

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 4, 2011

1:07 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Steve Thompson, Vice Chair
Representative Wes Keller
Representative Bob Lynn
Representative Lance Pruitt
Representative Max Gruenberg
Representative Lindsey Holmes

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Carl Gatto, Chair
Representative Mike Chenault (alternate)

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW(S): DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 7

"An Act classifying certain synthetic cannabinoids as schedule IIA controlled substances; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 7

SHORT TITLE: SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS AS SCHEDULE IIA

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) MUNOZ, HERRON, KERTTULA, GATTO,
LYNN, PRUITT

01/18/11	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/7/11
01/18/11	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/11	(H)	JUD, FIN
02/04/11	(H)	JUD AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120

WITNESS REGISTER

JOSEPH SCHMIDT, Commissioner
Department of Corrections (DOC)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the overview of the Department of Corrections.

CARMEN GUTIERREZ, J.D., Deputy Commissioner
Prisoner Rehabilitation and Re-entry
Office of the Commissioner - Anchorage
Department of Corrections (DOC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Assisted with the presentation of the overview of the Department of Corrections.

REPRESENTATIVE CATHY MUNOZ
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As one of the bill's joint prime sponsors, presented HB 7.

KENDRA KLOSTER, Staff
Representative Cathy Munoz
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Assisted with the presentation of HB 7 on behalf of one of the bill's joint prime sponsors, Representative Munoz.

ROBERT URATA, M.D.
Valley Medical Care
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments during discussion of HB 7 and asked that it be passed.

ORIN DYM, Forensic Laboratory Supervisor
Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory ("Crime Lab")
Office of the Commissioner
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions during discussion of HB 7.

ANNE CARPENETI, Assistant Attorney General
Legal Services Section
Criminal Division
Department of Law (DOL)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments and responded to questions during discussion of HB 7.

RANDAHL HAHN, Captain, Commander
Alaska Bureau of Investigations (ABI)
Division of Alaska State Troopers
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions during discussion of HB 7.

ELIZABETH RIPLEY, Executive Director
Mat-Su Health Foundation;
Chair
Mat-Su Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments during discussion of HB 7.

J. KATE BURKHART, Executive Director
Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA)
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments on behalf of the ABADA during discussion of HB 7.

DENNIS A. WHEELER, Municipal Attorney
Department of Law
Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments during discussion of HB 7.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:07:19 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR STEVE THOMPSON called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. Representatives Thompson, Gruenberg, Keller, and Pruitt were present at the call to order. Representatives Holmes and Lynn arrived as the meeting was in progress. Representative Gatto was excused.

Overview(s): Department of Corrections

[1:07:47 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the first order of business would be an overview of the Department of Corrections.

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JOSEPH SCHMIDT, Commissioner, Department of Corrections (DOC), said that the mission of the DOC is to enhance the safety of Alaska's communities, and provide secure confinement, reformative programs, and a process of supervised community reintegration. The DOC employs 1,500 people, has 12 facilities throughout state, now has 1,000 prisoners in Colorado, and has experienced consistent growth in its prison population. Providing secure confinement constitutes the most expensive aspect of what the DOC does, and so the DOC has found ways to keep the public safe in a much more cost-effective and efficient manner while still providing for inevitable growth. The DOC has 13 probation offices around the state; 15 contract jails with 159 beds in rural communities; 789 halfway-house beds - or community residential center beds; 290 prisoners on electronic monitoring; a total of about 5,900 offenders located both in and out of state in either secure facilities, halfway houses, or on electronic monitoring; and about 6,000 supervised probationers/parolees. The DOC processes 38,000 "bookings" per year - representing 22,000 individuals - and supervises 1 out of every 36 adults in Alaska.

