

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

April 20, 2007

8:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Charlie Huggins, Vice Chair
Senator Bettye Davis
Senator Donny Olson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gary Wilken

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 5
Relating to civics education and a citizens' advisory task
force.

HEARD AND HELD

PRESENTATION: FLOYD DRYDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SCR 5

SHORT TITLE: CIVICS EDUC/ CITIZENS ADVISORY TASK FORCE

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) STEVENS

03/30/07	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/30/07	(S)	SED, FIN
04/13/07	(S)	SED AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
04/13/07	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
04/20/07	(S)	SED AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

Carl Rose, executive director
Association of Alaska School Boards
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SCR 5

Robert Bassett, representing himself
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SCR 5

Maida Buckley, representing herself
Fairbanks, AK
POSITION STATEMENT: In support of SCR 5

Rebecca Farrell, teacher
Floyd Dryden Middle School
POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in presentation

Sandi Pahlke, teacher
Floyd Dryden Middle School
POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in presentation

Eric Hill, student
Floyd Dryden Middle School
Juneau, AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in presentation

Sierra Sanchez, student
Floyd Dryden Middle School
Juneau, AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in presentation

Robert Nick, student
Napakiak School
Napakiak, AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in presentation

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Special Committee on Education meeting to order at [8:05:47 AM](#). Present at the call to order were Senators Huggins, Davis, Olson, and Chair Stevens.

SCR 5-CIVICS EDUC/ CITIZENS ADVISORY TASK FORCE

CARL ROSE, Executive Director for the Association of Alaska School Boards, said that the resolution addresses the need to teach civics and service learning in public schools. It's critically important that the legislature and citizens examine the civic mission of the state; other subjects are important as well, but the No Child Left Behind act has been detrimental to the learning of civic topics. He explained that the resolution is simple but will start the conversation about the need to learn civics. He then outlined different elements of the bill, and what levels of school it could apply to. The bill allows for the governor and speaker to make several appointments to an

advisory task force. The fiscal note is unavoidable, but outside funding will be raised and many people will be willing to commit their time and expertise to the board.

[8:12:20 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS clarified that the resolution will recognize the importance of civic education and assemble a task force to examine the issue. He asked if the date for the final findings of the task force would remain the same.

MR. ROSE replied that because of session issues, the date might have to be altered.

CHAIR STEVENS said that he was wondering if the task force could complete its work by that date.

MR. ROSE said that the group is envisioned to number 12 people, with at least four meetings. The work should be able to be done in a short period of time.

[8:14:29 AM](#)

SENATOR OLSON said there seems to be a lack of civic education in public schools, and asked if that's what the SCR is addressing.

MR. ROSE related a personal story about the lack of civic awareness, and said that people don't pay enough attention to things outside of work or home life. Such education is a responsibility of schools, and everyone needs to be more aware of the responsibility such learning.

[8:17:09 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS related a personal story about civic awareness, and asked how the results of the SCR would be marketed.

[8:20:00 AM](#)

MR. ROSE said that change happens from raising awareness, and an outreach program would be prepared through the Department of Education and Early Development and other channels. The report shouldn't be done in isolation; everyone can participate and make a difference.

[8:21:30 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS said the committee would be taking testimony, and not moving the bill that day.

SENATOR OLSON asked if civic awareness is lower than 30 years ago; television and radio must have made a difference in exposure.

[8:22:31 AM](#)

MR. ROSE pointed to information before the committee that shows a serious lag in young peoples' civic awareness.

[8:23:31 AM](#)

ROBERT BASSETT, representing himself, related his work history and said that Alaska has a unique opportunity to coalesce different fragments of its population. Service to others is an important part of civic awareness, as well as leadership and citizenship. Schools are already taxed with a lot of responsibilities, so community-based strategies for learning are important as well. He gave some examples of civic education programs in Anchorage, and said that the best current practices in Alaska and other states need to be identified and disseminated. The Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives should be involved in the task force as well.

He pointed out that that day was National Youth Service Day, and talked about the awards that would be given to local youth in Anchorage. He said that many people are unfamiliar with these awards; community resources are not effectively communicated. He mentioned that public school drop-outs are historically civically disengaged.

[8:29:17 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Mr. Bassett, and clarified that the result of the legislation will be a task force in which Mr. Bassett could hopefully participate.

MAIDA BUCKLEY, representing herself, said that she has a passion for civic education which plays a vital role in democracy. She referenced the Constitution to show that civic education needs to be orderly and comprehensive; reading, writing, and math are important but do not prepare students for the decision-making of an active citizen.

[8:34:04 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS said that he hopes Ms. Buckley will consider applying for the task force, and requested that she send her written testimony to the committee.

He added that there were several amendments to be drafted for the bill.

SENATOR DAVIS commented that there should be an amendment regarding the number of the members of the committee.

CHAIR STEVENS agreed.

SENATOR DAVIS said that the task force will have plenty of work to do.

CHAIR STEVENS called a brief at-ease.

[8:36:15 AM](#)

PRESENTATION: FLOYD DRYDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

[8:36:37 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked the students from Floyd Dryden Middle School (FDMS) to come forward for their presentation.

REBECCA FARRELL, teacher at FDMS, introduced herself.

SANDI PAHLKE, teacher at FDMS, introduced herself.

MS. FARRELL thanked the committee for hearing the students from the school, and said that the exchange program they would be presenting is student-led.

[8:37:45 AM](#)

ERIC HILL, student at FDMS, introduced himself and his fellow participants in the exchange program with Napakiak School. The program was designed to learn about the areas of governance, health care, subsistence, transportation, education.

[8:38:50 AM](#)

SIERRA SANCHEZ, student at FDMS, introduced more students who participated in the program.

[8:40:30 AM](#)

MS. PAHLKE explained that the program was run by the Alaska Humanities Forum, and said that the committee would be seeing a video created by the youth involved in the program.

[8:48:55 AM](#)

MS. PAHLKE introduced additional teachers.

CHAIR STEVENS said that the rural/urban program is wonderful, and asked the urban students if they've ever gone to rural communities before. He said that many urban kids seldom get a chance to see life in rural Alaska.

SENATOR DAVIS complimented the presentation and asked how the village of Napakiak was chosen for participation.

MS. PAHLKE said that the village was chosen through the Rose Program, and said that FDMS is looking forward to having the village's school as a sister school.

[8:52:01 AM](#)

CHAIR DAVIS commented that in Anchorage only high school students are sent on such programs, and she'll share information about the Juneau program with her district.

[8:52:38 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS asked the rural students about what they'll be doing in the Juneau area.

ROBERT NICK, a student from Napakiak, said that the students will go swimming, play basketball, go bowling, go to the movies, eat pizza, and go to the museum.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked what sort of snow-machine Mr. Nick rides.

MR. NICK said that he rides a Ski-Doo.

[8:54:22 AM](#)

SENATOR OLSON asked how long the FDMS students stayed in the villages.

MS. SANCHEZ said that they stayed for six days, visiting other communities as well.

CHAIR STEVENS said that the committee was proud of the program.

MS. PAHLKE introduced further students.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the meeting at [8:55:54 AM](#).