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DON SHACKLEFORD, Avant-Garde Learning Foundation, Anchorage, AK, said the foundation is conducting an "alignment study" through the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA). It is looking at the very questions being discussed, particularly the apparent gap between high school graduation and college entrance and high school graduation and the workforce. It is not only an alignment study but also a preparedness study. They are asking questions such as: What requirements do kids have to meet to graduate from high school? In what schools are kids being successful? Is there a discrepancy between urban and rural graduation with regard to student performance in schools? What are the colleges and universities in Alaska looking at in terms of what people need to know in writing, reading, mathematics and science; in other words, what are the base-level courses that people are being offered in college and how many of our kids are having to go through those developmental classes, why and how can they address it?

The preliminary report will be available by the 1st of November and the final report will be completed before the conference in mid-November.

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REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said she has found that the attitude of the parents has a lot to do with it. Her district is mostly rural; some areas are quite inaccessible and she is finding that some parents in those inaccessible areas are less concerned about kids' education than parents in other areas. She questioned how to evaluate that.

MR. SHACKLEFORD admitted that it is difficult and complicated. Educators have little control over parents and home life but a great deal to say about what goes on in the schools; part of that has to do with the relationships with parents and how well educators develop those relationships in the community. He said during the 30 years he has worked in education in this state, he has seen several very good schools in rural Alaska that have a lot of participation by parents because the schools have made

that outreach. He suggested that a P-16 council could look at how to better address parent and community involvement.

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MS. DOUNAY added that ECS published a policy brief that looks at different approaches states can use to support parental involvement. In many cases parents feel that they need to be involved in the earlier grades but fall away during the high school years when research indicates that setting high expectations and providing support are really essential.

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CHAIR DAVIS again invited people in the audience to comment.

[1:59:04 PM](#)

PAUL D KENDALL asked if he could testify.

CHAIR DAVIS said testimony would be taken starting at 4:00 PM.

She announced short at ease from [2:00:22 PM](#) to [2:16:18 PM](#).

LARRY LEDOUX, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, AK, expressed interest in these topics; DEED has been working hard looking at the success of Alaska's kids. A statistic that keeps coming to mind is that 40 out of 100 students drop out of Alaska schools. It's a complicated issue, but inaction is not acceptable.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said he gets calls every day from people asking for help "putting out fires" and he doesn't like to operate that way. But in order to be proactive, there must be a plan yet there is no broad range education plan in this state and never has been. He clarified that when he talks about planning, he is not talking about planning that can be used to hide behind, but planning that holds DEED accountable and allows it to direct resources to a common goal; planning that will help to prevent kids from walking away.

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As part of that, the state and the University of Alaska are sponsoring an education summit to help the State of Alaska build an education plan. The outcomes are to define a vision and a mission for Alaska's children. They also intend to develop some graduation outcomes that they believe are important. They believe citizenship is important; working ethically and honestly is important; using technology; an understanding of the arts; mastery of a wide body of knowledge; the ability to understand

service and contributions to the community. Those things are important but they aren't stated anywhere. The summit is going to take a look at some of the broader statements about what it want graduates to look like when they leave school. He emphasized that right now in Alaska, a student can graduate with a D- average and 23 credits and passing an exam in math, for example, 80 percent of which is based on 8th grade standards. That isn't enough; whatever standard is set, the kids will meet it. Many kids walk away because the system doesn't meet their needs, not because they are not able to learn. He pointed out that kids now days are learning in real-time. When they want to know something, they go learn it. They aren't interested in sitting for 180 days to earn a credit and they aren't waiting for us any longer. He wants a system that will build a vision in every child.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said another component of the summit is to set specific goals and objectives from birth to work. Although DEED doesn't have responsibility for children before they come to school, he insisted that the state pays the price if they are not interested. So while he was not saying the department is going to be responsible for all of that, he is willing to work collaboratively with other agencies.

