

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 5, 2013
8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Peggy Wilson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Melody Mann - Wasilla
James Fields - Glenallen
David DeVaughn - North Pole

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 154

"An Act relating to natural and cultural history repositories."

- MOVED CSHB 154(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 190

"An Act providing for course credit in secondary school based on demonstrated mastery of the subject."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 196

"An Act relating to group insurance coverage and self-insurance coverage for school district employees; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 154

SHORT TITLE: MUSEUM OF THE NORTH

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) THOMPSON

03/04/13 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/04/13 (H) EDC
04/05/13 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 190

SHORT TITLE: CREDIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSES

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) SEATON

03/28/13 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/28/13 (H) EDC
04/03/13 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/03/13 (H) Scheduled But Not Heard
04/05/13 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

MELODY MANN, Appointee

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Wasilla, Alaska

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

JAMES FIELDS, Appointee

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Glenallen, Alaska

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

REPRESENTATIVE STEVE THOMPSON

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 154, as sponsor of the bill.

LYNETTE BERGH, Staff

Representative Steve Thompson

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 154 on behalf of the bill sponsor, Representative Thompson, and answered questions.

KEVIN WINKER, Chief Curator; Acting Director
University of Alaska Museum
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 154.

LINDA THIBODEAU, Director
Office of the Director
Libraries, Archives & Museums
Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 154.

REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 190 as the sponsor of the bill.

HERB SCHROEDER, Vice Provost
University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)
Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 190.

GENE STONE, Assistant Superintendent
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 190.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 190.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:46 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN GATTIS called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Representatives Gattis, LeDoux,

Seaton, and Reinbold were present at the call to order. Representatives Saddler and Drummond arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)
Professional Teaching Practices Commission

[8:01:29 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the first order of business would be confirmation hearings for the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:01:45 AM](#)

MELODY MANN, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, reported that she had been a teacher for 23 years and, as she closely followed issues with teachers, she offered "a good sense of integrity and justice that I feel I could bring to the commission."

[8:02:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD noted Ms. Mann's educational background and asked about her interest for the direction of public education in Alaska.

MS. MANN shared her belief in the public education system in Alaska. She expressed concern with a lack of trust in public educators, which she declared to be unfounded, as "teachers work really hard." She expressed her desire to reassure Alaskans that teachers are doing "the best they can with what they're given." She expressed concern for the lack of resources for public education, and a need for the legislature to fund the base student allocation (BSA). She stated that her work on the commission would ensure that teachers were working with integrity.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked about her work with the National Education Association (NEA) and the direction of the organization.

MS. MANN replied that, as the NEA had given her leadership training, this offered her the opportunity to bring leadership training to Alaskan Natives in small communities. She declared NEA to be "a wonderfully democratic organization" and expressed

her appreciation for the organization's work of the behalf of teachers throughout Alaska.

8:06:54 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of Melody Mann 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.

8:07:15 AM

JAMES FIELDS, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, stated that he wanted to make the state education system better for the students, the teachers, the administrators, and the parents. He declared that this was a good opportunity for regional educational attendance areas (REAs) to be represented on the commission.

8:08:03 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of James Fields 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.

8:08:38 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to advance the confirmation of David DeVaughn 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.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX questioned whether the committee had heard anything from David DeVaughn, and then she asked for a brief at-ease.

The committee took a brief at-ease.

8:10:34 AM

CHAIR GATTIS brought the committee back to order and reminded members that signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members'

approval or disapproval of the appointees, and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

8:10:50 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted that Mr. DeVaughn's resume had been distributed to the House Education Standing Committee. He pointed out that this commission was not a policy making body, but instead an ethics committee for teachers.

8:11:40 AM

CHAIR GATTIS noted that Mr. DeVaughn could still contact the committee.

8:11:48 AM

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX stressed the importance for an applicant interview before forwarding a confirmation.

HB 154-MUSEUM OF THE NORTH

8:12:23 AM

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 154, "An Act relating to natural and cultural history collections at the University of Alaska Museum of the North."

