

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

April 14, 2009

9:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Linda Menard, Chair
Senator Kevin Meyer, Vice Chair
Senator Hollis French
Senator Albert Kookesh
Senator Joe Paskvan

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING

Joseph Schmidt, Successor to Lieutenant Governor
CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 10(HSS)
Urging the United States Congress to improve health care for veterans.

MOVED CSHJR 10(HSS) OUT OF COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 14(STA)

"An Act designating the Alaskan Malamute as the official state dog."

MOVED CSHB 14(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 156

"An Act relating to municipal fees charged for disposal of waste material from the substantial rehabilitation, renovation, demolition, removal, or replacement of a structure on deteriorated property."

MOVED HB 156 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 10

SHORT TITLE: VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GUTTENBERG

01/30/09 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

01/30/09 (H) MLV, STA, HSS
 02/24/09 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
 02/24/09 (H) Moved CSHJR 10(MLV) Out of Committee
 02/24/09 (H) MINUTE(MLV)
 02/25/09 (H) MLV RPT CS(MLV) 6DP
 02/25/09 (H) DP: KAWASAKI, OLSON, HARRIS, LYNN,
 BUCH, GATTO
 03/02/09 (H) STA REFERRAL WAIVED
 03/10/09 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106
 03/10/09 (H) Moved CSHJR 10(HSS) Out of Committee
 03/10/09 (H) MINUTE(HSS)
 03/12/09 (H) HSS RPT CS(HSS) 7DP
 03/12/09 (H) DP: HOLMES, COGHILL, SEATON, LYNN,
 CISSNA, HERRON, KELLER
 03/25/09 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
 03/25/09 (H) VERSION: CSHJR 10(HSS)
 03/27/09 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 03/27/09 (S) HSS, STA
 04/07/09 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BELTZ 211
 04/07/09 (S) <Pending Referral>
 04/10/09 (S) HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 04/10/09 (S) Bills Previously Heard/Scheduled
 04/11/09 (S) HSS RPT 3DP
 04/11/09 (S) DP: DAVIS, DYSON, PASKVAN
 04/14/09 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BELTZ 211

BILL: HB 14

SHORT TITLE: ALASKAN MALAMUTE AS STATE DOG
 SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GARDNER

01/20/09 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/09
 01/20/09 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 01/20/09 (H) STA
 02/26/09 (H) STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
 02/26/09 (H) Moved CSHB 14(STA) Out of Committee
 02/26/09 (H) MINUTE(STA)
 02/27/09 (H) STA RPT CS(STA) 4DP 2NR 1AM
 02/27/09 (H) DP: SEATON, GRUENBERG, WILSON, PETERSEN
 02/27/09 (H) NR: JOHNSON, LYNN
 02/27/09 (H) AM: GATTO
 04/07/09 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
 04/07/09 (H) VERSION: CSHB 14(STA)
 04/08/09 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 04/08/09 (S) STA, RES
 04/14/09 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BELTZ 211

BILL: HB 156

SHORT TITLE: ALLOWING CERTAIN LANDFILL FEE WAIVERS
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) LYNN

02/25/09	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/25/09	(H)	CRA
03/12/09	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
03/12/09	(H)	Scheduled But Not Heard
03/17/09	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
03/17/09	(H)	Moved Out of Committee
03/17/09	(H)	MINUTE(CRA)
03/18/09	(H)	CRA RPT 1DP 4NR
03/18/09	(H)	DP: KELLER
03/18/09	(H)	NR: CISSNA, MILLETT, MUNOZ, HERRON
04/02/09	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/02/09	(H)	VERSION: HB 156
04/03/09	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/03/09	(S)	CRA, STA
04/09/09	(S)	CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 211
04/09/09	(S)	Moved HB 156 Out of Committee
04/09/09	(S)	MINUTE(CRA)
04/10/09	(S)	CRA RPT 2DP 2NR
04/10/09	(S)	DP: THOMAS, MENARD
04/10/09	(S)	NR: OLSON, KOOKESH
04/14/09	(S)	STA AT 9:00 AM BELTZ 211

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID GUTTENBERG

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HJR 10 as sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE BERTA GARDNER

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 14 as sponsor.