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The summit is invitation only. DEED solicited the names of leaders, movers and shakers in business, industry and services. Each superintendent was asked to bring four people to the summit: the superintendent, a school board member, a community leader or politician and a teacher or principal; the University of Alaska is inviting over 100 people. Also invited are 150 agency heads, people who are involved with young people in Alaska. He emphasized that he hopes to bring together people that normally don't want to be in the same room with one another; he wants diverse opinions. Groups will be asked to tell what success will look like; what it will look like if they accomplish this goal and objective; who will be involved in helping to achieve that; and what opportunities and challenges will be faced on the way. The real work for the summit will take place afterward to put workgroups together, groups of people to break things down into actions and costs.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said he believes a K-20 commission is needed; there should never be silos. The department of education or K-12 is intimately related to the university system. It needs to work hand-in-hand with the universities that train the teachers and with people involved in early education.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked for the dates of the summit.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said the summit will be held November 13-14 at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage; invitations will go out this week.

[2:28:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked how many of the kids that do not graduate have or have had an IEP. [Individual Education Plan - A legal document created to ensure a child's teacher understands his/her learning and/or physical limitations and follows steps necessary for success. It falls under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or "IDEA."]

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said he can tell her that by the time of the summit.

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PAUL D KENDALL, representing himself, Anchorage, AK, asked if the summit will be on camera so everyone can participate.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX responded that they are not planning to do that now. They have talked about trying to broadcast it statewide; they are doing a statewide survey prior to the summit and inviting citizens all over the state to share [their views]. He asked Mr. Kendall if he is suggesting that they broadcast it live.

MR KENDALL said his concern is that these "insider" meetings are becoming an infrastructure versus society in multiple sectors. He asserted there's an obligation to put the meetings on TV so everyone can learn and come along together. He asked whether there is an itinerary or an agenda so the public can see the flow during the day.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said a copy of the agenda will go out with invitations. The flow of things has been a concern; the idea is to provide maximum interaction among the participants so a lot of the work will be done in small groups.

MR. KENDALL asked if there will be audience seating so the public can view the proceedings.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX replied that he hadn't thought of it but it sounds like a great idea. The second day, when the draft plan is

presented, would be an excellent time to invite the public to see what is being presented. He said he would bring that to the group; it makes a lot of sense.

MR. KENDALL questioned why the second day; he likes to see things during formation. He also stated that he can't imagine not making energy a part of the discussion; it's absolutely essential and foundational. He wondered who is developing the agenda and if it is available for the public to see or if it is being done by a select few.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX commented that over 400 people randomly invited can hardly be considered a select few; but the intention is to collect information before and after the summit. He said Mr. Kendall had some good comments as far as the audience and presentation of the plan and pointed out that the group will post information on the website today. Eight major topics have been identified and he was not sure that energy would be a chief topic of discussion.

[2:32:58 PM](#)

MR. KENDALL asked if they will have some of their stiffest critics present so they can assess the content of the criticisms

CHAIR DAVIS said that Commissioner LeDoux will deal with that later and announced that the committee will go on with the next presentation.

Dropout Prevention

[2:34:02 PM](#)

MS. DOUNAY relayed that drop out prevention and P-16 are very much interrelated. Many P-16 councils are looking specifically at dropout prevention as part of their agenda. It is huge issue; approximately four out of ten kids nationwide and one out of three high school students, are dropping out. That amounts to 1.2 million students per year that do not graduate. Males students tend to drop out at a higher rate than females and that is true across ethnic lines. There is a strong correlation between dropping out and various negative consequences. Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed and to live at or near the federal poverty level; they are also more likely to become incarcerated. This translates to reduced tax revenues at all levels and a higher likelihood of reliance on public assistance programs. The problem also extends to health and related issues. The chart on slide 4 shows that there is a huge spike in Medicaid coverage among those who have not finished high school.

There is also a clear link, not just in the U.S. but internationally, between education and life expectancy; the more years of school a person completes, the greater his or her life expectancy. In addition, a study published in 2006 indicated that one in four of all dropouts and one in three female dropouts left school, at least in part, because they became parents.