COMMISSIONER SCHMIDT explained that the DOC's prison beds - which cost close to \$50,000 per year per bed to operate - are reserved for offenders who are actively dangerous. Halfway houses and electronic monitoring are used for offenders who are still serving time but are about to reenter the community, and allow such offenders to maintain a job, sobriety support, and housing, all of which have been shown to reduce recidivism rates. In fact, 95 percent of those who utilized electronic monitoring were able to finish their sentence without committing either a technical violation or a new crime, and the other 5 percent only committed technical violations. He then indicated that the DOC's residential substance abuse treatment (RSAT) program [is being] changed to account for the fact that between felons and misdemeanants, the average sentence length is only 160 days; by offering several 90-day and 120-day RSAT programs over the course of a year instead of one year-long RSAT program - which, incidentally, also has a year-long waiting list - more of the prison population could be served. Some form of substance abuse was a factor in the cases of between 80 and 90 percent of the prison population.

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COMMISSIONER SCHMIDT relayed that because there is the expectation that offenders will make changes in their lives while they are incarcerated so that they won't later go on to create more victims, in addition to RSAT programs, another of the DOC's focuses is on high school equivalency education and vocational training, and on ensuring that offenders have proper identification (ID) when they leave a facility, since without ID, there is very little chance that a released offender will be able to find a place to live or get a job. The DOC releases close to 300 felony offenders every month, and so has a duty to the community to ensure, whenever possible, that those released are better people than when they entered the criminal justice system; of course, such offenders have to want to change.

COMMISSIONER SCHMIDT then referred to [a pilot program called] Probationer Accountability with Certain Enforcement (PACE) - which was modeled after a program in Hawaii - and explained that it was started in July and designed to address recidivism issues for probationers/parolees, 50 percent of whom were ending up being incarcerated again on new charges for crimes committed while waiting for a court process, or for a warrant to be served, or to get scheduled for a hearing, or something else of that nature. Probationers/parolees, he surmised, were simply giving up on complying with their probation/parole requirements. Under the PACE program, however, probationers/parolees who reoffend are immediately re-incarcerated - often for far shorter periods of time than if their re-incarceration were delayed - thereby providing them with an incentive to not reoffend and to not stop trying to comply. This PACE pilot program has proven to be successful, producing results similar to Hawaii's program. The DOC, therefore, will be seeking to expand the PACE program to Fairbanks, with a focus on misdemeanor domestic violence (DV) offenders.

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COMMISSIONER SCHMIDT reported that construction of the new Goose Creek Correctional Center is about 75 percent completed; that it is expected to be ready for occupancy in March 2012; that only about 30 minimum-security prisoners will be housed there for the first four months; that upon completion, it will have 1,500 medium-security beds; and that about a year after this new facility becomes fully operational, the DOC should be able to provide the legislature with accurate statistics. He also indicated that asking rural communities to provide treatment to offenders returning home could be one way of addressing future prisoner-population growth; currently, offenders from rural

communities, once they are released, must remain in the city in order to complete court-ordered treatment and generally must do so without sufficient resources, often reoffending as a result.

COMMISSIONER SCHMIDT then relayed that the Palmer Correctional Center can house about 500 prisoners, both medium- and minimum-security prisoners; that the Spring Creek Correctional Center can house maximum-security prisoners; that the cost of housing prisoners in the Goose Creek Correctional Center is estimated to be about \$86/day; and that the Goose Creek Correctional Center will have its own medical unit - which should help keep some of the DOC's "outside" medical costs down - and several hundred beds in its "special management unit" for "pretrial people" and prisoners who don't behave.

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CARMEN GUTIERREZ, J.D., Deputy Commissioner, Prisoner Rehabilitation and Re-entry, Office of the Commissioner - Anchorage, Department of Corrections (DOC), said that the DOC believes that Alaska's high recidivism rates can be reduced through collaborative efforts, and relayed that cost-effective justice requires receiving good value for money spent. The estimated cost of incarcerating an individual in fiscal year 2011 (FY 11) is \$136/day, or approximately \$50,000/year, but according to a 2007 Alaska Judicial Council (AJC) study, "Criminal Recidivism in Alaska", two out of three offenders get arrested again within the first three years of their release, with most getting arrested within the first year, particularly within the first six months. This means that for the most part, Alaska isn't getting good value for the money it's spending on offenders. Furthermore, nationally, Alaska has the 11th fastest growing prison population. For example, from 2000 to 2007, Alaska's prison population increased by 106 prisoners for every 100,000 Alaskans, whereas nationally the increase was only 28 prisoners for every 100,000 residents, with 12 states actually experiencing a decrease and only two states experiencing a greater increase than Alaska.