8:12:38 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to adopt the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 154, labeled 28-LS0613\N, Mischel, 3/20/13, as the working document. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVE THOMPSON, Alaska State Legislature, introduced HB 154, and paraphrased from the sponsor statement [Included in members' packets]:

House Bill 154 is an act relating to natural and cultural history repositories. It revises statutes governing the University of Alaska adding a new section that designates the Museum of the North as a repository of the state natural and cultural history collections and gives the university the authority to

designate other repositories as needed. The bill also defines the purpose and the functions of a repository. Museum collections include 1.4 million artifacts and specimens representing millions of years of biological diversity and thousands of years of cultural traditions. These are crucial resource items that need to be available. Designating the Museum of the North as a repository will help ensure that the historical collections remain available to researchers, students, Alaska citizens and others with an interest in cultural history and an interest in repositories.

[8:14:47 AM](#)

LYNETTE BERGH, Staff, Representative Steve Thompson, Alaska State Legislature, said that she would answer any questions about proposed HB 154.

[8:15:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON directed attention to page 1, lines 6 - 7, and asked why the University of Alaska Fairbanks was being offered the power to designate museums throughout Alaska as repositories.

[8:15:36 AM](#)

MS. BERGH, in response, explained that the intention was for campuses with museums to be designated as repositories, and that the designations could not be made outside the University of Alaska system.

[8:16:20 AM](#)

KEVIN WINKER, Chief Curator; Acting Director, University of Alaska Museum, explained that the designations were limited to within the other campuses in the University of Alaska system.

[8:17:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON suggested that the designation was too broad, and he questioned whether it was the University of Alaska or the museum that was given power to designate.

MR. WINKER agreed that the main purpose was the designation for the University of Alaska Museum of the North, and he also

requested clarification for future designations. He pointed out the potential for the use of these resources for both research and education, stating that "it's a great idea."

[8:18:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD, noting that there was a zero fiscal note attached [Included in members' packets], asked if there were any projected costs in the future.

MR. WINKER replied that he did not anticipate any cost directly associated with the proposed bill, though he conceded there were costs for the maintenance of collections. He pointed out that the proposed bill designated a home to allow for collections to remain in Alaska.

[8:21:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked whether the Alaska State Museum was designated as a repository, and whether it had the authority to designate other museums as repositories.

LINDA THIBODEAU, Director, Office of the Director, Libraries, Archives & Museums, Department of Education and Early Development, replied that the repository language was not in statute, but that statute did designate the museum and its branches as the State Museum, which was satisfactory for its purposes.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked to clarify that statute and policy had been designated by the Legislature for both the museum and its branches.

MS. THIBODEAU expressed her agreement.

[8:22:36 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS closed public testimony.

[8:22:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON expressed his concern with proposed HB 154 for giving authority to the Museum of the North for the designation of repositories, as the Alaska State Legislature had previously made those designations to museums. He questioned whether this was an integral part of the proposed bill.

[8:23:34 AM](#)

MS. BERGH, in response to Representative Seaton, offered her belief that allowing the Museum of the North as the sole repository would not allow other campuses to have a repository, which would create a separate class of museum.

[8:24:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to report the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 154, labeled 28-LS0613\N, Mischel, 3/20/13, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal notes.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON objected for discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked that the sponsor clarify the repository requirement language which gave the University of Alaska the ability to designate other museums in the University of Alaska system as repositories, a designation which he opined should be reserved for the Legislature to determine.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON removed his objection. There being no further objections, CSHB 154(EDC) was moved from the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:25:27 AM](#)

[Chair Gattis passed the gavel to Vice Chair Reinbold]

The committee took a brief at-ease.

HB 190-CREDIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSES

[8:27:50 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 190, "An Act providing for course credit in secondary school based on demonstrated mastery of the subject."