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MS. DOUNAY said that recent research has provided much more insight into who is leaving school and what factors cause kids to leave school. She referenced an ECS report from July or August of 2007 that summarizes some of the research she will present today. The report looked at students in Chicago and defined "on-track in grade 9" as having completed at least five course credits of English, math, science, social studies and one other course for enough credits to move up to 10th grade; and having earned no more than one "F" in English, math, science or social studies. Another study tracked students in Philadelphia from grade 6 through a year or two after they were supposed to have graduated from high school. It found that if a student had failed English or math; had attended school 80 percent or less of the time; or had an out-of-school suspension, even as early as six years before graduation, he or she was significantly more likely to leave school before earning a diploma. If students have behavior incidents such as low attendance or suspension in addition to failing math or English, the likelihood spiked even higher. A University of Michigan study looked at student/teacher relationships and found that in schools where student and teacher responses to survey questions indicate that when students believe their teachers know who they are and care about them, and teachers say they know and care about their students, the dropout rate is significantly lower than it is in comparable high schools where survey responses were not so positive. Smaller schools are more likely to have those positive relationships between students and teachers than larger schools. It is also very important for parents to set high expectations and clearly communicate those to high school age children. Last, she said, the kind of math curriculum offered and student achievement in math correlates closely with a student's likelihood of graduating.

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REPRESENTATIVE WILSON referenced Ms. Dounay's comment that school size is a factor in student/teacher relationships and asked if she could identify a break-point in the size of a school.

MS. DOUNAY said that large schools of 1600-2500 students have higher dropout rates than small to medium or very large (over 2500) schools. That the rate was lower in very large schools surprised researchers. They believe it is because they were focusing on dropouts in grades 11 and 12 and in those very large schools, students were leaving in grades 9 or 10, even before the study could catch them.

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She went on to slide 6, "What do dropouts say?" which presents information from two surveys of recent dropouts. One is the 2006 nationwide study she mentioned earlier; the other was published by the Michigan Education Association in May 2008. The findings of both studies were similar. Among students age 16 to 25, the most common reason given for leaving school was that the students found school boring and could not see a relationship between what they were supposed to learn in school and what they thought they needed to know to get by in the world. The second most common reason was that the teachers and other adults had low expectations so the students did not feel inspired to expend much effort. Two thirds of students said they would have put forth more effort had more been expected. In the Michigan study in particular, a number of dropouts said they had no job or career direction. They didn't know what they wanted to do after high school and they had no adult guidance; so they felt school was pointless. One third of young adults in the 2006 study said they were actually failing in school and felt it was impossible to catch up, so they gave up. Over 50 percent of those in the 2006 study said their parents were not actively involved in their schools. Many said they simply had too much freedom; they knew they were allowed to leave school at age 16 and were just waiting for their birthdays to do so. The total is more than 100 percent because students frequently gave more than one reason for the decision to drop out.

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REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked if it makes a difference the state allows children to drop out at age 16, 17, or 18.

MS. DOUNAY said she didn't have that information on hand; she hasn't seen a recent study on graduation rates and thinks that is because states are changing the way they calculate graduation. In some states the very definition of a graduate is changing. Until a couple of years ago, Texas was allowed to count GED completers as high school graduates, but a lot of research suggests that completing a GED does not result in the

same outcomes in terms of post-secondary access and completion or income. Also many states are replacing older data systems to better determine whether kids actually drop out or just move from one district to another. Some states have changed tracking methodology; more states are moving toward a four year cohort system that looks at the number of kids entering 9th grade and the number coming out four years later, which is a little clearer. Nevada is calculating dropout rates in grades 6, 7 and 8 as well.

[2:45:53 PM](#)

MS. DOUNAY noted that slide 7, "Dropout Prevention: What States Are Doing," is very "wordy." She said the approaches schools are taking to address the dropout problem is varied; some are based on research and some on anecdotal evidence. She said there is a strong correlation between dropping out and being identified for special education; some research also suggests that a certain number of Career/Technical Education (CTE) courses may help keep students who are not interested in a traditional academic program in school. She said she does not have time to get into that much today, but ECS does have a 50-state database on CTE programs on its website. She noted that a small but growing number of states are looking at not stopping adolescent literacy programs at grade 3, but providing teachers with training to build upon student literacy in grades 4 through 12 as well.

