

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

April 25, 2007

1:36 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Bettye Davis, Chair
Senator Joe Thomas, Vice Chair
Senator John Cowdery
Senator Kim Elton
Senator Fred Dyson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Senator Tom Wagoner

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 119

"An Act establishing a grant program to support public school libraries."

MOVED SB 119 OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 3

Relating to consideration by the Senate of impeachment of James C. Hayes, University of Alaska regent.

HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 119

SHORT TITLE: SCHOOL LIBRARY GRANTS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) OLSON

03/14/07 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

03/14/07 (S) HES, FIN

04/25/07 (S) HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SR 3

SHORT TITLE: REQUEST REMOVAL OF REGENT HAYES

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) WAGONER

02/26/07 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/26/07 (S) HES, STA, JUD
04/25/07 (S) HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

Denise Liccioli, staff to Senator Olson
Alaska Capitol Building
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SB 119

Cathy Boutin, representing herself
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SB 119

Lynn McNamara, librarian
Scenic Park Elementary
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SB 119

Barb Bryson, district librarian
City of Valdez
Valdez, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SB 119

Kari Sagel, representing herself
Sitka, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SB 119

Charlotte Glover, representing herself
Ketchikan, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SB 119

Tiki Levinson, representing herself
Delta Junction, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SB 119

Barbara Nagengast, principal
Spring Hill Elementary School
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SB 119

Senator Thomas Wagner
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SR 3.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR BETTYE DAVIS called the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at [1:36:15 PM](#). All members were present at the call to order.

SB 119-SCHOOL LIBRARY GRANTS

[1:37 :24 PM](#)

CHAIR BETTYE DAVIS announced SB 119 to be up for consideration.

DENISE LICCIOLI, staff to Senator Olson, sponsor of SB 119, explained that the bill will establish a grant program for public school library acquisitions. Individual school library budget shortfalls have impacted many libraries across the state; they must use inter-library loans to participate in reading programs like Battle of the Books. The program will provide a means to update atlases and other books that go out of date quickly and that are necessary for supporting classroom curriculum standards. The Alaska Association of School Librarians supports the legislation and suggests funding a \$2500 annual grant for larger libraries and a \$750 annual grant for smaller libraries with five or fewer teachers. The bill will help produce better readers at all grade levels.

[1:40:17 PM](#)

CATHY BOUTIN, representing herself, talked about how expensive books are for school libraries and gave examples of how the bill could help increase their book, DVD, and periodical stocks. Online encyclopedias are also important but expensive.

[1:43:00 PM](#)

SENATOR ELTON asked if the current bill language would allow for DVD purchases.

MS. BOUTIN replied that it may have been left out but she could clarify that with Senator Olson's staff.

SENATOR ELTON remarked that a lot of information comes from computers nowadays, and asked why there's not a provision in the bill for computer hardware or operating software.

MS. BOUTIN replied that there were materials provided to the committee explaining why books are still important for learning. A lot of information on the internet isn't necessarily accurate.

[1:46:05 PM](#)

LYNN MCNAMARA, librarian for Scenic Park Elementary, said that students don't necessarily have a lot of access to computers in school; books are more readily available, and are an equalizer for both rural and urban communities without access to the internet. Internet information is difficult to sift through, as well, and accuracy is spotty.

She explained that the materials purchased for libraries are based on the subjects that students tend to study in certain levels of school. A study has shown that even people who use the internet often tend to use books as well. Book information is accurate and is aimed at students in applicable ways. She then related a personal story about the differences between book and internet learning.

[1:51:12 PM](#)

BARB BRYSON, Valdez school district librarian, said that the Alaska Association of School Librarians and the Alaska Library Association support the bill. There should be an annual grant of up to \$2500 for public school libraries; the bill would parallel the already existing state-supported libraries. The grant would help purchase a wide variety of resources to aid in learning. The average budget for public school libraries in Alaska is low compared with national averages. She cited the state standards for library functions, and said that school libraries need adequate funds to fulfill these duties.

[1:54:25 PM](#)

KARI SAGEL, representing herself, said that school libraries are important for students prepping for standardized testing and keeping up with curriculum. The book budget has had to be supplemented with other fundraising methods. Books often focus on specific topics more often than internet information, and so are an important part of learning. The implementation of state standards has created a need for new information and resources, and for maximum student use materials need to be available in the library although not limited to curriculum subjects.