[8:28:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of HB 190, offering a brief history for the proposed bill, explained that some high school students in the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) had only received

partial credit at University of Alaska, as they had not accumulated enough seat time in their school districts. He explained that the proposed bill allowed students who demonstrated mastery of course content to challenge and test out of high school courses and receive academic credit. The proposed bill would leave the criteria for demonstrating mastery to the discretion of the school district, and would require the school district to provide an option for students to challenge a course through an assessment, designed by the school district. He noted that credits would apply to fulfilling the requirements for the Alaska Performance Scholarship, but not necessarily be factored in to the student's grade point average (GPA), if no letter grade was given. It did not attempt to establish credit for courses that were prerequisites for the challenged course. He stated that currently there was no requirement for school districts to provide an opportunity for students to challenge courses for academic credit. Some districts had pre-approved tech prep plans for certain college courses, but these were primarily focused on vocational coursework and were limited to established agreements between campuses. He pointed out that some school districts already allowed course challenges, including Anchorage, Kenai, Matanuska-Susitna, and North Star. He declared the necessity to establish a unified approach for challenging courses across the state, as this would keep students engaged in learning and challenged with rigorous coursework. He described the Anchorage Credit By Choice program, which had established a policy on Credit by Examination that students must score 90 percent to demonstrate proficiency. He clarified that the proposed bill did not establish a proficiency level for each school district, and would allow that the authority be kept with the district. He declared the need for the legislature to promote high academic achievement in education and allow HB 190 to "remove a barrier to students who wish to receive credit for their coursework and to support a learning environment that continues to challenge and reward student initiative." He stated that the proposed bill would resolve the issue in a more universal way.

[8:32:21 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD read: "School districts must establish assessment tool for the student to demonstrate secondary school course mastery." She questioned whether school districts already had this in place, in light of the zero fiscal note [Included in members' packets.]

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON clarified that the proposed bill was not offering a unified course or that the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) develop a demonstration of mastery, but was leaving this for each school district to design its own tests to determine the level of proficiency.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD suggested that parameters needed to be established for eligibility to challenge a course. She asked if this would result in a pass or no pass grade.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON expressed his agreement, and suggested that these questions would be answered at the district level.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD asked for more definition regarding the challenge to a course.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON opined that the intent of the proposed bill was to allow each district to establish its policy. He directed attention to an example of the Anchorage School District programs and policies, titled "Credit By Choice program (CBC) [Included in members' packets], which stated that a student had to be taking the class in order to challenge. He offered his belief that it would not be good policy to put the determinations in statute, but instead, to let each district make its own policy.

[8:38:52 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD asked if Anchorage School District (ASD) was included on the list of existing programs, and if ASD was in support of the proposed bill.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON explained that Anchorage School District had the aforementioned "credit by choice" program, as did Kenai, Matanuska-Susitna, and several other school districts. He pointed out that there were many school districts which did not have the policy and had students who had passed a college course, yet had to return to the high school classroom for more seat time. He noted that the ASD did exempt physical education classes. He emphasized that it was not productive or effective education to require seat time of a student in order to demonstrate mastery of a course.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD declared that, although she agreed with the concept, the application was an issue. She questioned the activities of a student that had tested out of a class, asking "where do they go ... is that child gonna wander the halls."

She declared her desire to ensure there were not any unintended consequences.

[8:42:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND pointed to page X, item 7, in the aforementioned "Credit by Choice" program handout, and stated that ASD had included a lot of detail. She offered her belief that students were already short of time in each school day, and she stated that she did not believe "there'll be students sitting around twiddling their thumbs looking for something to do or getting in trouble." She declared that these were students in search of additional stimulation, and she opined that they would do productive things with their time.

[8:44:09 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD stressed that students would need to be directed to a specific place, and that parents did not want the kids to go just anywhere. She opined that this would create confusion for the teachers.

[8:44:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked if students were currently allowed to go home, if they finished classes early in the day.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that the school district would determine a policy and he stressed that the students being served by the proposed bill were those students that tended to be ahead of classmates. He declared that the unintended consequence of students not being in the appropriate class was boredom and a bigger workload on the teacher. He noted that it was not required for a student to challenge a course, but that the school district had to provide the opportunity for those students who could demonstrate mastery of a subject to move on to other material.