MS. DOUNAY said the first dropout prevention point is increased rigor in the high school curriculum. That gets at the research on the math curriculum discussed previously and what dropouts said about teachers setting and students meeting low expectations. ECS identified eight states where all students are expected to complete a college/work ready curriculum, which includes: four years of English, three years of social studies, three years of math, and three years of a laboratory science. That curriculum has been identified as best preparing students to achieve a benchmark on the ACT assessment. It also aligns with research from the U.S. Department of Education; students who completed that curriculum were most likely to complete high school and go on to complete a four-year degree within a reasonable period of time. Of the eight states having a more rigorous curriculum, only Texas has graduated a class with that standard. She said she hasn't seen statistics on the number of students that chose the lower-level curriculum, which was a statewide option before the class of 2008. Nonetheless, the results are encouraging. The example cited is San Jose, California, a fairly large, diverse district with respect to native student language, ethnicity and income. In 1999 the local

board determined that all students would be expected to complete the curriculum that the state university systems accepted for basic admissions. A number of critics said that students couldn't be expected to complete that curriculum yet the district saw that graduation rates increased. Other unexpected results included: more Latino students completed advanced math and laboratory science courses; state-level assessment scores for the district rose more quickly than for the rest of the state; more diverse students took AP courses and passed AP exams with higher scores.

[2:50:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked if Ms. Dounay could provide a link to the higher standard curricula.

MS. DOUNAY directed Representative Cissna to the ECS home page; navigate to the high school online database page, which has links to "College-Ready Standards" and "Highlights of Local Initiatives." The website also profiles what the San Jose school district did to prepare teachers for the advanced requirements and gives some results. Based on that success the Los Angeles Unified School District decided that students in the class of 2012 would be required to complete the college-ready curriculum. San Diego is beginning to talk about following in the footsteps of San Jose and Los Angeles.

MS. DOUNAY said it isn't enough to say that students have to take the courses. It's also essential to improve teacher preparation and professional development, have early remediation and communicate with parents about why the curriculum is changing.

MS. DOUNAY said another piece is student accountability. Research done in an early '90s Princeton study shows students that were required to stay in high school until age 18 were more likely to get a diploma. Now 27 states have policies to deny a driver's license if the academic criteria is not met. Other restrictions have also been imposed but data on the successes is anecdotal.

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MS. DOUNAY next addressed graduation plans and career "majors." Graduation plans refer to when a student sits down with a parent and teacher or counselor at the beginning of grade 9 to determine which classes to take to attain a particular goal after high school. This helps to get students and parents thinking about what will give meaning to the high school

experience. Just nine states currently have this requirement; 20 states and DC will have these counseling requirements for the class of 2011. Providing greater academic focus gets students thinking about so-called career majors. Currently three or four states require, instead of eight electives, just four general electives and three or four electives in a particular area of interest. Those can change from year to year; the idea is to stimulate interest in setting goals and taking courses in the area of focus.

[2:57:09 PM](#)

CHAIR DAVIS asked Ms. Dounay not to spend so much time on each of the dropout prevention items on the list. (slide 7)

[2:57:41 PM](#)

MS. DOUNAY mentioned counseling for dropout prevention and noted what some other states are doing to put more counselors in high schools. Touching on remediation, she said ECS launched a database in 2007 looking at what classes the district is required to offer if students don't meet a certain threshold. Various other indicators are also used. When students fall behind, they need those supports yet they're often not provided or not evaluated if they are provided. Early college high schools is an approach where a five-year program begins in grade 9; at the end of five years the student receives an associate degree, technical certification, or enough college credits for junior year standing. Only six states have statewide policies for this. Other states that have local partnerships are governed either by dual enrollment or charter school rules. They do have a significant positive impact on students, particularly given that the programs are geared to underserved students.

[2:58:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked for a definition of an underserved student.

MS. DOUNAY replied it varies by district, but primarily it includes students who aren't necessarily on a college path when they start high school.

She relayed that in October or November model policy components for early college high schools will come out. It will draw from current legislation in North Carolina and other states that have model programs.

Small learning communities, breaking up a large high school into smaller communities, is done primarily at the local level but

some states are getting into that. For example, in Nevada a separate learning community must be provided for grade 9 in high schools with more than 1,200 students. Florida encourages districts to develop schools within schools for large high schools.

Alternative pathways to a diploma is the next point. It looks at ways to provide flexibility to disengaged high school students so they can get the credits they need to earn a regular high school diploma. She noted that the strategies in the policy brief, "Beyond the GED," would apply equally to students who aren't doing well in a traditional high school.