[1:57:15 PM](#)

CHARLOTTE GLOVER, representing herself, said that she runs a statewide essay program for fulfilling need from different libraries across the state. Libraries must raise funds for new books themselves, and there's also a huge strain transferred to public libraries because of interlibrary loans; kids need to have access to good reading material.

[1:59:33 PM](#)

TIKI LEVINSON, representing herself, said that a solid education is based on available information in libraries. She referenced how out of date schools' libraries are, and how materials can become damaged. Current collections need to be shored up with additional material.

[2:02:40 PM](#)

BARBARA NAGENGAST, principal of Spring Hill Elementary School, said that libraries are the heart of schools. A key component of study findings is that school libraries are critical to producing people who read throughout their lives. Workforce development is also greatly influenced by teaching kids how to read. If students are to be well-prepared for life and work, they need to be good readers.

[2:05:35 PM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS moved to report SB 119 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objection, the motion carried.

SENATOR ELTON commented that he hoped the committee would go on to hear the next piece of legislation even without the members who had to leave, and that he was sorry the subject had reached the point where the legislature even needs to consider the resolution. There are other options for the person the bill addresses, like choosing to step down from his position. He added that he appreciates the idea behind the bill, and if it's the only way to resolve the matter he supports it.

SR 3-REQUEST REMOVAL OF REGENT HAYES

[2:07:16 PM](#)

CHAIR DAVIS announced SR 3 to be under consideration.

SENATOR WAGONER, sponsor of SR 3, said that Senator Elton has a lot of the same feelings about the bill as he does. He commented that he is a graduate of the University of Alaska (UA), and a lot of students have contacted him about the issue; they have clearly said that Mr. Hayes should step down from the Board of Regents.

He went over the language in the sponsor statement, and explained that ethics should be as important for the UA regents as they are for legislators. It's important to remove even the appearance of questionable behavior; Mr. Hayes was indicted in January 2007, and because he's under investigation should voluntarily step down from office without having to be pressed on the matter.

SENATOR WAGONER cited other examples of politicians who have stepped down from office while under investigation. He clarified that the SR is not a statement of guilt, but a statement that Mr. Hayes should step down from the UA board of regents and remove the appearance of unethical behavior from his public office. The case means that Mr. Hayes' attention is currently focused on his personal issues rather than UA matters. Someone with the time and energy to commit to the regents' duties should be serving on the board, and not Mr. Hayes.

[2:11:41 PM](#)

He explained two items included in a packet provided to the committee that showed that Mr. Hayes used undue influence for the actions under investigation, and improper use of the UA seal. He asked the committee to consider advancing the resolution at the first available moment.

SENATOR WAGONER added that the fiscal note is premature; it assumes that the legislature will be meeting in special session, which won't necessarily be the case. The issue could be handled for less money, and it won't necessarily take a long time. The bill is being brought forward to urge Mr. Hayes to step down, and contact the governor if need be.

[2:15:47 PM](#)

SENATOR COWDERY asked if Mr. Hayes is still being reimbursed for being a regent.

SENATOR WAGONER replied the reimbursement isn't significant.

SENATOR COWDERY asked if Mr. Hayes was paid anything for the meetings he missed.

SENATOR WAGONER replied he was not; over the past year he missed over 50 percent of the board meetings.

SENATOR COWDERY asked if Mr. Hayes is under indictment.

SENATOR WAGONER replied that he is.

SENATOR COWDERY asked if a date has been set for the trial.

SENATOR WAGONER replied he believes the trial is set for September, but may be postponed. He added that the indictment is ongoing, and has been expanded to include more charges. The situation is a serious one.

[2:18:28 PM](#)

CHAIR DAVIS commented that the bill could not be moved at the time due to lack of a quorum; it would be re-heard at another date. She pointed out that the UA has said that people often miss regent meetings, and it's not in and of itself a reason for being removed. There are people who think that the governor should remove the regent, but the attorney general advised her against it. She added that she was hoping that the matter wouldn't have to come to an SR, but that it's the proper process.

SENATOR WAGONER pointed out that Mr. Hayes had a good attendance record until the indictment came up; his absences started immediately after. He added that other community boards around the state have stipulations for member removal after two subsequent unexcused absences.

[2:21:25 PM](#)

SENATOR COWDERY asked if the UA board has that stipulation.

SENATOR WAGONER said that it doesn't; he referenced his own work with the UA, and said that of all his regent acquaintances, none have had poor attendance records. A high sense of responsibility seems to be the norm for regents.

SR 3 was held in committee.

There being no further business to come before the committee,
Chair Davis adjourned the meeting at [2:22:37 PM](#).