

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 29, 2013

8:06 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Lynn Gattis, Chair  
Representative Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair  
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Paul Seaton  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
Representative Harriet Drummond

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development

Sue Hull - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Frances Roberts - Homer  
Eric Fry - Juneau, Alaska  
Martin Laster - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Gloria O'Neill - Anchorage  
Dale Anderson - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SUE HULL, Appointee  
Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke as an appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner  
Office of the Commissioner  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified and answered questions during the confirmation hearings for the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

FRANCES ROBERTS, Appointee  
Professional Teaching Practices Commission  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke as an appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

ERIC FRY, Appointee  
Professional Teaching Practices Commission  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke as an appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

GLORIA O'NEILL, Appointee  
University of Alaska Board of Regents  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke as an appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

DALE ANDERSON, Appointee  
University of Alaska Board of Regents  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke as an appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

MARTIN LASTER, Appointee  
Professional Teaching Practices Commission  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke as an appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

8:06:35 AM

**CHAIR LYNN GATTIS** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. Representatives Gattis, Reinbold, Seaton, P. Wilson, Saddler, Drummond, and LeDoux were present at the call to order.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):**  
**Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development**

8:06:57 AM

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the only order of business would be confirmation hearings for the various boards and commissions. Attention was first turned to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

8:07:43 AM

SUE HULL, Appointee, Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, announced that she was currently serving on the Fairbanks School Board and had been involved with education for more than 30 years. She stated that she had served on the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development in the 1980s, and had served as the President of the Alaska PTA, as well as on the national PTA board. She reported that she had also been the Chair for the development of the national standards for parent and family involvement.

8:08:46 AM

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked if she had previously served on the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

MS. HULL replied that she had served from 1982 - 1987.

8:09:13 AM

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked why Ms. Hull would like to serve on the board.

MS. HULL replied that she wanted to promote a closer relationship between the school districts and the Department of

Education and Early Development (EED). She referred to earlier pilot programs which had not considered local communities in the planning process.

[8:10:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked for her perspective on the statewide public school system, and to include commentary on its standout features and its opportunities for improvement.

MS. HULL offered her belief that there were many extraordinary teachers, schools, and administrators statewide. She noted that although scores were improving across the state, there were still challenges. She expressed interest for enhancing graduation rates and student achievement. She pointed out that there was national interest for making schools better.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what role Ms. Hull would take, and the state would take, to address the challenges of low achievement and low graduation rates.

MS. HULL replied that, as a board member, her job was "to ask the right questions, to speak up on behalf of kids, to talk about how the policies that the state sets really impact kids in the schools." She compared the school system to any bureaucracy with inertia. She opined that the public election of school boards allowed input for improvement from members from outside that system.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether the current public school system only needed more funding and resources, or if there was a need for systemic changes.

MS. HULL responded that any organization, including schools, was not healthy if it remained static. She stated that it would require a focus on continuous improvement. She declared her support of options in schools, while in a search for excellence.

[8:15:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked about the common core standards adopted by many of the larger school districts in Alaska, and noted that the state had adopted Alaskan specific standards. Directing attention to the state's use of common core assessments for progress, he questioned whether there was any disconnect for the use of an assessment to a standard which had not been adopted statewide.

MS. HULL declared that the new assessments would be a challenge for all users. She offered her belief that it should not be a problem, as the Alaska standards were comparable to the common core standards and aligned well enough to provide assessment. She opined that the assessments would drive change, as nationwide testing had reflected a significant drop in proficiency. She declared that it was "an act of courage to tell people where students are actually performing in terms of world class standards and then go to work at raising those scores." She expressed her support for the assessments.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON clarified that his concern was that the assessments were not based on the standards being taught, should a comparison be made to other states where the assessment was based on the standard being taught. He noted that the assessment included the testing for integration of complex ideas versus testing for the knowledge of specific facts. He asked how the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development would view a change of teaching methodology toward the integration of complex ideas.

MS. HULL replied that instruction had to change, and she expressed her desire for school districts to discuss the shift of instruction toward the common core. She detailed one challenge to be for the existing text books, as they were not aligned with the common core. She opined that instructors were aware of the challenges and had begun to review change. She discouraged the idea of sheltering staff from change, as everyone would need to "step up" to the new accountability measures.

[8:19:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of Sue Hull to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development for consideration in joint session by the House and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

CHAIR GATTIS 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.

### **Professional Teaching Practices Commission**

[8:21:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND requested a brief update on the Professional Teaching Practices Commission and any requirements for the nominees.

[8:22:02 AM](#)

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), explained that the Professional Teaching Practices Commission was housed in EED and its role was for the investigation and enforcement of the professional teacher ethics rules. He noted that the qualifications of each nominee were determined by the governor's office, and that the commission was comprised of educators, including higher education, as well as an EED representative.