Middle grade efforts to prevent dropouts includes research from Philadelphia on grade 6 indicators. Some states are just starting to look at the middle grades and what has to happen there for students to stay in school and on track in preparation for high school.

Parental involvement was mentioned earlier. She noted that the policy brief sets out the various areas of policy including: developing a formal policy; reaching out on academic expectations; accommodating parents' needs; building staff capacity; building parent capacity; developing benchmarks and evaluating impacts.

Ninth grade initiatives for preventing dropouts is demonstrated by Nevada requirement for separate learning communities for schools with over 1200 students. Each learning community must have: at least one licensed administrator that is solely dedicated to the community; guidance counselors that are assigned just to that learning community; and one adult mentor for each 9th grader. Any need for remediation counseling is to be identified as early as possible, not at the end of 9th grade or later. Louisiana and Rhode Island have early intervention for students at risk of failing 9th grade math.

[3:02:48 PM](#)

CHAIR DAVIS asked if the committee could get supporting documentation.

MS. DOUNAY said she would provide the state legislation.

The final state policy approach for dropout prevention is dual enrollment. In Oregon there is a statutory priority for school districts to inform dropouts that the "Expanded Options" program is available. Any student who has dropped out may reenter the

system to participate in that program. Also, the state annually must report the number of dropouts that participated in expanded options and earned a high school diploma. In Rhode Island school districts with a dropout rate higher than 15 percent must provide an expanded option. Indiana provides a program called "Fast Track to College." Students who are age 17 and have permission from their high school or dropouts who are 19 or older may finish their high school diploma at a community college or four year school. High school credits and secondary credits can be earned concurrently. She noted that a recognized disadvantage is that those who are older than 19 and do not have a high school diploma are not eligible for federal financial aid for tuition and fees. Indiana officials hope to address that and Oregon already does provide a subsidy. She noted that the Oregon program is mentioned in the "Beyond the GED" policy brief. It also looks at dropout recovery including increasing the upper statutory age; flexibility in accelerating learning and demonstrating competency; flexible credit recovery options; flexibility in course scheduling and course loads; clear connections workforce; and communicating options to the public.

3:04:50 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked for further explanation of the expanded options that Oregon requires.

MS. DOUNAY explained that it's a program for students in grades 11 and 12 to take courses on a college campus and earn both high school and post-secondary credits.

CHAIR DAVIS asked if the public had questions for Ms. Dounay related to dropouts.

3:06:36 PM

KAREN MARTINSON, Director, Southeast Alaska Career Center, Sitka, AK, asked for information about the impact of career and technical education as a dropout prevention strategy.

MS. DOUNAY mentioned a study that looked at students who completed between 1 and 12 credits in a career/technical education (CTE) program. That study found that at-risk students who completed 6 credits were more likely to graduate than at-risk peers. But once the at-risk students completed more CTE courses than academic courses, the dropout rate increased. She offered to provide a copy of the study.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked Ms. Dounay to provide that information to legislators as well.

[3:08:33 PM](#)

MR. KENDALL asked Ms. Dounay if she had any information about the parents of dropouts such as their age, how long they've been married, number children in the family, and socio-economic background.

MS. DOUNAY replied she hasn't looked at that, but she has seen research that suggests that children from single-parent homes are more likely to drop out than those from two-parent homes.

MR. KENDALL asked if she finds that sort of parental information relevant when looking at students. He continued: "Not only parental and point of birth and the society within which they grow, but some of the teachers who are being brought in. ... Is there teacher data as to where those teachers come from - predisposition for a sexual orientation or diversity of background?" He said he'd like to see that information if it's available.

MS. DOUNAY asked if he is looking for a correlation between students who dropout and the teachers they have.

MR. KENDALL replied he's already seen the data that's been presented here. He's curious to look at the families of dropouts. "My concern is about the child and the parental raising. Not only that but whoever influenced the child, and that most direct influence is the teacher after the parents. I would think you would be looking at assessing the teachers' inclinations from many different perspectives."

MS. DOUNAY responded that a few states are developing data systems for the purpose of tracking which students have which teachers. At this point there aren't enough years of data to make any sort of finding.