DR. GUTIERREZ mentioned that the new Goose Creek Correctional Center is costing \$250 million to build, and will have an estimated annual operating budget of \$50 million. Referring to a handout in members' packets, she relayed that since 2005, generally speaking, the DOC's prison population has grown, on average, by about 200 individuals per year. Such growth cannot be sustained, she opined, unless the DOC starts employing cost-effective justice measures, particularly given that as more

people are incarcerated, more people will also eventually be released. For example, during 2009, the DOC released an average of 295 convicted felons every month, and this number is expected to go up in future years. In [2008, 3,436 prisoners were released: approximately 1,735] in Anchorage, 290 in Fairbanks, and 106 in Juneau. According to a study conducted by the Pew Center on the States as part of its Public Safety Performance Project (PSPP), in 1982, only 1 out of every 90 adult Alaskans was under the jurisdiction of the DOC, compared to 1 out of 36 in 2009.

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DR. GUTIERREZ, referring to page 3 of the aforementioned handout, noted that it illustrates that in 2009, less than 50 percent of the DOC's prison population was incarcerated for offenses against the person crimes. On the issue of recidivism, she relayed, the DOC has determined that much of what works to reduce recidivism - housing, employment, mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, positive peer groups - falls beyond the mandate of the DOC, and so the DOC, under the auspices of the Criminal Justice Working Group (CJWG) and its Alaska Prisoner Reentry Task Force, has been working collaboratively with the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD), the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Department of Education and Early Development (EED), the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA), the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), community stakeholders, and concerned/interested citizens to try to address Alaska's high recidivism rates. Other collaborative efforts to reduce Alaska's high recidivism rates that the DOC has been involved with include a five-year prisoner reentry strategic plan - 2011-2016 - and, again, the aforementioned successful pilot PACE program, which required the cooperation of the Anchorage Police Department (APD), the Alaska Court System (ACS), the Department of Law (DOL), and the Public Defender Agency (PDA). When everyone works together, she proffered, they can do things that truly make a difference, and this constitutes cost-effective justice.

DR. GUTIERREZ, referring to pages 4-5 of the aforementioned handout, then provided information about successful steps that the State of Texas has taken in its efforts control crime and corrections' costs, including collecting data and then developing systematic approaches and programs based on that data. If Texas can do it so successfully, Alaska can do so as well, she opined, and perhaps thereby avoid having to build

another new prison in the next eight-nine years. In terms of the next steps that the DOC could undertake, she indicated that in addition to continuing to work collaboratively with the aforementioned agencies/entities/groups and other interested parties, and continuing to obtain information about new approaches, identifying the factors that drive Alaska's prison growth - as Texas has done - and raising public awareness about the issues the state is facing are also warranted. In conclusion, she said, "For every prisoner who comes out and is successfully reintegrated into his or her community, we have one less victim and we have healthier [communities], and that is the goal of the Department of Corrections."

The committee took an at-ease from 1:47 p.m. to 1:51 p.m.

HB 7 - SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS AS SCHEDULE IIA

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VICE CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 7, "An Act classifying certain synthetic cannabinoids as schedule IIA controlled substances; and providing for an effective date."

[1:52:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CATHY MUNOZ, Alaska State Legislature, speaking as one of HB 7's joint prime sponsors, explained that the bill would classify certain synthetic cannabinoids as schedule IIA controlled substances, which include materials, compounds, and mixtures that contain hallucinogenic substances. The issue of synthetic cannabinoids was first brought to her attention, she relayed, by a constituent whose son experienced severe adverse reactions when he first experimented with a substance containing synthetic cannabinoids. Within moments of inhaling the substance, commonly referred to as "K2" or "Spice," he began vomiting, lost his sense of reality and his ability to walk or talk, and had violent outbursts. She then read from a letter he'd since written, which in part read [original punctuation provided]:

