

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 4, 2014

9:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS

Representative Bob Lynn, Chair
Representative Wes Keller, Vice Chair
Representative Lynn Gattis
Representative Shelley Hughes
Representative Doug Isaacson
Representative Charisse Millett
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

SENATE STATE AFFAIRS

Senator Fred Dyson, Chair
Senator Cathy Giessel, Vice Chair
Senator John Coghill
Senator Bill Wielechowski

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS

All House members present

SENATE STATE AFFAIRS

Senator Bert Stedman

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

ALASKA ARCTIC POLICY COMMISSION PRELIMINARY REPORT PRESENTATION

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE BOB HERRON

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Preliminary Report Presentation as co-chair of the commission.

SENATOR LEISL McGUIRE
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Preliminary Report Presentation, as co-chair of the commission.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:01:18 AM](#)

CHAIR BOB LYNN called the joint meeting of the Senate and Senate State Affairs Standing Committees to order at 9:01 a.m. Representatives Keller, Gattis, Isaacson, Hughes, Kreiss-Tomkins, and Lynn, and Senators Coghill, Giessel, Wielechowski, and Dyson were present at the call to order. Representative Millett arrived as the meeting was in progress.

[9:01:20 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN handed the gavel over to Chair Dyson.

[9:02:07 AM](#)

Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Preliminary Report Presentation

CHAIR DYSON announced that the only order of business was the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Preliminary Report Presentation.

[9:02:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BOB HERRON, Alaska State Legislature, reported that as required by [the resolution adopted by the Alaska State Legislature in April 2012, which established the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission] the commission delivered its full preliminary report by January 30, 2014, and delivered to all legislators the commission's executive summary on February 3, 2014. He said there has been a flood of reports, including the National Strategy for the Arctic Region, issued early in 2013, and the implementation plan for that strategy was supposed to be revealed in September; however, the commission provided its thoughts and information to the White House, and the administration pushed back the reveal to November, then to December, then to the same

day Alaska issued its preliminary report. He characterized that as "a good sequence of events." He explained that both he and Senator McGuire think that the commission had an impact on [the administration's] report and implementation plan.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON opined that the legislature needs to have an Arctic footing and work with its federal counterparts and the governor, who is in the branch most responsible for having a working relationship with the federal government. He said Alaska holds the purse strings and writes the laws, and it needs to understand how it can best protect its interest to international and federal governments in the Arctic.

9:05:20 AM

SENATOR LEISL MCGUIRE, Alaska State Legislature, said whenever the state works on issues of sovereignty, it needs to be careful not to send mixed messages. She said the governor's team was at the table. She said there were five Senators and five Representatives involved, including Senator Cathy Geisel who was present today, who worked alongside public members who were subject matter experts who had been appointed by the Speaker of the House and the Senate President and brought strong views to the table, ranging from environmental protection to pro-development. Topics were run through the administration and respective agencies to find out where policy had already been established and where there were gaps. She stated that the crowning achievement was working alongside the federal government.

9:07:20 AM

SENATOR MCGUIRE stated that one of the best ways to work with the federal government is to figure out where it is going. She said the commission figured out in March [2013], during meetings in Washington, D.C., that the Obama Administration was already on an aggressive pace in terms of Arctic strategy. In light of that, she said, the commission was able to get the federal government to listen and join commission meetings, in person in Unalaska and by phone in Barrow. At the latter meeting, she said, she compared the Canadian policy and an initial draft of the strategic report, and she mentioned references to climate without mention of the human beings involved. Conversely, in the Arctic report, many references were made to the human beings that lived on the land and their interrelationship with that climate. The change in ice is paramount in the Arctic, because it brings both opportunities and challenges.

9:09:48 AM

SENATOR MCGUIRE said she and Representative Herron would present slides to the committee. She named the following web site: akarctic.com. She explained that what was being presented to the committee was the preliminary draft. She relayed there were 16 policy recommendations and four vision statements, and there is still a lot of work to do, primarily in the area of state and national security and spill prevention and response. She said those two issues "came to us a little bit later" and are "cumbersome," but the commission's teams are addressing them. Senator McGuire reminded the committee that the commission was created by the legislature, thus is a reflection of its thoughts and ideas. She encouraged feedback over the next year, noting that the final report will be issued on January 30, 2015.