MR. KENDALL asked if families of dropouts are also being tracked with respect to drugs, violence, or social services.

MS. DOUNAY replied ECS hasn't tracked that and she isn't familiar with other organizations that have done that research.

CHAIR DAVIS announced that Representative Fairclough joined the meeting.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH apologized for being late; her office had been following the meeting and Senator Dyson was on line as well.

3:12:47 PM

CHAIR DAVIS said that if she received an updated list she would recognize other legislators.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA observed that an issue in Alaska is that a large percentage of the population moves seasonally for work, taking their families with them. She asked Ms. Dounay if she has seen any correlation between an itinerant population and the dropout rate and how different groups have addressed that.

MS. DOUNAY replied she has seen some research on the number of times a child changes schools during the K-12 years; after changing schools a certain number of times it is less likely that a student will complete high school. She has not looked at the migrant issue but she could do some research in that area.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH said that issue was very important when she served on an elementary school PTA and on the Anchorage Assembly. Although the focus here is on 9th grade, she wonders if there is research on attendance at lower levels. When she served on the assembly she learned that school nurses could identify as early as 1st, 2nd or 3rd grade which students would be bullies in 9th grade and which were most likely to drop out, based on their inability to handle current class-load assignments. She asked if research is available that supports intervention long before a child reaches high school.

MS. DOUNAY referred to the "purple handout" that has grade 6 indicators. A 2001 ECS study synthesized that information for policy makers; it can be found at: www.ecs.org/rs.

3:17:05 PM

CHAIR DAVIS asked if there were other questions.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said he was a high school principal for 10 years and an elementary school principal for 10 years, so some of his comments come from that background. He found that if he wanted to find out what was going on in a child's life, he needed only ask what that child was going to do this summer or next year. An at-risk child will always say "I don't know." The most telling characteristic of an at-risk teenager is that they have no vision; they don't know where they are going and have no plan. He said the signs are obvious long before 6th grade. He

stressed that a child will pay any price to belong and feel connected. Many kids who leave school do not feel connected. He also pointed out that with technology, children are learning in real time. When looking at education from a broad perspective, there is no reason for a student to sit in a classroom if there's a way to demonstrate that the student already had attained the needed knowledge. Mastering the information is the goal, not seat-time in the classroom. Also many schools in Alaska need larger playgrounds so kids can explore their talents and interests; it's part of learning.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX continued that when he graduated from school, everyone had a part-time job that taught important life skills. That is no longer true, particularly in rural Alaska. In the last 10 years there's been a flight of kids from rural Alaska. When many of the rural schools were built they were large enough to have vocational programs. That is no longer the case; currently there are 100 schools with 25 or fewer students and those schools can't afford to offer enough choices to allow kids to explore their interests. For that reason many parents choose to put their children in a larger high school but in the larger schools, those children have no connection, they become invisible and disappear. The bottom line is that all the things Ms. Dounay said make sense and Alaska is already doing a lot of the things she recommends. DEED is exploring "middle colleges" where students can get their associates degree at the same time they get their high school diploma. These are programs that attract kids. Again he said that many of the kids who are walking away from school do have skills, they simply are not connected. "They don't have the vision; they don't have the ability to make connections with the society that's changing."

[3:23:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA agreed that Alaska has a mobile population due to seasonal jobs. She recalled that in early 2000 there was training available for rural teachers on how to use the Internet effectively to keep kids at the same level as the rest of the state. Also, distance delivery is used successfully at the college level. She asked if there is a way to use something like the Internet to keep kids engaged even though they may move from place to place.

[3:25:23 PM](#)

MS. DOUNAY replied that is being done. Alabama and Louisiana use virtual high schools to target students' individual achievement levels.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said DEED is looking at some virtual high school models, including partnerships with other schools. For example a teacher in Karuk who has one student can access a virtual schedule to partner with other teachers and many students. Moving toward a standards-based system rather than a credit system, students won't have to sit through an entire course to pick up one piece of information they missed. "We're moving in that direction with credit recovery, virtual schedules, and very very flexible ways for kids to earn credit," he said.

CHAIR DAVIS announced a break from [3:27:44 PM](#) to [3:40:22 PM](#).