[8:47:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked if any school districts had objected, as she was curious to the rationale for opposition.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said that every school district in Alaska had been contacted. He listed several which already had a program, while others were in discussion for the program. He

allowed that some school districts had not responded, but were aware that the proposed bill was being considered.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked about the fiscal note, and announced that she did not support unfunded mandates. She declared that, although this should be a school district responsibility, it was not fair to mandate it without funding it.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON replied that the proposed bill had a zero fiscal note [Included in members' packets]. There would not be any new tests or assessments imposed.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked to clarify that there was no additional cost anticipated to the school district.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON directed attention to the aforementioned "Credit By Choice program" handout and noted that there was an \$85 fee for creation, administration, and evaluation of the challenge test.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX offered her belief that this could "keep a bright kid from a low-income family in a course they don't need to have because they can't afford the \$85 fee." She questioned the wisdom in this policy.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON explained that most policies allowed for fee waivers and scholarships, and that it would be important to refrain from placing details in statute. He cited that many high school drop-outs were smart students who were not being challenged and engaged. He declared the necessity to enforce that school districts had a policy to allow students to challenge out of a course for which they had demonstrated mastery of the material.

[8:52:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND directed attention to the "Credit By Choice" handout, page XI, Program No. 6, "Community service and field study," which listed the preapproved district programs that earned 0.5 units of credit. She lauded the proposed bill, and expressed a desire for the school districts to testify regarding the administration of these programs.

[8:53:54 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD pointed out that schools with open forum curriculum allowed students to work at their own pace. She

questioned whether the proposed bill would work in traditional schools.

8:55:18 AM

HERB SCHROEDER, Vice Provost, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, said that the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program components allowed students statewide to complete the courses necessary to earn the Alaska Performance Scholarship. He explained that students came to Anchorage during the summer to complete university courses taught by university faculty in the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program acceleration academy. He declared that a problem which arose for students was that completion of the course did not guarantee equivalent high school credit. He reported that the proposed bill would provide a mechanism for students to earn the correct high school credits.

8:56:59 AM

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked to clarify her concern for the transfer of credits. She opined that, as 24 high school credits in four years were required, a 0.5 credit was a single semester class.

DR. SCHROEDER, in response, described a course at university versus at high school, and noted that, as the university class would be accomplished in a shorter period of time, a student was therefore given fewer high school credits than if the course was taken at the high school. He offered an anecdote of a student who had taken multiple courses at the university while enrolled in high school, yet was informed that he did not have enough credits to graduate from high school.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND suggested that this issue should be discussed between the school district and the university. She referenced "Program No. 3 - College courses" in the aforementioned "Credit By Choice program," which stated that a three semester hour course at the university would only receive 0.5 high school credit.

9:00:10 AM

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD expressed her praise for the ANSEP facility and the student levels of enthusiasm. She opined that, although

the ability for a student to challenge a class was a good idea, she had concerns for the details at the classroom level.

9:01:20 AM

GENE STONE, Assistant Superintendent, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, said that all school districts would benefit from equality for credit transfers. He reported that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District had adopted a policy to mitigate credit transfer issues based on parental requests and concerns. He pointed out that other credit options were also in place and offered an anecdote in support of the opportunity to test out of a class. If a freshman failed a semester class and repeated the course, but had mastered the content prior to the final examination, the school district supported a course challenge which allowed the student to move back into course sequence.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD asked at what point could the assessment be offered.

MR. STONE replied that this was a district and school board policy, and that his school district reviewed these on a case by case basis. He noted the other credit option opportunities, which included on-line learning, and declared that this was a mantra for learning plans in education.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD repeated her concerns for unsupervised students.

MR. STONE underscored that the district was able to manage each case, and that it was not designed as a situation solely to sign up and take the test.

9:09:00 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON clarified that the proposed bill would not override the Anchorage School District policy, but merely provided a student the opportunity to request the challenge and demonstrate mastery of the coursework to school district standards. He declared that education should engage students and allow progress.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD agreed with the concept, but declared her concern for the subsequent use of student time.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON replied that the proposed bill only required each school district to have a policy, that it left the criteria to each school district, and that it was not intended as a "one size fits all" solution.

9:12:38 AM

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), stated his support for proposed HB 190, indicating that the bill accomplished the intent to allow a student to prove proficiency to a course. He offered his belief that a school district would be able to establish a policy for students to test out of a class, and define the boundaries as it chose for the best educational practice.

9:14:36 AM

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD announced that public testimony would remain open and that proposed HB 190 would be held over.

9:15:24

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.