9:11:00 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON directed attention to the cover of the executive summary, which shows two photos. He described the upper photo as "a polar star camera view." He said Alaska, between Canada and Russia, is small, but plays a key role. He said the bottom photo is "Alaska looking to the Arctic, looking to the future."

9:12:07 AM

CHAIR DYSON offered his understanding that during the Hickel administration, an organization named, Northern Forum, was formed, and he observed that he has not seen that organization listed.

9:12:24 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON responded that the commission discussed Northern Forum at its December meeting in Anchorage, and [commission member] Nils Andreassen said the organization has "sort of gone into dormant mode." He said people are talking about bringing it back; but that idea has not gained traction.

9:12:50 AM

CHAIR DYSON recollected that in the past, the entity was busy; it had several international conferences and lots of work with both the Canadians and the Russians. He expressed surprise to find out it had atrophied.

9:13:11 AM

SENATOR MCGUIRE said someone who has spoken a lot about this issue is Lieutenant Governor Mead Treadwell. A thought is that if the Northern Forum is going to be restarted, then its mission should be reinvigorated. Currently, part of Northern Forum's mission exists with the Institute of the North, but the missing link is with Russia. She said this issue has also been discussed in Senate meetings. She said the population of the Arctic is 4 million, 2 million of which are Russian. She said that in the past, many trade missions took place with Sakhalin and Khabarovsk, and she emphasized the importance of resuming them on the local level, even if federal strategy is failing with Russia.

SENATOR MCGUIRE, in response to Chair Dyson, mentioned the Arctic Imperative, a pro-development group in Girdwood comprising 300 people at its inception and increasing to over 1,000 people during its three year existence; however, she ventured the chair was thinking about two quasi-state entities, which receive state funding: Northern Forum and the Institute of the North.

CHAIR DYSON said while he appreciates what had been said about invigorating the mission, it seems "that organization" has done a lot of work, and the legislature should find out what that work is and build upon it.

SENATOR MCGUIRE concurred.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON said there should be a reference to it for historical value.

9:15:36 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES noted that she had read most of the report and is "excited about the potential." She said she sees the work of the Arctic Council as pivotal. She expressed appreciation for the work that is being done. She said it would be helpful if the report included a description of the groups, as well as list their membership, status, and cooperative work. She stated appreciation for the commission's timing and its timely work with the federal government.

9:17:18 AM

SENATOR MCGUIRE said most of the groups are federally created, and she posited that that distinction should be made. She indicated one question is: "How do we insert ourselves in at the state level?" She mentioned another group, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) Arctic Caucus, which was in recognition that at the provincial, territorial, and state levels, Canada and Alaska are not being heard enough. She expressed thanks for the late Governor Hickel for his vision, and expressed appreciation for Lieutenant Governor Mead Treadwell and [former state Senate President] Drue Pearce who came before the commission and did a lot of work on this issue, which she said people were not always interested in discussing, even a couple years ago.

[9:19:10 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE directed attention to the slide presentation, to two slides showing that there are 4 million people living in the Arctic and the division between the Russian, European, and American Arctic.

[9:19:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON explained the next slide showing the [covers of] the many reports issued by the federal government over the last year. She said the newest report is by the Department of Defense (DoD) in November 2013, which is what the commission is going to address this year for the final report. He turned to the next slide entitled, "U.S. National Strategy for the Arctic Region." He said that entity wants to advance its security interests, pursue responsible Arctic Region stewardship, and strengthen international cooperation. He said the commission opines that those "lines of efforts" seem "a little too high level" and do not consider responsible development that protects and sustains northern communities.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON directed attention to the next slide, entitled, "Arctic Council Chair," which shows a timeline. He said this spring and summer, the federal government is going to [hold] "listening sessions" in Alaska to talk to as many people as possible. Next fall, he said, the federal government will finalize its chairmanship themes and go to the other seven Arctic states and negotiate the themes so that there is "buy-in." He stated that the chairmanship for the Arctic Council is "going very, very quickly." He said the next slide shows "Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council," and he noted that four of the participants are indigenous Alaskan groups:

the [Aleut International Association] (AIA), the [Arctic Athabaskan Council] (AAC), the [Gwich'in Council International] (GCI), and [Inuit Circumpolar Conference] (ICC).