[3:40:46 PM](#)

PAULA PAWLOWSKI, Legislative Chair, Alaska PTA, Anchorage, AK, said she was born in Alaska to a military family; between the ages of 1 and 12 she attended 11 schools so she missed a lot and her SAT scores were awful. If someone isn't tracking what subjects students are taking and when, students can get lost. Her family has hosted exchange students from Costa Rica, Japan and Switzerland; her eldest son was an exchange student in Sweden; and her youngest spent time in China, Taiwan and is now at Stanford.

MS. PAWLOWSKI said it's phenomenal that everyone is pointing fingers at parents. Many parents don't realize how much influence they have as teachers; but they do know their child best and for better or worse are their child's first educator. In 1995 the Alaska State Board of Education endorsed the standards for parent involvement developed by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein of Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Epstein worked with the national PTA to continue to develop those standards. The Alaska State Board of Education also endorsed the printed book of the national standards; so the State of Alaska has had two opportunities to define parental involvement. Those standards have quality indicators and measurement tools in place but so far the DEED has not utilized them to look at what parental involvement can do for students and partnerships. The Fairbanks Borough has done an excellent job of using the standards indicated in "No Child Left Behind" to define a parental involvement policy; but the rest of the state is way behind on that.

The state PTA is an organized entity and a great way to educate parents. Currently there are about 9000 members and 158 PTA groups across the state. According to Johns Hopkins, parents of students at the secondary level want information about jobs and

career paths; but Anchorage has only two PTA groups at the high school level so the state PTA doesn't have a vehicle to get information out to parents.

MS. PAWLOWSKI said the state PTA request for funding for a parent involvement project made it through the House and the Senate but was vetoed by the governor. There were a couple of particularly important things in that project: to spread PTAs to more rural areas, and to develop a teacher preparation/parent involvement class at the university level.

MS. PAWLOWSKI said last year the national PTA had a contract with Ann Henderson to realign all of its information and resources on the national parent standards. Ms. Pawlowski advised that she is now working with Bridge Builders of Anchorage, looking at parents of minority students who have a very hard time navigating the school system. At this point, she said, the children are acting as communicators between school and family and it isn't working out well. She said that before the November summit she will contact all of the state PTA presidents for information on how this is working for parents in the various states.

MS. POWLOWSKI said that if a child has a good family situation and a poor teaching experience, the child will be OK; if the child has a poor family experience and great teachers, that child will be fine; but if a child has both a poor family experience and a poor teaching experience, the child will be disconnected. Ms. Pawlowski spoke of the influence the teachers at West High had on her children and that the smaller learning community there had a positive influence.

MS. PAWLOWSKI said there is some great research about getting fathers engaged and involving non-custodial parents. When non-custodial parents or single fathers are engaged in their child's educational life, statistics show the same good results as when both parents are at home. It is parents' intent and the engagement that makes a difference. The question is how to make sure all parents get involved. The PTA isn't fond of the "body count" for how many parents attend parent/teacher conferences or sporting events because more and more often both parents have to work and some families feel that teachers are the experts and it's up to them. But both are teachers in their own right and the learning at home piece is vital. It's just that parents need to be empowered and encouraged to take part. In conclusion she said there is a history in Alaska of being a Johns Hopkins partnership school to use standards to engage parents, but very

few districts have developed policy to encourage parental involvement. Getting districts to use those standards has been and continues to be the goal of the Alaska PTA. Those six standards cover business, home and at school.

[3:57:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked if the number of schools that have PTAs has changed.

MS. PAWLOWSKI said yes and it's driven by the number of people who have time to volunteer. Some years there are as few as 100 PTAs in the state and sometimes as many as 180. Parents come together when there is a critical issue.

