

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
April 10, 2009
1:38 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Stedman called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:38 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Charlie Huggins, Vice-Chair
Senator Johnny Ellis
Senator Donny Olson
Senator Joe Thomas

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Senator Bettye Davis, Sponsor; Tom Obermeyer, Staff, Senator Bettye Davis; Sam Trivette, Self; Senator Joe Paskvan; Konrad Jackson, Staff, Representative Kurt Olson.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Boyd Brownfield, Engineer and Chairman, Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors; Harley Hightower, Architect and Member, Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors.

SUMMARY

SB 35 "An Act extending the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council; and providing for an effective date."

CSSB 35(HSS) was REPORTED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with attached fiscal notes 1 and 2 by the Department of Health and Social Services.

SB 114 "An Act extending the termination date of the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors; and providing for an effective date."

CSSB 114(L&C) was REPORTED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with attached fiscal note 1 by the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

SB 183 "An Act authorizing the Department of Environmental Conservation to award grants for the control of air emissions or the development and administration of air quality control programs; and providing for an effective date."

SB 183 was REPORTED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with attached new zero note by the Department of Environmental Conservation.

HB 86 "An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Veterinary Examiners; and providing for an effective date."

HB 86 was REPORTED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with attached fiscal note 1 by the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

#sb35

SENATE BILL NO. 35

"An Act extending the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council; and providing for an effective date."

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SENATOR BETTYE DAVIS, SPONSOR, spoke in support of the bill.

TOM OBERMEYER, STAFF, SENATOR BETTYE DAVIS, SPONSOR, read from the Sponsor Statement (Copy on File):

SB 35 extends the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to June 30, 2013. Suicide is a very serious public health concern in Alaska, particularly among young males and the Alaska native population. Extension of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council is important in curtailing this avoidable loss of life. The mission of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council is to advise the governor and the legislature on issues relating to suicide. In collaboration with communities, faith-based organizations, and public-private entities, the Council works to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans by reducing suicide and its effect in individuals and communities.

The Executive Summary of the July, 2005 study by the Alaska Injury Prevention Center funded by Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority "Alaska Suicide Hospitalizations, 2001-2002," reported that in 2002 32,000 took their own lives in the United States, and 20 times that number sought treatment for self-inflicted injuries. Alaska had the highest age-adjusted suicide rate of all the states in 2002 at 21.12 per 100,000 population, which is nearly twice that of the U.S. rate of 10.99 per 100,000. An average of 125 people die from suicide each year in Alaska, making it the number one cause of death for Alaskans under the age of 50 years (if unintentional injuries are examined individually instead of in groups).

Hospitalizations for suicide per the above study make a compelling case for prevention of suicide and new insights into this dramatic public health problem. Over \$4 million in hospital costs alone is spent in public funds each year to care for suicide attempts. This did not include physicians' and specialists' costs. While the toll on society and family members by suicide may be incalculable, significant numbers were revealed:

- The average age for the patients was 30 years.
- The average length of each hospital stay was 4 days, with a range of 1 to 366.
- The average cost per case was \$8,986.
- Over 75% of the hospital costs were paid through public funding sources.
- 15% of hospital costs had to be written off for patients' inability to pay.

The unabated high rate of suicide in Alaska demands continued attention and effort and earnestly urges, if not compels, the extension of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council. A subsequent study to the above by the Alaska Injury Prevention Center from 9/1/03-8/31/06 found 426 suicides in Alaska during this 36-month period, with the continuing rate of suicide at over 21/100,000. Males outnumbered females 4 to 1. The age-group 20-29 had both the greatest number of suicides and the highest rate per 100,000 population. Alaska Natives had a significantly higher average rate of suicide than the non-Native population (51.4/100,000 compared to 16.9/100,000). The leading cause of death was firearms with toxicology reports in 1/3 of the cases. Alcohol was found in 44% of the toxicology tests and marijuana was found in 15%.

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Co-Chair Stedman opened public testimony.

SAM TRIVETTE, SELF, spoke in support of the legislation. He described personal experience with losing a son to suicide in 2007. After his death, they heard many reports of other suicides. Recently, seven young people took their lives in the Juneau area. He said that young people with the highest potential have the highest suicide rate.