PAIGE HILL, Second Grader

Polaris School

Anchorage AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 14.

CIARA BRADY, Fourth Grader

Polaris School

Anchorage AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 14.

SANNE CASSEE, Second Grader
Polaris School
Anchorage AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 14.

MAEVE WILEY, Third Grader
Polaris School
Anchorage AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 14.

RYAN TERRY, Fifth Grader
Polaris School
Anchorage AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 14.

DUNCAN WRIGHT, Fifth Grader
Polaris School
Anchorage AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 14.

REPRESENTATIVE BOB LYNN
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 156.

MARK MARLOW, Contractor/Developer
Anchorage AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 156.

SHAWN EVANS, Commercial Realtor
Alaska Commercial Property
Fairbanks AK
POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 156.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:03:30 AM](#)

CHAIR LINDA MENARD called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Senators Kookesh, Paskvan, and Menard were present at the call to order. Senators French and Meyer arrived later.

Confirmation hearing for Joseph Schmidt as the successor to the Alaska Lieutenant Governor.

[9:04:10 AM](#)

CHAIR MENARD announced the confirmation hearing for Joseph Schmidt for the Lieutenant Governor's successor. "We did speak to this in our committee." So she asked the committee to sign.

CHAIR MENARD said "I would like to move HJR 31, which is the 'Support Soldiers Burial Designations,' to be considered as the Senate bill. We did already have that companion bill, Senate Bill Resolution 18. So it's the exact one, so if it's OK with the committee ... I'd like to waive that out of committee."

SENATOR FRENCH said it is fine with him. The others agreed.

HJR 10-VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

CHAIR MENARD announced the consideration of CSHJR 10(HSS).

[9:06:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID GUTTENBERG, Alaska State Legislature, said this resolution asks the federal government to do a better job with veteran healthcare. Alaska veterans often have to travel, sometimes to Seattle, to get proper care. There are a variety of clinics across the state that are available, "but they're not V.A. [Veterans Administration]." HJR 10 asks the federal government to have V.A. benefits "follow the vet" instead of be anchored in a facility. It will strengthen the local economy by keeping the money in communities, and it will allow veterans to get better health care closer to where they live.

SENATOR FRENCH moved to report CS for HJR 10 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objection, CSHJR 10(HSS) moved from committee.

The committee took a brief at-ease.

HB 14-ALASKAN MALAMUTE AS STATE DOG

[9:10:26 AM](#)

CHAIR MENARD announced the consideration of HB 14. [CSHB 14(STA) was before the committee.]

REPRESENTATIVE BERTA GARDNER, Alaska State Legislature, said HB 14 was brought to her by students of Polaris K-12 School. It was entirely their idea. "Everything in here was written by them or elicited by those kids." They did the sponsor statement, the request for hearing, and all of the testimony. She asked the students why they chose the Malamute as the state dog. They persuaded her with their answers.

[9:12:21 AM](#)

CHAIR MENARD said she has been in the school system for a long time, and this group of students has articulated their position well. She loves the idea of having a state dog. Alaska is young and, doesn't have the traditions and "the symbolic things that I would like to see in our state." Some states have 180 different things on their calendar. About 20 percent of Alaska's population is in kindergarten through 12th grade. Students get excited about celebrating state dog day or Seward's Day. It stimulates history discussions with teachers.

[9:14:45 AM](#)

PAIGE HILL, second grade, Polaris School, Anchorage, said her grandmother from North Carolina visited Ms. Hill when she was in kindergarten. Her grandmother went to her classroom and said North Carolina had a state dog. Ms. Hill then learned that Alaska didn't have one. This is where it all began. The teacher helped her students investigate how to get a state dog. After lots of discussion, the students narrowed the dog down to two types: husky and Malamute. They voted for the Alaska Malamute. It has been in Alaska for thousands of years and is one of the 12 ancient breeds. It is the only dog native to the United States. Two other classes joined her class in researching the Malamute. Once people understand this dog's history, they will realize it should be the official state dog. "Thank you for taking our bill seriously."