[8:23:43 AM](#)

FRANCES ROBERTS, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, reported that she had been a mathematics high school teacher for 19 years, and that she had a Master's Degree in mathematics. She said that she was very interested in education, community and civic involvement, and teachers' rights. She expressed her long term interest in serving on the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:25:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there were any professional teaching practices that were required of the new generation of teachers, but had not been required in the past.

MS. ROBERTS responded, "None that I'm aware of."

[8:25:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of Frances Roberts to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission for consideration in joint session by the House and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

CHAIR GATTIS 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.

[8:26:48 AM](#)

ERIC FRY, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, reported that he worked for EED.

[8:27:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND expressed her concern for a non-educator representative on the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:27:55 AM](#)

MR. FRY explained that the commission pertained to the rules of ethics, not to competency as an educator.

[8:28:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER stated his support for the nominee, noting that the applicant's resume was well rounded and qualified to be a representative on the commission.

[8:29:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON clarified that Mr. Fry was currently serving on the commission, and she asked for examples of the cases brought to the commission.

MR. FRY replied that about 20 cases annually resulted in final orders, with about half related to early departure from contracts by teachers. He noted that many cases also resulted from teacher disputes with other teachers, as the ethics rules dictated that teachers would not disparage one another. He stated that a very small number of cases resulted from the misuse of school equipment, specifically computers or i-pads.

[8:29:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND, confirming that Mr. Fry was currently serving on the commission, inquired as to the length of terms and term limits.

MR. FRY replied that each term was for three years, with no more than two consecutive terms.

8:30:22 AM

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX offered her belief that it was appropriate for a person outside of the profession to have a seat on the commission.

8:31:07 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there were any general trends of problems being brought to the commission for consideration.

MR. FRY explained that the problems tended to revolve around teachers breaking contractual agreements and the need for some consequence, which was typically suspension of the teaching certificate for a year. He noted that many of the disparaging personal disputes were in small towns. He said that it was very rare to have a harmful action. He added that, although others on the commission were members of the educator unions, he had never witnessed any excuses for a union member who had misbehaved. He stated that the commission members were very concerned with the enforcement of high standards of behavior.

8:32:58 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked if the commission investigated school principals.

MR. FRY replied that the commission covered public school teachers and administrators, as well as instructors in higher educations.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD relayed anecdotes of two recent situations involving drugs and inappropriate personal behavior with school personnel. She then asked who were the monitors and what were the preventative measures taken. She expressed her concern for a lack of evaluation.

MR. FRY replied that monitoring was handled by the school district administration, and that illegal activity was handled by legal authorities.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked how many principals or teachers were fired annually.

MR. FRY replied that, as this was handled internally by school districts, it would not be reported to the commission. He

clarified that the commission handled complaints about rules of ethics. He stated that the commission did not supervise teacher conduct in every aspect of their work.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked how many ethics complaints were received.

MR. FRY offered his belief that the executive director of the commission would review 50 complaints per year, and would determine that all the local grievance procedures had been handled. He said that there were about 20 final orders each year, which all pertained to ethical rules.

[8:36:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked if the trend for teachers who break contracts existed primarily on or off the road system in Alaska.

MR. FRY replied that many Anchorage teachers break contracts, although he would not estimate to the actual percentages.

[8:37:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND read a definition for the causes for suspension or revocation from the Professional Teaching Practices Commission annual report, which stated: "The Commissioner or the Professional Teaching Practices Commission may revoke or suspend a certificate for the following reasons: incompetency, immorality, substantial non-compliance with the laws, and a violation of ethical or professional standards." She said that incompetency was defined as "the inability or unintentional or intentional failure to perform the teacher's customary teaching duties in a satisfactory manner." She offered her belief that this could come into the commission's purview.

[8:38:37 AM](#)

MR. FRY said that he had never seen a complaint related to non-performance by a teacher. He apologized if he had misstated.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND expressed her concern that the House Education Standing Committee was not clear about the assessment of requirements for the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:39:48 AM](#)

MR. MORSE clarified that although the commission was housed under EED, the executive director was appointed by the governor and reported to the commission. The executive director was aware of the detailed requirements. He said that AS 14.23.70-AS 14.25.100 established the powers of the commission. He provided examples of violations that could be presented to the commission, which it would consider. He pointed out that the code of ethics for teachers had been adopted by the commission, even though it was not in statute. He suggested that the executive director could better attest to the violations addressed by the commission.

[8:42:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON suggested that an incompetent teacher would be identified and the issues resolved by the school district administration, and thus not reach the level of the PTPC.

MR. MORSE, drawing from his experience as a principal, added that more often an administrator would have the teacher removed instead of bringing a charge to the PTPC.

[8:44:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of Eric Fry to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission for consideration in joint session by the House and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

CHAIR GATTIS 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.

