

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE

January 17, 2013

3:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Pete Higgins, Chair
Representative Wes Keller
Representative Benjamin Nageak
Representative Lance Pruitt
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Geran Tarr

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Lora Reinbold

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

INTRODUCTORY/ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

PAUL VERHAGEN, Staff
Representative Pete Higgins
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As House Health and Social Services Standing Committee aide, discussed committee procedures during the organizational discussion.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:02:43 PM](#)

CHAIR PETE HIGGINS called the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. Representatives Higgins, Keller, Nageak, Seaton, and Tarr were present at the call to order. Representative Pruitt arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CHAIR HIGGINS introduced the committee support staff, and announced that a fine of donuts for the committee would be assessed for any cell phone ringing during the committee meeting.

Introductory/Organizational Meeting

[3:04:00 PM](#)

CHAIR HIGGINS stated his commitment for health and social services, noting that it was the recipient of more than 20 percent of the state budget. He declared that, although the State of Alaska was responsible for offering the best possible health care service, the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee also had a responsibility to the state budget. He requested that the committee members be fair, keep partisanship outside the door, "and let's think of our children, let's think of our elderly, and let's think of everybody in the state, and let's do the right thing by them." He invited each committee member to introduce themselves and state why they had requested to sit on this committee.

[3:05:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR shared that she represented District 17 in Anchorage, declaring that her interest in the committee was the result of her background in science, as she had been a physiology, anatomy, and biology university teacher for the past 14 years. She noted that she was interested in building the state's health industry work force.

[3:06:03 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER expressed his interest and concern with the issues related to sustainability of the current health care in the state. He declared that the role of the state was to care for the most needy and that it was important to be fair in the laws and policies.

[3:06:59 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT said that he represented District 25, sharing that he was raised in the district. He declared that health care was crucial for all of us, and that it was necessary for it to be available and affordable. He declared "that one of the biggest challenges that we face" was to ensure that health care was not a burden to the state.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON reported that he represented District 30 and had served on the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee for 11 years, since his election to the Legislature. He established that health care was of "the utmost concern to my constituents and it directly affects the lives of Alaskans." He stated that his focus had shifted from health care services to ways of prevention, which he opined would relieve the cost burden on the state. He expressed his pride that the State of Alaska had resolved that prevention of disease was a primary model for health care. He pointed out that a multitude of studies indicated that Vitamin D would improve the health of Alaskans. He expressed his pleasure that support for domestic violence prevention was part of the administrative agenda.

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REPRESENTATIVE NAGEAK recounted that he had been born in Kaktovik, and raised in Barrow. He described the impacts of diabetes, suicide, tooth decay, mental health, and cancer on his life and his community. He stated his desire to be a part of the solution, as a healthy population makes for a richer state. He recognized the financial impact on the state budget for a healthier state.

3:13:26 PM

CHAIR HIGGINS established that he represented District 5 in Fairbanks, and that he had been in the health profession for many years, with three clinics in Alaska. He pointed out that, because of the diversity of the state, it was important that each area be viewed differently and that many of the health care solutions were "out of the box," as there were no blanket answers. He announced that Representative Keller was vice-chair for the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee. He asked that, during discussions, members request to speak by a raising of hands and limit their time for discussion to three minutes each.

3:15:46 PM

PAUL VERHAGEN, Staff, Representative Pete Higgins, Alaska State Legislature, offered the committee members some recommendations for submissions to the committee chair, which included footer descriptions and page numbers on each page.

3:19:30 PM

CHAIR HIGGINS asked that committee members include the name, organization, and contact phone number for any witnesses and presenters they submitted for testimony before the committee.

3:20:28 PM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.