[9:21:50 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE directed attention to a slide showing the "Alaska Arctic Policy Commission" has 26 members, composed of five Senators, five Representatives, one executive branch member appointed by the governor, and fifteen members appointed jointly by the Senate President and Speaker of the House; the slide lists the industries from which those fifteen members come. She reiterated the commission's interaction with the federal government, adding that she and Representative Herron have had weekly conversations with representatives of the Obama Administration.

SENATOR MCGUIRE turned to the slide entitled, "AAPC Letter of Intent," and she noted there are eight areas of consideration listed: Indigenous Perspectives and Priorities; governance; Oil, Gas, and Mineral Exploration and Development; Science and Research; Energy; Planning & Infrastructure; Security & Marine Transportation; and Fisheries. She encouraged the joint committee members to let the commission know if there should be any further considerations added. Senator McGuire directed attention to a slide showing the commission's vision statements.

[9:23:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON paraphrased the vision statements, which read: "Values community sustainability and thriving cultures"; "Ensures public safety and security"; "Advances economic development and a healthy environment"; and "Incorporates transparency and inclusion into decision making."

SENATOR MCGUIRE noted that depicted in the lower [right] corner of the slide is Edward Saggan Itta, former mayor of the North Slope Borough, during a portion a meeting set aside to listen to the local people.

[9:24:10 AM](#)

CHAIR DYSON referred to Representative Herron's mention of public safety, and he asked if the term is being used in the vision statement in connection with cross-border terrorist activity or transportation safety.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON answered all of the above.

SENATOR MCGUIRE added that the group is expanding its mission and the governor is placing a heavy emphasis on homeland security. She said, "That part was added in vis-à-vis our international neighbors." She stated, "But this particular group: public safety with respect to marine traffic." She mentioned the need for search and rescue response and a presence built up to the population increases. In response to Chair Dyson, she said air traffic is also a consideration.

[9:25:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON directed attention to the next slide entitled, "Strategic Recommendations." He listed the categories and respective leaders: Governance and Indigenous Perspectives - Senators Stevens and Hoffman; Science and Research - Representatives Edgmon and Kerttula; Planning and Infrastructure and Wildlife - Representative Neuman; Oil, Gas, and Mineral Resources and Search and Rescue/Oil Pollution - Senator Giessel; Security and Defense - Senators Austerman and Olson; Marine Transportation - Senator Austerman; Energy and Power - Representatives Edgmon and Kerttula; Fisheries - Senator Hoffman. He indicated that Representative Guttenberg would be taking Representative Kerttula's spot.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON, referring to the slide entitled, "Barrow," said public testimony lasted seven hours at the aforementioned meeting in the North Slope Borough, and one opinion resulted, which was "pretty unanimous": "The Chukchi and the Beaufort is our garden; we would rather that the federal government and the state work together to drain [the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge] (ANWR) first." He directed attention to the slide entitled, "Unalaska," and said it is number one in the U.S. for seafood volume and will play a key role in the Arctic, because it is the largest current port in Western Alaska and key component to the Bering Sea.

[9:27:38 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE said delegates from Iceland and Norway have expressed interest in working with Alaska in having "sister port ships." She said those countries are way ahead of Alaska in recognizing the potential for marine traffic as a result of "these opening lanes." She said it is nice for the commission to look at how opening the Northwest Passage changes the volume

that comes through the Bering Sea down into "that port." She continued as follows:

I use the figure that Mayor Marquardt gave of 22 new vessels just to support the one exploratory well of [Shell Oil Company], and that's not even full-stage development, and that's not Statoil, and that's not [ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.]; and that port is already full, because it's the largest fishery port on the earth.

