

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 22, 2011

9:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Bill Wielechowski, Chair
Senator Joe Paskvan, Vice Chair
Senator Albert Kookesh
Senator Kevin Meyer
Senator Cathy Giessel

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 28(FIN)

"An Act relating to temporary courtesy licenses for certain nonresident professionals and to a temporary exemption from fees and other licensing requirements for active duty members of the armed forces."

- MOVED SCS CSHB 28(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 94

"An Act adding a second verse to the official Alaska state song."

- MOVED SB 94 OUT OF COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW: JAPAN'S NUCLEAR CRISIS: WHAT IT MEANS FOR ALASKA

- HEARD

REVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 28

SHORT TITLE: TEMP LICENSE/FEE WAIVER FOR PROFESSIONALS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) THOMAS, HERRON, FEIGE

01/18/11	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/7/11
01/18/11	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/11	(H)	L&C, FIN
02/07/11	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124

02/07/11 (H) Moved CSHB 28(L&C) Out of Committee
02/07/11 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
02/09/11 (H) L&C RPT CS(L&C) NT 7DP
02/09/11 (H) DP: THOMPSON, SADDLER, JOHNSON, HOLMES,
MILLER, SEATON, OLSON
02/16/11 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519
02/16/11 (H) Moved CSHB 28(FIN) Out of Committee
02/16/11 (H) MINUTE(FIN)
02/18/11 (H) FIN RPT CS(FIN) NT 11DP
02/18/11 (H) DP: FAIRCLOUGH, GARA, T.WILSON,
GUTTENBERG, JOULE, NEUMAN, COSTELLO,
EDGMON,
02/18/11 (H) DOOGAN, STOLTZE, THOMAS
02/23/11 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
02/23/11 (H) VERSION: CSHB 28(FIN)
02/24/11 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/24/11 (S) STA, L&C
03/08/11 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/08/11 (S) Heard & Held
03/08/11 (S) MINUTE(STA)
03/22/11 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 94

SHORT TITLE: SECOND VERSE OF ALASKA'S STATE SONG

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) DAVIS

02/25/11 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/25/11 (S) CRA, STA
03/08/11 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/08/11 (S) Moved SB 94 Out of Committee
03/08/11 (S) MINUTE(CRA)
03/09/11 (S) CRA RPT 5DP
03/09/11 (S) DP: OLSON, KOOKESH, WAGONER, ELLIS,
MENARD
03/09/11 (S) FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER STA
03/17/11 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/17/11 (S) Heard & Held
03/17/11 (S) MINUTE(STA)
03/22/11 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

KACI SCHROEDER, Staff to Representative Bill Thomas
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 28 for Representative Bill Thomas, the sponsor.

SENATOR BETTYE DAVIS
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 94.

MICHELLE SYDEMAN, Staff to Senator Bill Wielechowski
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on fiscal note for SB 94.

JONATHAN EDWARDS, Director
Radiation Protection Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained monitoring and assessment functions of the Radiation Protection Agency.

DR. JOE MCLAUGHLIN, State Epidemiologist
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Discussed possible health impacts and steps Alaskans can take to protect themselves.

CHRIS LABORDE
Preparedness Program Manager
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Discussed possible health impacts and steps Alaskans can take to protect themselves.

GREG WILKENSON, Public Information Officer
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Discussed possible health impacts and steps Alaskans can take to protect themselves.

CLYDE PEARCE, Chief of Radiological Health
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Discussed possible health impacts and steps Alaskans can take to protect themselves.

BRIAN FISHER, Chief of Operations for Homeland Security
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information about emergency responses to nuclear fallout related to the Japanese nuclear threat.

MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS H. KATKUS, Commissioner
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Ft. Richardson, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information about emergency preparedness related to the Japanese nuclear threat.

MICHAEL O'HARE, Deputy Director
Division of Homeland Security
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information about the Japanese nuclear threat and what it means for Alaska.