[3:58:46 PM](#)

ANDY ROGERS, CEO, PangoMedia Inc. and Legislative Affairs Committee, State Chamber of Commerce, said his interest is in seeing students complete a course of study so they can enter the workforce as employable young professionals. It is difficult to find jobs for young people, but it's difficult for industry to grow when students come into the workforce without the necessary resume to be successfully placed in profitable positions. It is a disservice to students to let them go through an educational process and enter the workforce only to find that they don't have what is needed to obtain employment in their field. It is also unfair to the employers. He asked that there be an emphasis in the educational process on internships in the actual workforce; so when students leave school to embark on their professional careers, they have some demonstrable skills and experience. He suggested that educational institutions be encouraged to connect more directly with industry and representatives of the business world and make more effort to include pragmatic work experience in their students' education. Last, Mr. Rogers asked that members of the business community be further included in discussions like this one when trying to craft the best possible educational system. He is discouraged that the best and brightest young people in Alaska are leaving the state to complete their educations and forming their first business ties elsewhere because they don't come back. If they do finish school in Alaska, they are unable to find work so they relocate.

[4:04:56 PM](#)

CHAIR DAVIS thanked Mr. Rogers for his comments and assured him that business must be involved in the educational process.

[4:05:48 PM](#)

PAUL D. KENDELL said he is concerned that the school system is flawed. He admitted that when he listens to testimony by people who have a passion for something it puts him back in his place. He opined that those people who have a passion for something have a greater standing than people like himself who look at the issue from the outside. He said they've gone way beyond their mission; they now have groups looking at groups and this isn't complicated, they need to get back to the home and the parents. He said he does not believe it is the school's job to deal with employment but to teach children how to learn and how to get along with other children. The child who excels should be rewarded and the child that can't be handled should be sent home and let society take care of him. That's the way it is, he said.

MR. KENDELL continued that he wants to set that aside for a moment; he came to the meeting to "ambush" legislators with another mission, to turn their efforts toward energy. From his perspective, everything in Alaska should be directed toward energy; everything is interconnected through the distribution of energy and disruption in the distribution of energy has robbed people of their sense of security.

He believes that the legislature should reward students for good grades by giving them each an electric vehicle, which would reduce air pollution, provide business to auto makers and teach students about electrons and hydrogen. Buying 100,000 electric vehicles would change the state and every living creature in it overnight.

[4:12:19 PM](#)

MR. KENDELL went on to say that it appears to him that the world is headed toward a new, energy-related society. Energy and "business as usual" will never be viewed as it was in the past. The whole world is looking at energy and everything so it's important to redirect the children of Alaska toward an energy mentality. Schools have the opportunity to morph Alaska in 2-6 years, gain world recognition and put Alaska's children in a very special place.

[4:16:13 PM](#)

He pointed to big oil and the fact that it is getting into everything. He said it has to fail and when it collapses, it isn't the money that's the problem, it is quality of life. Somehow that quality of life has been lost. He maintained that worry about money is really tied to people who don't want to work. But energy is behind it all and you can't buy energy if there isn't a stable society. He warned that the legislature is

headed for a direct conflict with the money, but it's really about the energy.

MR. KENDELL offered his belief that young children are beginning to see the unraveling and the only way to bring that back home is to concentrate on energy. A dwelling that has electricity and water can be held together. Alaska should have 100 hydroelectric projects and wind turbine projects and new electric vehicles.

CHAIR DAVIS interrupted and asked Mr. Kendall to wrap up. She asked him to provide a copy of his plan and reminded him that, as she told him earlier, if he doesn't have any support for that plan, it cannot go anywhere. She stressed that she wants to read what he has given her, but does not see how it connects with what they are trying to do.

MR. KENDALL asked if he could clarify his position. He is very disappointed with the school infrastructure; he thinks it's failing and flailing and everyone is waiting for it to collapse when the money runs out. He didn't want to come and complain about that, and thought if he could tie in energy, perhaps they could get past the differences that no one was going to give ground on. He hoped to show legislators that the problems they see of females who no longer want to be patriarchal; the boys and girls who can't be boys and girls; and all the ideologies they are seeing now days are not possible without individual freedoms and you can't have the individual freedoms without energy. He was hoping the legislature could transcend the differences of diversity and race and holidays and gender to see a way to get around it.

[4:24:09 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH said Mr. Kendall questioned legislators' ability to notify the public so she wanted to announce that the Alaska Renewable Energy Task Force would meet at the Anchorage LIO on October 21, 2008 from 10:00 AM to noon. She emphasized that public notice is always provided, but it is simply not possible to provide personal invitations to everyone.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Davis adjourned the meeting at [4:26:01 PM](#).