[9:28:43 AM](#)

CHAIR DYSON ventured that Senator McGuire had meant to infer that much of the new traffic coming through is coming from the Northeast Passage from Russia. He offered his understanding that there are unresolved issue regarding "innocent passage" in the Canadian archipelago, and there is a tacit agreement that Canada is not going to push to stop that traffic in areas that they consider to be their national waters. He mentioned "the pie-shaped border dispute" between the Yukon and Alaska, wherein there is a tacit agreement to "operate without that one being resolved." He asked, "Have I got that right?"

SENATOR MCGUIRE answered yes on both counts. In response to a follow-up question, she said she does not have a sense of the time frame on either of those issues. She continued:

I know that [for] our Canadian friends, it's a dinner-time conversation about ... whether they agree about innocent passage or not, and I'm just thrilled about the agreement to just leave ... the little pie-shaped argument. In fact, it's the reason that ... there was push-back when I wanted to form the Arctic caucus to begin with, because there was a feeling that it could tear us apart as a group.

[9:30:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON directed attention to the slide entitled, "Adak," which he characterized as "an asset the Navy left behind." He said Chair Dyson had brought up a good issue regarding the "Northwest" - the northern sea route. He mentioned the 3,000-4,000 ships that go through Unimak Pass and back down "through the chain beyond Adak." He said if Canada is successful in either Prince Rupert or Kitimat, those resources

that are going west to Asia could double traffic through Unimak Pass - Alaska's territory - under innocent passage.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON stated that one of the most important strategies is going to be: "How do we get beyond just voluntary oil spill response capability in all these ships?" He opined that it is in the state's best interest that ships have a mandatory response capacity, because 7,000 ships going through Alaska's waters every year in the near future have a huge potential for disaster.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON turned to the slide entitled, "Bethel," which he noted shows an Alaska Native woman from Kuskokwim in the background photo. He said the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers - the two major tributaries to bisect Alaska - are "very dependent on the Bering Sea."

SENATOR MCGUIRE said the point about the potential for oil spills from the many vessels passing through the Bering Sea was brought up when the commission heard from Unalaska.

[9:32:23 AM](#)

CHAIR DYSON offered an explanation about the term "innocent passage" as follows:

This is a term of art in international law; it's been placed for [a] couple of centuries. Basically, [it] says that the oceans of the world are the commons of the world, and all vessels from all nations - unless there's been something specific - have the right to innocent passage through the commons - all the maritime corridors of the world. The discussion with Canada is the traditional -- the best routes through there, which are only a couple ... [through] sea ice, are well within the Canadian archipelago, and so there's question in their mind. But innocent passage means all kinds of commercial [and] recreation [vessels] and everything else, as long as they're not about bad things. ... [This is a] huge issue in the maritime world. And if you look at international maritime transportation, there are a few choke points in the world where that's hugely important who controls those.

[9:33:36 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE directed attention to the slide entitled, "Nome," which she said is a hot spot where movement in infrastructure has begun. The federal government is looking at both Port Clarence and Nome in its feasibility study. She said consideration is being given to developing a hangar large enough for WX C-130 aircraft, as well as other infrastructure.

[9:34:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON brought attention to the slide entitled, "Bering Strait," which he said is a key choke point, thus, is probably the area that will receive the most attention in the immediate future.

SENATOR MCGUIRE pointed out Port Clarence and Nome on the map on the Bering Strait slide.

[9:34:40 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE directed attention to a slide entitled, "Fairbanks," and she relayed that the commission held a meeting there to focus on UAF as Alaska's Arctic University. She indicated the connection between northern climates and suicide, alcoholism, and drug addiction, and stated the importance of studying the impacts of development in the north.

[9:35:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON stated that UAF is number one in the U.S. in Arctic research and is a member of the University of the Arctic. He emphasized, "It's important that a legislature invest in research, because we live in the Arctic."

SENATOR MCGUIRE brought attention to the slide entitled, "Anchorage," where the commission heard reports from its subcommittees during a two-day work session. She commended those involved for their focused efforts.