... I lost control of my legs that I couldn't walk at all. I couldn't talk. I could hear what I thought and what I wanted to say, but all I was spitting out was gibberish. This went on for what felt like many hours. I can remember thinking to myself that I wasn't actually going come out of this craziness and

this might be how I end up dying! I remember telling my brother to call 911 and remember going into the ambulance and ending up in the hospital

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ relayed that she's since heard similar stories from around Alaska and other parts of the country, and offered her understanding that to date, nine other states have successfully enacted laws banning synthetic cannabinoids - which have only just recently been marketed in the U.S - and that many countries in Europe have already taken steps to ban them, including Germany, Sweden, Russia, and England. Synthetic cannabinoids are primarily made in China and Europe; are commonly marketed as incense after being mixed with [a leafy substance]; are readily available over the Internet and in local stores; and can produce reactions similar to those of [tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in marijuana], but can also produce severely adverse reactions such as hallucinations, nausea, vomiting, agitation, and panic attacks. In conclusion, she indicated that there were folks available to speak in support of HB 7.

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KENDRA KLOSTER, Staff, Representative Cathy Munoz, Alaska State Legislature, speaking on behalf of Representative Munoz, one of the bill's joint prime sponsors, explained that HB 7 would add 10 specific compounds to AS 11.71.150(b) - the list of schedule IIA controlled substances; these are the compounds that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and other states have thus far come across. In response to comments and questions about a different synthetic compound being labeled as "bath salts" but being used as a drug, she indicated that further research would be warranted before including such a compound in HB 7.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLMES asked what the rationale was for proposing to add synthetic cannabinoids to the list of schedule IIA controlled substances rather than to one of the other schedules.

MS. KLOSTER explained that both the DEA - [which has temporarily banned] five of the compounds listed in HB 7 - and the majority of the other states that have enacted legislation to ban synthetic cannabinoids have included them in their schedule I controlled substances lists, which are similar to Alaska's schedule IIA controlled substances list; Alaska's list of schedule IIA controlled substances and those other states' lists of schedule I controlled substances include other hallucinogenic drugs.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLMES offered her understanding that while some consider synthetic cannabinoids to be like other hallucinogens, others consider them to be more like marijuana, and therefore she is questioning which schedule would be the most appropriate to list them under.

MS. KLOSTER acknowledged that other types of synthetic marijuana, as well as THC itself - again, the active ingredient in marijuana - are listed as schedule IIIA controlled substances, and mentioned that she has spoken with the drafter about instead adding the synthetic cannabinoids named in the bill to the list of schedule IIIA controlled substances, if that's what the committee would prefer.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG observed that according to information from the National Conference of State Legislatures included in members' packets, some states provide the same penalties for crimes involving synthetic cannabinoids as for crimes involving marijuana. In contrast, HB 7 would provide for stronger penalties.

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MS. KLOSTER pointed out that Alaska simply schedules its drugs differently. For example, in Alaska, marijuana itself is not considered to be very dangerous and so is listed as a schedule VIA controlled substance, whereas research indicates that the synthetic cannabinoids listed in HB 7 behave more like hallucinogens - schedule IIA controlled substances - and are thus more harmful to people; no one has died from using marijuana, but some have died from using synthetic cannabinoids. She again indicated that listing such compounds as schedule IIIA controlled substances, instead, would be an option, if that's the committee's preference; again, other types of synthetic marijuana are already listed as schedule IIIA controlled substances. In response to a question, she offered her understanding that possession of a schedule IIA controlled substance would be a class C felony, whereas possession of a schedule IIIA controlled substance would be a class A misdemeanor; she agreed to research whether any other states have made possessing synthetic cannabinoids a felony.