CIARA BRADY, fourth grade, Polaris School, said some people feel that the Alaska husky should be the state dog, but all the students were convinced that it should be the Malamute. The Malamute was developed for a particular purpose. Arctic settlers as long ago as 5,000 years or more had heavy sleds loaded with supplies. Arctic explorers could travel for weeks on end. Malamutes helped during the gold rush. Throughout Alaska's history people have needed animals to help. "They got all that and more from the Alaska Malamute." They are smart, loyal, and work well with people. They were treated as part of the family, and often helped raise the children. Theoretically, today's Malamutes can do the same job as their ancestors. They continue to be the same amazing dogs. The Malamute represents the Alaskan character: proud, independent, and sometimes even stubborn. The Malamute is huge, just like Alaska.

[9:19:05 AM](#)

SANNE CASSEE, second grade, Polaris School, said the Malamute is named after the Malamute tribe from the shores of Kotzebue

Sound. Archeologists have found ancient bone and ivory carvings showing the Malamute from up to 20,000 years ago. Recent DNA analysis confirms that the Alaska Malamute is one of the oldest breeds of dogs. It is the only one out of 150 breeds that is native to the United States. The Alaska Malamute was used for pulling thousands of pounds and not as a racing dog. The Inuit used them for hunting seals and tracking polar bears. The Malamute was so widely respected that Eskimos who lived inland traveled to Kotzebue Sound to trade furs for the dogs. This is how the Alaska Malamute found its way to other regions of Alaska. Gold miners wanted big dogs to freight their supplies, and no other dog, no matter how big, could come close to the strength and ability of the Alaska Malamute.

[9:21:59 AM](#)

MAEVE WILEY, third grade, Polaris School, said the Alaska Malamute babysat children while their Inuit parents were out hunting. This is one of the reasons they make good pets, unlike many other northern breeds. They are so gentle human babies snuggled up with puppies. This partnership was used for survival. Malamutes helped with hunting and hauling supplies between camps. They looked out for bears and guarded caribou herds. Russian and European explorers saw this amazing connection between the people and their dogs. Malamutes have affectionate dispositions. Early explorers often reported this superior type of dog. They were easy going and capable of an enormous amount of work. When Captain Cook was looking for a trading route, he was very impressed by the hard-working Malamute that got along with humans. Prospectors would pay \$500 for one. Many dogs were being brought to Alaska during the gold rush. In an effort to make them bigger and stronger, miners crossed them with Malamutes. The breed was almost lost during that era, but a few enthusiasts did their best to save the breed. By 1908 dog racing was becoming popular. The Siberian husky was imported in 1908. In an effort to get faster dogs people continued to mix them. The concept of the Alaska husky emerged. Dog mushing with huskies is the official state sport. Huskies are already recognized by this, but the husky cannot match the long history of the Malamute.

[9:26:30 AM](#)

RYAN TERRY, fifth grade, Polaris School, said long after the gold rush the Malamute was still valued for hauling freight. They were easy to care for and could carry heavy loads. They helped haul mail and bush supplies. Native and white Alaskans continued use them for travel, hunting, and mail delivery. When ships couldn't reach Alaska's harbors in winter, dog teams

carried mail through 1,000 miles of Alaskan terrain in relays of 300 miles each. Malamutes were the Big Mac trucks of their day. During the 1925 serum run to Nome, about 150 sled dogs relayed diphtheria antitoxin 674 miles in a record-breaking 5.5 days, saving Nome from a terrible epidemic. In World War I, the Malamute was called into service by the French government. The Nome kennel club shipped 450 Alaska Malamutes, sleds, harnesses, and two tons of dried salmon to France where the dogs easily tackled the harsh conditions and moved troops that were cut off from mountain passes in far reaching outposts. The dogs pulled weapons across frozen ground. They served as search and rescue dogs and sniffed out mines. The military tried to use them as guard dogs but they failed that test because they just liked people too much to attack someone.

