

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

April 14, 2011

3:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Donald Olson, Chair
Senator Thomas Wagoner
Senator Johnny Ellis

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Albert Kookesh
Senator Linda Menard

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 24

Urging the United States Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act of 2000.

- MOVED HJR 24 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 24

SHORT TITLE: SUPPORT FED. FOREST LAND REVENUE SHARING

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) P.WILSON

03/25/11	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/25/11	(H)	CRA
04/08/11	(H)	CRA RPT 4DP
04/08/11	(H)	DP: FOSTER, SADDLER, GARDNER, MUNOZ
04/08/11	(H)	CRA AT 8:30 AM BARNES 124
04/08/11	(H)	Moved Out of Committee
04/08/11	(H)	MINUTE(CRA)
04/11/11	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/11/11	(H)	VERSION: HJR 24
04/12/11	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/12/11	(S)	CRA
04/14/11	(S)	CRA AT 3:00 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON
Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HJR 24.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:00:26 PM](#)

CHAIR DONALD OLSON called the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Ellis, Wagoner, and Chair Olson.

HJR 24-SUPPORT FED. FOREST LAND REVENUE SHARING

[3:00:41 PM](#)

CHAIR OLSON announced the consideration of HJR 24.

[3:00:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON, sponsor of HJR 24, said that this resolution urges Congress and the President to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools [and Community Self-Determination] Act (SRSCA) and honor an agreement made in 1908. She explained that the federal government historically shared 25 percent of the annual income earned from national forest receipts with states for distribution among local communities located within the national forest for schools and roads. [This was in response to local governments' concern about the loss of property tax revenue when public domain lands were withdrawn from private ownership to create national forests.] The federal government has steadily decreased payments through the SRSCA over the years even though these forest communities continue to have the same needs as they did initially. They are surrounded by national forest and thus lack the ability to utilize the land to create revenue locally.

Forty two states and Puerto Rico receive payments from the SRSCA including thirty three [Alaska] communities and the State of Alaska. Last year \$16 million was distributed statewide primarily for schools but also for the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF). Local school districts, the National Forest Counties & Schools Coalition, the Western Governors' Association, and at least 29 senators and 69 congressmen, including the Alaska delegation support reauthorization of the SRSCA.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON said Alaska needs to send a strong message that the secure rural schools program should continue at

a level that will sustain forest communities that are able to generate little or no tax revenue.

CHAIR OLSON asked if anyone opposes the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON replied she was not aware of any opposition.

CHAIR OLSON asked if the federal government was interested in continuing this 1908 agreement.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON replied funding to reauthorize the SRSCA is in the 2012 budget but the allocation decreases every year.

[3:04:51 PM](#)

SENATOR WAGONER asked if there is still some contention between cities and boroughs about the division of the funds.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON surmised that the issue had been resolved because she'd heard nothing about it this time.

CHAIR OLSON asked if any strings are attached to the federal funds other than that they're to be used for schools and roads.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON answered yes; some of the funds are allocated to Resource Advisory Councils (RAC) for use in the forest itself on existing improvements like trails or cabins. The amount that is allocated to RACs changes depending on the administration, but the local community has a say as to what will be improved.

[3:06:48 PM](#)

CHAIR OLSON asked how much money each community receives.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON said it depends on the amount of forest in the area but in the last distribution Kenai received \$645,000; Valdez received \$2.2 million; Cordova received \$1.2 million; the Southeast Alaska School District received \$373,000; Chatham School District received \$415,000; Anchorage received \$104,563; MatSu received \$32,000; the City of Pelican received \$38,000; and Port Alexander received \$5,000.

CHAIR OLSON commented that it's a fair amount of money. Finding no further questions or public testimony, he asked for a motion.

[3:08:18 PM](#)

SENATOR WAGONER moved to report HJR 24, version M, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

CHAIR OLSON announced that without objection, HJR 24 moved from the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.

3:08:42 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Olson adjourned the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee at 3:08 a.m.