

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 29, 2012

1:10 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 Hawker (alternate)

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Attorney General

Michael C. Geraghty - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Violent Crimes Compensation Board

Regina C. Chennault, M.D. - Soldotna

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Alaska Judicial Council

Kenneth Kreitzer - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Commission on Judicial Conduct

Robert D. Sheldon - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Select Committee on Legislative Ethics

Dennis E. "Skip" Cook - Fairbanks
Herman G. Walker, Jr. - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MICHAEL C. GERAGHTY, Appointee
Attorney General
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the position of Attorney General.

WILLIAM R. SATTERBERG, JR., Attorney at Law
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments during the confirmation hearing of Michael C. Geraghty as appointee to the position of Attorney General.

REGINA C. CHENNAULT, M.D., Appointee
Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB)
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB).

KENNETH KREITZER, Appointee
Alaska Judicial Council (AJC)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Judicial Council (AJC).

ROBERT D. SHELDON, Appointee
Commission on Judicial Conduct (CJC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Commission on Judicial Conduct (CJC).

DENNIS E. "SKIP" COOK, Appointee
Select Committee on Legislative Ethics
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics.

HERMAN G. WALKER, JR., Appointee
Select Committee on Legislative Ethics
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:10:28 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER, acting as chair, called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Representatives Keller, Gruenberg, Lynn, and Pruitt were present at the call to order. Representatives Holmes and Thompson arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): **Attorney General**

[1:11:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER announced that the first order of business would be consideration of the appointment of Michael C. Geraghty to the position of Attorney General.

[1:11:36 PM](#)

MICHAEL C. GERAGHTY, Appointee, Attorney General, referring to his appointment as a privilege and an honor, said he is looking forward to working with the House Judiciary Standing Committee on the many challenges facing the state. He then provided the committee with some personal information, including some employment history and educational background. In response to a question, he characterized the Department of Law (DOL) as an excellent, well-run and well-managed department, and DOL employees as exemplary; noted that his transition into the position of attorney general has been seamless; and recounted that the DOL's core services include providing the best possible legal advice to the governor and executive-branch agencies, protecting Alaskans via the prosecution of those who violate Alaska's laws, promoting the development of Alaska's natural resources, and promoting Alaska's fiscal integrity. He also mentioned that as attorney general, he would be examining the

various aspects of the DOL and its operations for possible improvements.

MR. GERAGHTY, in response to another question and comments, explained that whenever the state is asked to join other states in litigation, the merits of the particular case are carefully evaluated to determine whether joining in would really be appropriate for Alaska; and acknowledged his receipt of various awards and recognitions for his legal work.

[1:19:43 PM](#)

WILLIAM R. SATTERBERG, JR., Attorney at Law, characterized the appointment of Mr. Geraghty to the position of attorney general as an excellent choice. He then recounted a case he is involved in, one in which the state had previously declined to join, and asked Mr. Geraghty to reconsider that decision should he be confirmed as attorney general.

MR. GERAGHTY, expressing familiarity with that particular case, declined to do so, relaying that he agreed with the decision to not join in. He indicated, though, that the state has joined in on another, similar, case.

The committee took an at-ease from 1:24 p.m. to 1:25 p.m.

MR. GERAGHTY, in response to other questions, mentioned aspects of DOL's existing work load, adding that he takes seriously his duty to uphold and defend the laws of Alaska and the Alaska State Constitution; reiterated some of his previous comments; explained that maintaining the integrity and independence of the DOL is critical to the proper functioning of government, and that his obligation is to the office of the governor, and therefore to the people of Alaska, rather than to the individual governor himself/herself; and assured the committee that he takes his ethical responsibilities very seriously. In response to comments and further questions, he noted that because there are unsettled questions of law, there may well be times when his legal opinion differs from that of Legislative Legal and Research Services, particularly in instances wherein the legality of one particular approach over another isn't at issue and instead it's just a question of policy; and assured the committee that he would keep members of the legislature updated on particular issues of interest.

MR. GERAGHTY, in conclusion, again referred to his appointment as a privilege and an honor, and reiterated that he is looking forward to working with the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER reminded members that signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflect individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees, and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[1:39:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT made a motion to advance from committee the nomination of Michael C. Geraghty to the position of Attorney General. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced from the House Judiciary Standing Committee.

Violent Crimes Compensation Board

[1:40:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER announced that the next order of business would be consideration of the reappointment of Regina C. Chennault, M.D., to the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB).