9:29:30 AM

DUNCAN WRIGHT, fifth grade, Polaris School, asked people to set aside biases about their favorite breed of dog and consider the intent behind HB 14. The Alaska Malamute has been here for 5,000 years, representing the entire history of Alaska. It has been here since the first people arrived. They survived and thrived in one of the harshest environments on earth. The Malamute lived as part of their human family, helping to hunt, haul, and care for children. He read of Malamutes snuggling and sleeping with children to keep them warm and sometimes staying back to babysit the children when adults went to hunt. The Malamute went on to impress explorers, settlers, and miners. They participated in Arctic and Antarctic explorations, were heroes in the world wars, helped in the serum run, and hauled massive amounts of freight and mail to remote parts of Alaska. The Malamute has been involved in Alaska's history every step of the way. Huskies were bred by outsiders and came mostly from outside stock. Thank goodness that a few good people saved the Malamute breed. The legacy of the Alaska Malamute speaks for itself.

9:33:12 AM

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER said it tickled her when Representative Joule from Kotzebue said people in Bethel called him a Malamute, an ancient name of some of the Inuit people. So the term is still used.

SENATOR PASKVAN moved to report HB 14 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objection, the motion carried.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER clarified that there is a CS from the House State Affairs committee. It capitalizes Malamute.

SENATOR FRENCH moved to rescind the action to move HB 14 from committee. There was no objection.

SENATOR PASKVAN moved to report CS for HB 14 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objection, CSHB 14(STA) moved out of committee.

HB 156-ALLOWING CERTAIN LANDFILL FEE WAIVERS

CHAIR MENARD announced the consideration of HB 156.

[9:39:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BOB LYNN, Alaska State Legislature, Sponsor, said HB 156 amends Alaska statute to permit -- not require - a municipality to waive the tipping fee at landfills for materials from renovating deteriorated properties. It is good public policy and won't cost the state a dime. It will make it more economically feasible to renovate dilapidated properties to the benefit of communities.

MARK MARLOW, Contractor/Developer, Anchorage, said the genesis of HB 156 was a local ordinance in the Fairbanks North Star Borough to assist in a renovation of a deteriorated downtown property. The local assembly passed an ordinance for a tipping fee waiver, but it may have been challengeable. The solution was "to define deteriorated property in AS 29.35 as it's defined in AS 29.45 to create a class of property that is eligible to receive these waivers." Municipalities aren't obligated to extend this benefit but will be able to with this bill.

[9:43:37 AM](#)

SHAWN EVANS, Realtor, Alaska Commercial Property, Fairbanks, urged the passage of HB 156. It makes projects like this a little more feasible. The Polaris Hotel has been a blight on the city of Fairbanks; it is an eyesore and has vagrants. The bill will help generate a little more life into downtown Fairbanks. It will not cost the state anything.

CHAIR MENARD asked if the municipality would lose revenue.

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN said obviously they would lose the tipping fee, but they will be renovating property so he assumes, by adding to the tax roll, it will be positive in the end.

CHAIR MENARD asked if a homeowner can get a waiver.

[9:46:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN said the bill precludes homeowners; it is limited to deteriorated commercial property.

CHAIR MENARD noted that in Canada property taxes are reduced when someone improves their property. It is frustrating that Alaska increases the assessment when improvements are made.

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN said the bill includes commercial property and residential buildings with at least eight units, and it must meet one of the following requirements: within the last five years it has been subject to environmental remediation; the property is vacated, condemned, or demolished; the structure is not less than 15 years old; or is located in a deteriorating area as determined by the municipality.

CHAIR MENARD said Senator Paskvan provided her with the statute that has a clear definition of deteriorated property.

SENATOR FRENCH said he supports the bill, but the definition is somewhat remarkable. "It basically means all commercial property, no matter what its state of construction. It could have been built yesterday." It refers to "real property that is commercial property not used for residential purposes."

SENATOR PASKVAN said the language goes on to list certain requirements, [which Representative Lynn just listed.]

[9:49:47 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH said he thinks it refers to all commercial property. Then he said he could read it another way. "I'm tending now to see it Senator Paskvan's way."

SENATOR PASKVAN said it defines an eight-plex (or more) as commercial. Within that category of commercial property the building needs to meet those requirements.

CHAIR MENARD said she appreciates that a building has to be at least five years old.

SENATOR PASKVAN said it refers to having been subject to an order in the last five years - meaning that it is condemned, demolished, or vacated. It can't be less than 15 years old.

[9:51:38 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH moved to report HB 156 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objection, HB 156 moved out of committee.

9:52:38 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 a.m.