ALICE EDWARDS, Director
Division of Air Quality
Department of Environmental Conservation
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information about the Japanese nuclear threat related to air quality in Alaska.

KRISTIN RYAN, Director
Division of Environmental Health
Department of Environmental Conservation
Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information about the Japanese nuclear threat and what it means for Alaska.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:02:30 AM](#)

CHAIR BILL WIELECHOWSKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Paskvan, Giessel, Meyer, Kookesh, and Chair Wielechowski.

HB 28-TEMP LICENSE/FEE WAIVER FOR PROFESSIONALS

[9:02:52 AM](#)

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI announced the first order of business would be HB 28. This bill would allow the spouse of a service member

on active duty to obtain a temporary license if he or she practices in a field regulated by the state's Department of Commerce and meets Alaska's professional standards.

SENATOR PASKVAN moved to adopt the proposed Senate committee substitute (SCS) for HB 28, labeled 27-LS0192\Y, as the working document.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI objected for discussion purposes.

KACI SCHROEDER, staff to Representative Bill Thomas, sponsor of HB 28, explained the change in the SCS appears on page 2, subsection (d). It narrows the definition of "active duty" to include only those who are in a combat zone, danger pay post, or qualified hazardous duty area.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI removed his objection and version Y was before the committee.

SENATOR GIESSEL thanked Representative Thomas for making the changes.

SENATOR PASKVAN moved to report HB 28, version Y, from committee with individual recommendations and accompanying fiscal notes.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI announced that without objection, SCS CSHB 28(STA) moved from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee.

SB 94-SECOND VERSE OF ALASKA'S STATE SONG

[9:05:07 AM](#)

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI announced the next order of business would be SB 94.

SENATOR DAVIS, sponsor of SB 94, thanked the committee for hearing the bill in a timely manner. She said last year this bill passed the senate and it has passed the house several times, but never both houses at the same time. She does have a concern about the indeterminate fiscal note.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI noted that all members should have the statement of intent in their packets.

MICHELLE SYDEMAN, staff to Senator Bill Wielechowski, said that last year this bill passed through four committees with a zero fiscal note. This year there was an indeterminate fiscal note issued by the Office of the Governor at the last moment. The

Office of Management and Budget raised the issues that state publications might need to be reprinted, and the possibility of copyright fees. She said that Senator Davis' office has a letter stating there would be no copyright fee, and Chair Wielechowski's office has prepared a letter of intent.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI read the letter of intent, as follows:

SB 94: Second Verse of the Alaska State Song
Legislative Intent

It is the intent of the Alaska State Legislature that no additional funds be spent to re-print state publications simply to include the second verse of the Alaska State Song. Instead, re-printing of publications should occur on the schedule it would otherwise have occurred had the second verse not been adopted.

SENATOR PASKVAN moved to adopt the legislative intent language for SB 94. Without objection, the intent language was adopted.

SENATOR PASKVAN moved to report SB 94 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s) and intent language. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

[9:09:12 AM](#)

At-ease from 9:09 to 9:11 a.m.

Overview: Japan's Nuclear Crisis: What it Means for Alaska

[9:11:22 AM](#)

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI said the committee would now turn its attention to the tragic events in Japan following the 9.0 magnitude earthquake that struck the region 11 days ago and the devastating tsunami that followed. On top of the initial damage wrought by the quake and tsunami, generators at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant were knocked out by flooding that reached the site. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the situation remains very serious. Chair Wielechowski said this hearing was scheduled because many Alaskans have been wondering what, if anything, this disaster could mean for Alaska.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI announced the first speaker would be Jonathan Edwards, Director of the Radiation Protection Division with the Environmental Protection Agency, on-line from Washington, D.C.

[9:13:10 AM](#)

JONATHAN EDWARDS, Director, Radiation Protection Division, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C., said that given the type of radio nuclides, weather conditions, and long transport time, they do not expect to see any type of a public health impact to the United States. Radiation monitoring equipment is in place; the system was designed several decades ago while doing nuclear weapons testing. It was in place during the Chernobyl accident and is in place and operating now. In 2005, the system was upgraded so there are many enhancements that give them a very good picture of what is in the environment.