[1:40:36 PM](#)

REGINA C. CHENNAULT, M.D., Appointee, Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB), noting that she is up for reappointment to the VCCB, proffered that it serves Alaskans in a way that no other entity can, and she is therefore honored to continue serving on the VCCB.

[Members of the committee then thanked Dr. Chennault for her willingness to serve on the VCCB.]

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT made a motion to advance from committee the nomination of Regina C. Chennault, M.D., to the Violent Crimes Compensation Board. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced from the House Judiciary Standing Committee.

Alaska Judicial Council

[1:43:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER announced that the committee would next consider the appointment of Kenneth Kreitzer to the Alaska Judicial Council (AJC).

[1:44:07 PM](#)

KENNETH KREITZER, Appointee, Alaska Judicial Council (AJC), noting that he's been serving on the AJC since his appointment last summer, said that the importance, enormity, and impact of the AJC's work with regard to screening, nominating, and retaining Alaska's judges was a big draw for him because he'd been looking for a way to give back to the community via public service. In conclusion, he relayed that he's been enjoying his work on the AJC, considering it to be very interesting, and is honored to be a part of it. In response to comments and questions, he confirmed that he's already been involved in the AJC's screening and nomination processes; explained that he'd applied to serve on the AJC because he'd heard there was a vacancy; mentioned that he is semi-retired and thus has the time and energy to devote to the AJC; shared some personal information; agreed to research the issues of gender representation and minimum-nominee requirements; and assured the committee that the AJC nominates potential judicial candidates based only on the merits and character of the candidates, seeking to nominate only those who would be loyal to the rule of law.

[During Mr. Kreitzer's testimony, Representative Keller turned the gavel over to Vice Chair Thompson, and Representative Holmes thanked Mr. Kreitzer for his willingness to serve.]

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG made a motion to advance from committee the nomination of Kenneth Kreitzer as appointee to the Alaska Judicial Council. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced from the House Judiciary Standing Committee.

Commission on Judicial Conduct

[1:56:55 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the next order of business would be consideration of the reappointment of Robert D. Sheldon to the Commission on Judicial Conduct (CJC).

[1:57:19 PM](#)

ROBERT D. SHELDON, Appointee, Commission on Judicial Conduct (CJC), noting that he's been serving on the CJC since 2008 and characterizing his appointment as an honor, explained that the CJC addresses issues of improper courtroom behavior, illegal influence, impropriety while off the bench, and other such issues. He mentioned that his view point has broadened since he first started serving on the CJC, adding that all members of the CJC work together to address the few items with actual merit that come before it. In conclusion, proffering that the CJC performs a crucial function for the state, he said he would be delighted to have his name forwarded to the full legislature, and he looks forward to continuing to serve. In response to a question, he offered his belief that currently, the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct is fairly well set and better left alone unless and until a specific issue arises that warrants addressing.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG made a motion to advance from committee the nomination of Robert D. Sheldon to the Commission on Judicial Conduct. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced from the House Judiciary Standing Committee.

Select Committee on Legislative Ethics

[2:02:03 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the next order of business would be consideration of the reappointment of Dennis E. "Skip" Cook to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics.

[2:02:31 PM](#)

DENNIS E. "SKIP" COOK, Appointee, Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, noting that he's been serving since 1998, said it's been a challenging but wonderful experience, and thus he is willing to be reappointed. He then provided some personal information to the committee, including correcting a mistake in his disclosure forms regarding numbers of non-dependent children. In conclusion, he said he's enjoyed serving on the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, and again commented on his willingness to continue serving.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER thanked Mr. Cook for his service.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG disclosed that he's served on the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics with both Mr. Cook and Mr. Walker.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG made a motion to advance from committee the nomination of Dennis E. "Skip" Cook as appointee to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced from the House Judiciary Standing Committee.

[2:05:28 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the final order of business would be consideration of the reappointment of Herman G. Walker, Jr., to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics.

[2:05:39 PM](#)

HERMAN G. WALKER, JR., Appointee, Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, noting that he's been serving since 2002, said he's been enjoying it and hopes to be reappointed. Although the work has been challenging, he remarked, it's never been boring. In conclusion, he said he is looking forward to continuing to serve, adding his belief that his perspective and the experience he's gained while serving thus far will be of benefit to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics and Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLMES thanked Mr. Walker and Mr. Cook for their service, and disclosed that she, too, has served on the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics with both of them.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG made a motion to advance from committee the nomination of Herman G. Walker, Jr., as appointee to the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced from the House Judiciary Standing Committee.

[2:08:54 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:08 p.m.