[9:36:55 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL noted that while in Fairbanks, the commission had invited a lot of people to come listen to its discussion, but seemed to have "lost a little bit of voice" in Anchorage, which has a larger population.

[9:37:28 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE explained that by the time the commission met in Anchorage on December 9-10, its focus was on bringing forward its report to the legislature by the 12/30/13. She said she would recommend holding a public hearing in Anchorage, Alaska.

SENATOR COGHILL responded that he would really encourage the commission enlisting Kenai in the discussion. He said he thinks Fairbanks feels a part of the discussion because of the university's role and perhaps because its Native population is larger. He warned against creating a divide in the state.

[9:39:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON said Representative Coghill made a good point, but he echoed Senator McGuire's explanation that the commission had been under a time crunch and wanted to deliver quality product. He said the commission realizes that it cannot separate the Arctic Ocean from Alaska or any part of Alaska from itself. He said there will be dozens of smaller meetings by teams that will have the responsibility to reach out and gather input from all Alaskans. He said, "Too many others are trying to tell us how to be Alaskan."

SENATOR COGHILL opined that if Alaska is going to speak to the federal government about the Arctic, it needs to do so with a unified voice. He commended the commission for its beginning efforts.

[9:40:37 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL remarked that the Sikuliaq - the Arctic research vessel belonging UAF harbors in Seward when it comes to Alaska, so "excluding the peninsula would be a mistake."

[9:40:59 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE turned to information on the next slide, which lists "Challenges in Alaska's Arctic," as follows: "Huge differences between resource wealth and community prosperity; Isolated, remote communities; lack of infrastructure - energy, transportation, telecommunications, etc.; Many layers of ownership of land and resources; Increasingly active Arctic - search for role, way to mitigate risk, and manage expectations."

[9:41:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON indicated that the commissions efforts have resulted in an "Arctic Package," which includes the following legislation: [Companion bills SB 140 and HB 288], which address Arctic development and would allow the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) to leverage private money; [HB 165], which addresses Alaska Arctic ports and development authority; and [HJR 24], relating to the "Arctic Council," outlining the state's priorities to the federal government, and promoting the idea of having the voice of Alaskan officials heard in consideration of appointing an individual to lead the council.

[9:42:57 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE related that the media asked her and Representative Herron how Alaska faces an infrastructure challenge with a tight budget. She said the proposed legislation related to AIDEA is modeled on the Sustainable Energy Transmission and Supply (SETS) bill that addressed energy and liquefied natural gas (LNG) trucking. She talked about "deferred interest on principal ways of partnering with the private sector." She said the state may not be in the position to "hand out lots of cash," but "these development challenges are not going to go away." She opined that although building up the Trans-Alaska Pipeline is important, the Arctic is the economic opportunity for future generations, which is why it is important to invest, even in tough times.

[9:44:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER expressed appreciation to the co-chairs of the commission for the work being done.

[9:44:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON emphasized the many other people who have worked hard, including former Lieutenant Governor Fran Ulmer and Jaime Robinson. He said the commission hired C. Nikoosh Carlo, Ph.D., as executive director, and she brought with her experience working previously in Washington, D.C.

[9:46:07 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE thanked Jesse Logan and Rob Earl for their hard work.

[9:46:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MILLETT noted one thing not expressed is how far ahead Russia is on issues of the Arctic, a point she said was made at the Arctic Imperative. She posited that Russia is "a force to be reckoned with." She warned against falling behind in "the race to own the Arctic."

[9:47:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON recommended keeping an eye on all other nations, and he said China, "being an observer," scares him more than Russia. He mentioned the interest of non-Arctic nations. He asked Senator McGuire and Representative Herron how they view the building interest and convergence of other nations on an area that has "strategic value to our long-term interest and yet isn't catching the popular press." He questioned how the work of the commission might be affected in an election year.