[9:16:30 AM](#)

The system is looking for fission products. Uranium 235 splits into a one-third, two-third part. In the top part are fission products like cesium, iodine, and xenon. In the bottom one-third, you see things like strontium and krypton. These tend to have longer half lives. The Radnet system consists of 124 monitors across the U.S. Alaska has three permanent sites, in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. These are pulling air through a filter in order to draw as many particles out of the air as quickly as possible.

There is a specially designed probe up-linked to a satellite and down-linked to a lab in Montgomery, Alabama. These probes produce hourly reports on Alpha and Gamma radiation. Gamma radiation is like x-rays; Alpha radiation takes a bit trickier analysis. This monitor gives a very good indication of what is happening near the monitors. The air filters are pulled off twice a week and sent to the lab for detailed analysis.

[9:19:56 AM](#)

In addition to the Radnet monitors, Mr. Edwards said, the EPA decided to send three additional monitors to the state after the accident, due to Alaska's proximity to Japan. These are in Dutch Harbor, Nome, and Juneau. This was done out of an abundance of caution. EPA wanted to make sure they had very good coverage. The scientists at the National Air and Radiation environmental lab are much schooled in looking at this data. These fission products are cesium and iodine, which will be up-taken by the thyroid, and strontium tends to behave chemically like calcium, being absorbed into the bones.

[9:22:44 AM](#)

Once the filters are pulled off the monitors, it takes two to three days to receive all of the detailed analysis. Some of the analysis takes several days to obtain the confirmation. The filters are to back up the real-time probes. The levels that are being seen now continue to remain at background level. The system will automatically alarm if there is any increase from background. EPA expects the levels to remain below guidelines for public reaction; they don't expect to see any harmful levels of radiation.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked about trajectory forecasts of air currents, and under what circumstances radioactive materials might be transported to Alaska.

[9:25:14 AM](#)

MR. EDWARDS answered it is a bit out of EPA's mission to talk about specific modeling results; however, weather typically takes two days to reach the Aleutians from Japan. For detailed weather forecasts and modeling projections, the Department of Energy and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration should speak about that. One thing about this situation different from Chernobyl is that the Chernobyl accident happened when the reactor was at full power. It burned for 10 days. This was a huge heat source that drove contaminants up into the atmosphere. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission could talk more specifically about that.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked if there were a large radioactive release in Japan, how much notice would Alaskans have and how should they respond.

[9:27:53 AM](#)

MR. EDWARDS answered that EPA does not expect to see such an event. There really is no need for any type of precautions; however, there are plans in place that have established protection action guides at projected doses to the public. Triggers for sheltering in place, protective action guides for evacuation, administration of stable iodine, guidance on when to evacuate; these are all well thought out and well accepted for several decades since the Three Mile Island accident. EPA would look at levels and if they were to increase, that information would be quickly reviewed and assessed; then data would be looked at and passed to the Federal Advisory Team for Environment, Food, And Health, with federal experts from EPA,

FDA, CDC, and USDA, and they would review any data and quickly assess projected doses.

[9:31:14 AM](#)

SENATOR PASKVAN said there are Alaskans in Japan right now, and asked what Mr. Edwards thoughts were concerning the radius of danger in Japan itself.

MR. EDWARDS replied the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has been working with Japanese authorities to make sure Americans in Japan receive correct information via the state department.

SENATOR PASKVAN asked what the radius of danger is.

MR. EDWARDS answered guidance from the U.S. embassy is that Americans within 50 miles of the plant should evacuate. That was different from the Japanese 20 kilometers. The embassy made sure that word got out as quickly as possible. They are also looking at food products in the area.

SENATOR GIESSEL asked about a context for people going to the EPA web site. What is normal yearly exposure and what levels should cause concern.