### **University of Alaska Board of Regents**

[8:45:24 AM](#)

GLORIA O'NEILL, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, reported that she was the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC). In response, she said that she had been appointed to the board by the governor in January and had served for one meeting. She

explained that, as a regent, she had been through the orientation, spoken with the other members of the board, and had reviewed the 600 page packet which had been distributed for the first board meeting. She pointed out that she had served on the academic affairs committee, which was addressing the "Growing Teachers for Alaska" program. She declared her need for due diligence, and voiced her passion for this program. She offered her belief that the time had arrived for the University of Alaska to review the mentoring and support programs for "growing rural teachers for Rural Alaska," and to make any necessary changes. She voiced a need for a system of success for students.

[8:49:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD stated the top issues as she understood them, which included the transfer of credits, the wait list for the nursing program, the cost of maintenance for the university, and the need for teachers in Alaska. She asked for suggestions for improvement to any or all of these issues.

MS. O'NEILL explained that she would be an impact member in any role that had importance. She noted that it was difficult to change systems from the inside, and that working with the University of Alaska Board of Regents for positive impact would be an approach for systemic change. She stressed that the issue regarding the transfer of credits was "ridiculous," as it was practical and sensible. She stressed that this issue was a priority of the president of UA, and that the University of Alaska Anchorage had made great strides for this transfer of credits within the University of Alaska (UA) system. She addressed the difficulty of enrollment in the UA nursing program, and explained that CITC had formed partnerships with organizations to train nurses. She opined that it was necessary to review what worked best for offering Alaskans opportunities, especially in the health care industry. She declared a necessity for the creation of public-private partnerships, as "different pathways work for different people." She said that she was still studying the university budget to gain a better understanding for the issue of high cost, while ensuring the maintenance of the university and the delivery of a quality experience. She emphasized that the university needed to be accountable to Alaskans and it was necessary to invest in the development of a workforce for the state.

[8:54:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked how the university would incorporate teacher education methodology to include the assessment requirements that had been adopted nationally for integration of knowledge. He requested her thoughts on the direction for this program.

MS. O'NEILL acknowledged her lack of information for the teacher training program. She offered her belief that it would be prudent for the board to review the relevance of each of the assessments, as it was important for pertinent learning.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON stated that the assessments based on common core have been negative as the instructional methods have focused on fact retention, and not the integration of knowledge. He expressed his desire that the teaching methodologies would move toward the integration of knowledge.

[8:58:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND expressed her appreciation for the focus on the "Growing Teachers for Alaska" program, especially from the Rural and Native communities. Noting the difficulty for placement of teachers in rural communities, she asked for a plan of action.

MS. O'NEILL stated her interest in teachers who were drawn to Rural Alaska, regardless of cultural background. She opined that passionate, inspired teachers would succeed in any community. She pointed out that some teachers from a village would have difficulty "going home" after seeing the opportunities in the larger communities and school districts. She questioned the cost to the state for a teacher to locate to a rural community for a few years, and then leave. She offered her belief that it was a high cost to the state and to the children. She asked what it would take to change this system. She pointed out that education was changing rapidly, and that it was no longer solely in the classroom.

[9:03:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND noted that, as Ms. O'Neill begins her tenure on the board, school districts and UA would be laying off many staff members. She pointed to the criticism of UA for a lack of teaching candidates, which necessitated the hiring of teachers from outside of Alaska. At the same time, the State of Alaska had been flat funding education for the past three years.

She suggested that a collision of all of the issues was in the future.

MS. O'NEILL acknowledged that this could also be an opportunity to "make the system better."

9:04:41 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of Gloria O'Neill to the University of Alaska Board of Regents for consideration in joint session by the House and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

CHAIR GATTIS 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.

9:05:31 AM

DALE ANDERSON, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, directed attention to his qualifications, which included a broad based exposure to a lot of Alaska in both the public and private sectors. He declared that he was uniquely qualified for the appointment, and had served on the board for the past year fulfilling the term of another regent.

9:08:08 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD, directing attention to the budget for the University of Alaska, expressed her concern "'cause there's a lot of people fighting for that money and there's lots of need throughout the state." Noting the appointee's financial background, she asked "to curb the appetite there [UA budget]."

9:09:23 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON stressed the need for teacher training methodology and courses to incorporate the integrated knowledge assessments in lieu of the fact assessments.

9:10:31 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of Dale Anderson to the University of Alaska Board of Regents for

consideration in joint session by the House and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

CHAIR GATTIS 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.

**Professional Teaching Practices Commission**

[9:11:20 AM](#)

MARTIN LASTER, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, reported that he was a retired K-12 superintendent, the current director of the Master Degree in Education Educational Leadership program at University of Alaska Southeast, and that he would be seated on the commission in the higher education position.

[9:12:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted the papers and publications written by the appointee, and expressed his appreciation for the expertise of the appointee.

[9:12:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of Martin Laster referred to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission for consideration in joint session by the House and Senate for consideration. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

CHAIR GATTIS 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.

[9:13:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked if there would be another opportunity to review the two appointees who were not available.

CHAIR GATTIS replied that this would be pursued at another meeting.

9:14:52 AM

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:14 a.m.