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ROBERT URATA, M.D., Valley Medical Care, in response to a question, relayed that he'd attended a person who'd used a synthetic cannabinoid; he elaborated:

The gentleman presented in quite a bit of distress. ... He was disoriented, hallucinating, and his blood pressure was extremely high - 180 over 105. His pulse rate was 139 when he arrived, and [he] looked very much like he was having some sort of toxic reaction to something, and we couldn't ... get a history from him, but his friends were there to give us the history of ingestion with this new drug ... [that was] surprisingly easily-available to him - I think it was purchased at a [local] store or something like that. So I thought that that was quite a dangerous thing. We actually admitted him overnight, gave him [intravenous (IV)] fluids, [but] we didn't have to give him any medications. We were advised by poison control ... that this should just settle down after close observation - which we did, we put him in the intensive care unit - and the next day he was able to go home. And he was alert, oriented, [but] did not recall all of the things except that he had a very scary experience and he was never going to do it again.

DR. URATA, in conclusion, opined that the committee should pass HB 7. In response to questions, he offered his understanding that synthetic cannabinoids have not been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and that the person had only smoked a pipe full of the synthetic cannabinoid through some sort of pipe; and said that the person did not appear to be suffering from an allergic reaction to the synthetic cannabinoid, and that the effects on the person were similar to those of cocaine or a "bad trip" on lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD).

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ORIN DYM, Forensic Laboratory Supervisor, Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory ("Crime Lab"), Office of the Commissioner, Department of Public Safety (DPS), in response to questions, explained that the Crime Lab would be responsible for performing all of the analyses pertaining to the compounds listed in HB 7; that he's provided the DOL with language regarding these compounds; that this language is meant to encompass possible future variations in the chemical composition of these types of

synthetic cannabinoids; that the [DEA has temporarily banned some] synthetic cannabinoids; that the synthetic compound being labeled as "bath salts" but being used as a drug is more closely related, structurally, to an amphetamine; that analyses pertaining to the compounds listed in the bill would be conducted using the Crime Lab's standard methodology, though a specific method has not yet been validated in Alaska; that it could be a challenge to prove to a court that a particular compound is one of the synthetic cannabinoids listed in the bill to the exclusion of all other compounds; and that the DPS's fiscal note reflects the addition of a new position to address the anticipated increase in the Crime Lab's workload, as well as the startup and ongoing costs associated with that new position, which would be capable of analyzing up to 40 requests per month.

2:24:06 PM

ANNE CARPENETI, Assistant Attorney General, Legal Services Section, Criminal Division, Department of Law (DOL), explained that usually the way a particular drug is scheduled in Alaska is that the federal government schedules that drug first under its schedules, and then, as required by Alaska statute, the governor introduces legislation to add that drug to Alaska's schedules, and then there are further statutory guidelines that must be followed with regard to which schedule that drug should be listed under. In the case of synthetic cannabinoids, however, the federal government hasn't scheduled them yet [having only temporarily banned them while it conducts more research regarding their potential dangers]. So at this point, she relayed, the DOL doesn't know enough about the dangers of synthetic cannabinoids to adequately address the issue of proper scheduling, and would therefore prefer that the bill include legislative findings of fact regarding the extent of the abuse and the dangers posed; such findings would also be helpful to the DOL for prosecution purposes as well as for defending the legislation should it be challenged. She indicated that the DOL would be happy to work with the [joint prime sponsors] in drafting those legislative findings.

MS. CARPENETI concurred that Mr. Dym has provided the DOL with language containing a more generic description of the synthetic cannabinoids listed in the bill such that possible future variations in the chemical composition of these compounds would still be covered, thereby precluding the need for future statutory revisions. In conclusion, she reiterated the DOL's preference that HB 7 include legislative findings of fact. In response to questions, she observed that should HB 7 become law,

prosecutions would fall to the state alone because the federal government has yet to schedule these types of synthetic cannabinoids; that she would research what possible effect any future prosecutions by the federal government might have on the aforementioned anticipated increase in the Crime Lab's workload; and, referring to the legislative findings of fact included in legislation passed in 2006 regarding marijuana, reiterated that it would be helpful - for purposes of prosecution, defending against a challenge, and proper scheduling - for HB 7 to include legislative findings of fact regarding the extent of the abuse and the dangers posed by these synthetic cannabinoids compared to other drugs, including marijuana.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG requested that the language provided to the DOL by Mr. Dym be distributed to the drafter.