Mr. Trivette told the committee that there had been no program in the school system to educate students, teachers, and parents about depression and suicide. The Juneau school district recently added a component in the high school curriculum to educate students regarding depression and suicide. Another school district with the program has not experienced suicides since its implementation.

Mr. Trivette reported that the curriculum was supported by the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, which has implemented a number of other initiatives at various local levels. The council is focused on getting information to citizens that can help lower the suicide rate. He noted that no other organization is focusing on the issue in Alaska. He emphasized that the council has had an impact in Alaska and urged extension of the council for another four years.

Co-Chair Stedman expressed compassion for the family.

Mr. Trivette informed the committee that his nephew had committed suicide that week.

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Co-Chair Hoffman MOVED to report CS SB 35(HSS) out of Committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 35(HSS) was REPORTED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with attached fiscal notes 1 and 2 by the Department of Health and Social Services.

#sb114

SENATE BILL NO. 114

"An Act extending the termination date of the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors; and providing for an effective date."

[1:48:20 PM](#)

SENATOR JOE PASKVAN, gave the committee an overview of the legislation. He noted that the board fees are paid by licensees, which cover the board's full operating expense.

There is no need for state money. The board is in good financial standing with a surplus since FY06. He emphasized that new funds are not required to implement the bill.

Senator Paskvan read from the Sponsor Statement (Copy on File):

The State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors is a regulatory board consisting of 10 members appointed by the governor. The board consists of two civil engineers, two land surveyors, one mining engineer, one electrical or mechanical engineer, one engineer from another branch of the profession of engineering, two architects, and one public member.

Senate Bill 114 seeks to extend the termination date of the Board from June 30, 2009, to June 30, 2017, as recommended by the Legislative Auditor.

The CS for SB 114(L&C) corrects an oversight in the original bill. By statute, the position of the temporary board member must also be extended in this legislation and that was not done in the original bill. The CS simply maintains the status quo of the Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors by adding language that extends the term for one temporary, non-voting board member who must be registered as a landscape architect.

The enclosed audit states that the Board "serves a public purpose and has demonstrated an ability to conduct its business in a satisfactory manner. The registration of qualified architects, engineers, land surveyors, and landscape architects benefits the public's health, safety, and welfare. We recommend that the legislature extend the termination date of the board until June 30, 2017."

Senator Paskvan urged support of the legislation.

[1:51:29 PM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman opened public testimony.

BOYD BROWNFIELD, ENGINEER AND CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND LAND SURVEYORS (testified via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. He had been charged with addressing three items:

- Reviewing the original sunset bill. He reported that he did read the bill and concurred with the proposed extension to the year 2017.

- Legislative audit findings from 2008. The board concurred with the three final findings and recommendations of the audit.
- Inclusion of the temporary, non-voting landscape architect seat. The board supports the position and its inclusion into SB 114.

[1:54:09 PM](#)

HARLEY HIGHTOWER, ARCHITECT AND MEMBER, BOARD OF ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND LAND SURVEYORS (testified via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation. He concurred with Mr. Brownfield's testimony.

Co-Chair Stedman closed public testimony.

Co-Chair Hoffman MOVED to report CSSB 114(L&C) out of Committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 114(L&C) was REPORTED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with attached fiscal note 1 by the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

#sb183

SENATE BILL NO. 183

"An Act authorizing the Department of Environmental Conservation to award grants for the control of air emissions or the development and administration of air quality control programs; and providing for an effective date."

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Co-Chair Stedman provided the history of the legislation.

Co-Chair Hoffman MOVED to report SB 183 out of Committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

SB 183 was REPORTED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with attached new zero note by the Department of Environmental Conservation.

#sb86

HOUSE BILL NO. 86

"An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Veterinary Examiners; and providing for an effective date."

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KONRAD JACKSON, STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE KURT OLSON, CHAIR, HOUSE LABOR & COMMERCE COMMITTEE, gave background of the legislation. He explained that boards come up for extension regularly and then are audited. The recommendation from legislative audit was an eight-year extension to June 30, 2017.

Co-Chair Hoffman MOVED to report HB 86 out of Committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

HB 86 was REPORTED out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with attached fiscal note 1 by the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:58 PM.