MR. EDWARDS responded the National Council for Radiation Protection says the average exposure is about 620 millarems per year; half of this comes from natural sources and the other half from medical exposures. This varies across the country and within different populations, but it is the general average. Readings from monitors are extremely low compared to that. Typical background level is in the range of 10-12 micro rs per hour; that is several orders of magnitude lower than background.

[9:36:01 AM](#)

If Alaska were to receive higher levels from the release, the sensors would pick this up immediately. The current levels are millions of times lower than areas of concern.

DR. JOE MCLAUGHLIN, State Epidemiologist, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), said there are only three key messages: there is no immediate or anticipated threat for harmful levels of radiation to reach Alaska; Alaska's seafood is unlikely to be affected; all Alaskans should assemble a home response kit and family emergency plan.

DSHS has a duty to inform the public about steps that they can take to mitigate a radiation emergency. It also has a duty to protect the public from radiation exposure, and to distribute medications, provide follow-up for exposed persons, and assure access to care.

DHSS has responded to media requests and issued press releases and messages through social media. The principal message says that there is no anticipated threat; people should not be taking potassium iodide at this time; all Alaskans should be prepared for any type of emergency at any time.

[9:40:55 AM](#)

SENATOR PASKVAN asked if there is a plan in place to distribute potassium iodide or to obtain a supply.

DR. MCLAUGHLIN said radiation medications are included in the U.S. strategic national stockpile, including potassium iodide. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) will only deploy this stockpile if there is a credible threat. At this point, no public health risks are expected.

CHRIS LABORDE, Preparedness Program Manager, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, said the state of Alaska does have a plan to distribute potassium iodide. We have an Alaska strategic stockpile and it is reviewed every year with the CDC. If there is a credible threat, a shipment would come to the warehouse and would be delivered to community health centers. Centers also have a plan in place for distribution to communities.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked if there is enough potassium iodide in Alaska right now.

MS. LABORDE said there is not; it would come from the CDC national stockpile.

[9:43:32 AM](#)

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked how communication would work if there were an emergency.

[9:44:27 AM](#)

GREG WILKENSON, Public Information Officer, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, said the state has an extensive plan for emergency communications that is reviewed annually. They would be notifying the public through regular media and state websites, also Twitter and Facebook.

They would have plenty of time to get this information out to the public.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI said he thought it would take two days for radiation to reach Alaska from Japan, and asked how quickly information could reach Alaskans.

MR. WILKENSEN said it could happen within one-half hour.

[9:45:44 AM](#)

DR. MCLAUGHLIN said the department recommends creating a family emergency response plan, a household emergency supply kit, and a vehicle emergency supply kit. If radiation levels were to rise substantially, EPA monitoring stations would measure specific isotopes to see if there was a threat to the public health. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is closely monitoring the situation. Less than four percent of U.S. imported foods come from Japan. The great quantity of water in the Pacific Ocean rapidly dilutes radioactive materials so fish and seafood are unlikely to be affected.

[9:47:32 AM](#)

DR. MCLAUGHLIN then showed slides of notes and effects from various rem exposures. The maximum radiation reported at the main gate to the power plant on March 15 was 40 rem. Only 0.0008 was reported in Tokyo on that day. The 5-50 rem level shows slightly increased risks of malformations in fetuses; 50-90 shows signs and symptoms of radiation sickness, as well as changes in blood chemistry. Exposure above 90 rems is more serious. Radiation medications are included in the strategic national stockpile and will only deploy if there is a credible threat. Alaska's seafood is unlikely to be affected. All Alaskans should be prepared for disasters at any time.

[9:50:03 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL asked how much exposure people receive when they go through TSA screening.

CLYDE PEARCE, Chief of Radiological Health, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services said that TSA claims it is lower than background amounts, but a recent report shows levels ten times higher than what TSA is stating.