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT asked whether law enforcement has come across any instances wherein someone under the influence of [one of the synthetic cannabinoids listed in the bill] committed a crime but couldn't be prosecuted to the full extent of the law because those compounds had not yet been made illegal.

[2:37:48 PM](#)

RANDAHL HAHN, Captain, Commander, Alaska Bureau of Investigations (ABI), Division of Alaska State Troopers, Department of Public Safety (DPS), indicated that [the DPS] has come across such instances wherein the person was only charged with the "core" crime but not with possession/consumption of a synthetic cannabinoid. He added, though, that because the compounds listed in the bill are not yet illegal, [the DPS] has only anecdotal information and is unable to provide the committee with the type of statistical data that it would normally provide with regard to controlled substances.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG expressed interest in hearing about the experiences of law enforcement in other states, and about whether there were any other substances that the administration thinks should be added to HB 7.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLMES asked Captain Hahn how the synthetic cannabinoids listed in the bill manifest in those who use them, and how dangerous he feels these compounds to be.

CAPTAIN HAHN indicated that law enforcement officers have found that the reactions and behaviors of individuals using a variation of one of the compounds listed in the bill more

closely resemble the reactions and behaviors of someone under the influence of LSD or cocaine, rather than those of someone under the influence of marijuana; generally speaking, these individuals indicated they were having hallucinations, they were much more aggressive and violent, and they had more significant blackout periods.

2:41:16 PM

ELIZABETH RIPLEY, Executive Director, Mat-Su Health Foundation; Chair, Mat-Su Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, indicated that [her organizations] are concerned about the synthetic cannabinoids listed in the bill - such compounds can be harmful and even deadly, even when used for the first time - and that [her organizations] support passage of HB 7, and advocate the use of public policy to curtail the availability and use of these drugs. She also provided comments regarding alcohol and marijuana abuse. In response to a question, she agreed to provide the committee with information regarding how many businesses in Palmer and Wasilla sell synthetic cannabinoids such as those listed in the bill.

2:46:53 PM

J. KATE BURKHART, Executive Director, Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), after stating that she would only be speaking on behalf of the ABADA and not on behalf of the DHSS, indicated that the ABADA supports the regulation of the synthetic cannabinoids listed in the bill given the significant health consequences these compounds pose to people who use them. Although the DEA has temporarily banned possession of [five of the compounds listed in HB 7] so as to investigate the issue of proper scheduling, the ABADA's position, she relayed, is that the state cannot rely upon the federal government to [schedule those compounds at all, or to schedule them] as quickly as would be desirable. [House Bill 7 represents] an opportunity for Alaska to protect its citizens from a significant health hazard, and to take the lead, over the federal government, on this issue, particularly given how popular these compounds have become even though they've only recently entered the marketplace, and given that those who use them are presenting with serious health consequences that could lead to death. She also provided comments regarding other hallucinogenic substances that perhaps should be regulated as well, such as Salvia Divinorum [and Salvinorin A (Divinorin A)].

[2:54:57 PM](#)

DENNIS A. WHEELER, Municipal Attorney, Department of Law, Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), relayed that after studying the issue of synthetic cannabinoids through the use of a state grant, the MOA passed an ordinance banning them back in December 2010. Although such compounds have only been temporarily banned by the DEA, he offered his understanding that it's considering listing them as schedule I controlled substances, and therefore the MOA supports bills such as HB 7 [in its current form], particularly given that the potency range of these types of synthetic cannabinoids is anywhere from 10-800 greater than marijuana. In fact, at least one person in Anchorage has died [as a result of using such a compound] - he went into a coma and never recovered - and there have been some significant motor vehicle accidents resulting from people driving while under the influence of these types of synthetic cannabinoids, including one person who smashed into some concrete barricades and then described some very strange [hallucinations] to the responding officer. He relayed that a couple of MOA personnel have been making presentations to Department of Corrections (DOC) staff, military officials, and others about these compounds and their dangers, and indicated that someone from the MOA would probably be available to present this information to the committee during the bill's next hearing. In response to comments and a request, he agreed to also provide the information in writing.

VICE CHAIR THOMPSON announced that public testimony would remain open, and that HB 7 would be held over.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.