[9:48:53 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE responded that the commission will call on all legislators to work as a team. She said she and Representative Herron will continue working on this issue. She stated that there would be continued listening sessions throughout spring and summer. She recollected a time when Secretary Salazar visited, and she talked about finding gaps and giving the legislature an awareness of them. She said, "That helps us, as a state, move into this place where the United States takes the chairmanship." She relayed that this would be only the second time in history that the U.S. will have the chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

[9:50:20 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL, in response to Representative Isaacson's previous comment, said both China and India have been admitted to the Arctic Council in "permanent observer status." She added, "So, it is absolutely a concern; I appreciate what you expressed."

[9:50:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON said, "That is key." He said the executive branch goes to "ministerials" and can be on the U.S. delegation to the Arctic Council and will continue to be participants in the six working groups in the council. He said

the committee work is where the real work gets done, and Alaskans can be involved in that.

[9:51:32 AM](#)

SENATOR MCGUIRE said the commission would have other documents for the legislature, including "the Canadian policy, the Northern vision, and what they're doing as their chairs." She said Scandinavian countries have held back to back chairmanships. She mentioned the Canadian delegation and said she is a fan of [Canada's Prime Minister] Stephen Harper, who appointed a Nunavut woman, Leona Aglukkaq, as chair, which she opined "says so much." She said, "Their themes are: jobs, economic with healthy respect for indigenous people and a healthy respect for the environment. When you read that, it's Alaska, Alaska, Alaska." She said she thinks sharing those documents with the legislature as a helpful tool for responding and testifying before the groups that will be soliciting feedback. She indicated that she and Representative Herron have been pushing for more involvement with the Canadians as an opportunity to influence Arctic policy in North America. However, she said there are still places in the State department that are still "resistant to that Canadian vision all the way." She encouraged support of the idea, "Wouldn't it be great to have an Alaskan?" She explained that the only reason the U.S. is an Arctic nation is because of Alaska; therefore, she does not think "that's a stretch to say that we ought to have that in the same way that Canada has picked someone from the north."

[9:53:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES said she appreciates Canada's visions and believes "that is an opportunity for us to extend it." She echoed Senator McGuire's description of the Arctic being the next economic frontier. She said she has hope for rural areas struggling for healthy, working communities. She stated that she wonders what the map of Alaska will look like in 50 years, and opined that "we" have a great challenge to invest in the infrastructure. She expressed appreciation for Representative Coghill's comment that this is something that the entire state must embrace, and she said statewide, Alaska will be involved with resource development and infrastructure issues. She relayed that she had read that one day the northern shipping route will rival the Suez Canal.

REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES, regarding the placement of more Alaskans on the Arctic Council, offered her understanding that "there

have been some where we haven't had Alaskans and we've had very few." She asked if consideration has been given to how to ensure "people are at the table" by assisting with scheduling or financial assistance with travel.

[9:55:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON responded that there are four Alaskan groups; there are four permanent participants that go to all the working group meetings. The governor attends, as well. He said the legislature must have an understanding of how to become partners with the executive branch and work with the permanent groups - the four Alaskan indigenous groups - to have "a common relationship." He said the indigenous groups have "done this for almost 25 years, and "we're coming into it pretty late in the game." He concluded, "The executive branch is doing what it has to do, but it has to be an expanded population that is involved in the Arctic Council in the working groups."

[9:56:22 AM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked, "When an international or U.S. Executive branch wants to know what's Alaska's position and policy on any of these issues, who speaks for the state? Not as an advisor, but definitively."

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON answered that it is the executive branch, which is why "we" have to have an understanding of the Arctic in order to help the executive branch.

CHAIR DYSON offered his understanding that [the legislature] acts as advisor. He asked if any of the dozen groups that have worked on Arctic policy can serve as "an efficient clearing house for all the information, the research ... that has been done over the last hundred years in the Arctic?"

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON answered that the Institute of the North has most base knowledge.

CHAIR DYSON noted that the Alaska Oil and Gas Association (AOGA) has had an Arctic Research subcommittee and has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into it. He expressed his hope that Institute of the North has at least a directory showing how to get at that information.

[9:58:03 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the Joint House and Senate State Affairs Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:58 a.m.