DR. MCLAUGHLIN said that U.S. customs and border protection deploys radiation detection equipment at both air and seaports to screen inbound travelers and cargo. In the air environment, customs and border patrol are equipped with personal radiation

detectors. All airports have sensitive radioactive isotope detection devices to determine both the presence and the type of radiation.

[9:52:07 AM](#)

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked why Juneau has two different EPA monitoring stations.

MR. PEARCE answered it was his understanding that the original monitor doesn't give full data, so they added a temporary monitor to increase capability.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked if anyone had studied weather patterns to see which parts of Alaska might be in the jet stream from a radiation release.

BRIAN FISHER, Chief of Operations for Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, said the most important message today is that all Alaskans should be prepared, have an emergency supply kit, and a family disaster communications plan. If there was any notification by the federal government about potential exposure to radiation, they would work with DHSS and DEC to coordinate efforts. They would handle this situation like a tsunami warning, and would be extremely pro-active in contacting local officials in all communities in the potential path of any kind of threat.

[9:56:48 AM](#)

It is important to let everyone know the military would not make specific recommendations or issue orders; local officials are best able to make that call. Often it is safer to stay put than try to evacuate a whole community.

MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS H. KATKUS, Alaska Army National Guard, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, said he didn't want to repeat what was already heard, but would take questions.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked how an order to take shelter would be implemented, and what assistance would be provided.

DR. MCLAUGHLIN said that decision would be made at the local level. Citizens should have an emergency supply kit already available. The military would provide information to local officials. The most likely recommendation would be to shelter in place. Individual communities have their own communication systems.

10:00:38 AM

SENATOR MEYER asked if Alaska is involved in helping to find survivors of the earthquake, and why are military families being evacuated.

GENERAL KATKUS said some crews in direct support of efforts in Japan do have Alaska National Guardsmen on flights; this past weekend seven Alaska National Guardsmen were involved either directly or indirectly on those flights. The refueling wing is standing ready to support other airborne assets. The Alaska National Guard is directly working under the support of the Alaska Command; there are contingencies to address American citizens leaving Japan. Right now everything is voluntary, and the U.S. military will assist wherever it can.

10:02:52 AM

GENERAL KATKUS also said the main effort of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs in Alaska would not be command and control; rather, the military is here for support. They make sure to have oversight through communication and preparedness, and offer assistance and coordination. They ensure that everyone is working as a team. They suggest, provide resources, and address concerns. They are supporters, not first responders.

10:04:26 AM

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked if evacuation were needed, how it would be handled.

GENERAL KATKUS answered that happens regularly in rural Alaska communities, such as river watch during spring break-up. There are different levels of evacuation; shelter in place, schools or other shelter; and weather permitting, by aircraft or boats or land transportation. Communities have their own contingency plans.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked if most communities have good evacuation plans in place.

GENERAL KATKUS responded any plan is better than no plan. Communities have a plan; the National Guard helps them to improve it.

10:06:24 AM

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked what the chain of command is.

GENERAL KATKUS answered the governor directs all state assets; he may ask the federal government for assistance. All state officials are in the chain of command and responsible for their individual communities.

MICHAEL O'HARE, Deputy Director, Division of Homeland Security, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, said every event is local. They provide support at the local community level, and provide state resources; if the state can't provide needed resources, they ask other states and the federal government.

ALICE EDWARDS, Division Director for Air Quality, Department of Environmental Conservation, said she would answer questions.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked about weather patterns.

MS. EDWARDS said she was not sure; that was probably handled through NOA or the National Weather Service.

[10:09:10 AM](#)

KRISTIN RYAN, Director of Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Conservation, said she was available for questions.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked about problems with Alaska seafood.

MS. RYAN responded there are no problems so far. DEC is monitoring outfall; so far there is no concern about uptake by seafood species. Any deposit in the ocean would dilute beyond a noticeable impact.

CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI said hopefully the reactors will quickly be brought under control and the Japanese can begin the process of rebuilding. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Japanese.

[10:10:53 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, he adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.