

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE ARCTIC**

March 5, 2015

11:16 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Cathy Giessel, Co-Chair  
Senator Donald Olson  
Senator Click Bishop  
Senator John Coghill  
Senator Berta Gardner

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Lesil McGuire, Co-Chair  
Senator Lyman Hoffman  
Senator Gary Stevens

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN AS IT RELATES TO THE ARCTIC

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

GREG CASHEN, Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented information related to Developing Alaska's Arctic Workforce.

MIKE ANDREWS, Director  
Division of Business Partnerships  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented information related to Developing Alaska's Arctic Workforce.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[11:16:12 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR CATHY GIESSEL** called the Senate Special Committee on the Arctic meeting to order at 11:16 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Coghill, Bishop, and Co-Chair Giessel. Senator Olson arrived shortly thereafter. She noted Co-Chair McGuire, Senator Hoffman, and Senator Stevens have excused absences.

### **PRESENTATION: Workforce Development Plan as it Relates to the Arctic**

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**CO-CHAIR GIESSEL** announced that today's presentation would be by the Department of Labor & Workforce Development on Developing Alaska's Arctic Workforce.

**SENATOR BISHOP** voiced appreciation to be able to have the discussion today. He said the conversation regarding the Arctic workforce began months ago. This presentation is the first attempt to bring the Arctic workforce together. He noted that members will be surprised to learn how many resources are already in place.

[11:18:31 AM](#)

**GREG CASHEN**, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL), presented information related to Developing Alaska's Arctic Workforce. He introduced Mr. Andrews who oversees grant training programs. He said the Arctic is a new frontier and the department is comfortable taking on the task of developing a workforce plan. He pointed out that the Workforce Investment Board has a vast amount of experience developing workforce plans for specific industries, such as oil and gas, health care, construction, mining, and maritime. He stated that there are training resources throughout the state, however, the Arctic area is new except for pipeline construction and mining.

**CO-CHAIR GIESSEL** noted the arrival of Senator Olson.

[11:21:16 AM](#)

**MIKE ANDREWS**, Director, Division of Business Partnership, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL), presented information related to Developing Alaska's Arctic Workforce. He said the division was directed to begin work on an Arctic workforce by the Arctic Policy Council Commission. The

presentation will deal with many aspects of workforce development.

SENATOR BISHOP commented on the appropriateness of an off-shore oil platform on the cover slide.

MR. ANDREWS listed the declaration of state Arctic policy priorities: promoting economic and resource development, addressing the response capacity gap in the Arctic region, supporting healthy communities, and strengthening a state-based agenda for science and research in the Arctic.

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MR. ANDREWS discussed the workforce development key to addressing Arctic council priorities. Alaska has decades of experience educating and training an Arctic workforce. Alaska has collaborative "workforce" partnerships in place to meet the challenges of increasing activity in the Arctic region. Alaska has substantial education and training infrastructure to support Arctic workforce development. He noted that fundamental training infrastructure is in place.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL welcomed Senator Gardner to the meeting.

MR. ANDREWS continued with Alaska's public postsecondary education - college, and university systems are engaged in Arctic workforce development. He listed the various systems: University of Alaska and rural college campuses in Nome, Kotzebue, Bethel, Dillingham, Interior, and the Aleutians; Alaska Technical Center in Kotzebue; Ilisagvik College in Barrow; Alaska Vocational and Technical Education Center (AVTEC) in Seward.

MR. ANDREWS addressed the Arctic Region training capacity: "Arctic Region" education and training infrastructure has grown significantly over the past 15 years and Regional Training Centers (RTC) have established workforce partnerships with regional employers, health care providers, schools, college campuses, Alaska Native Corporations, and mobile industry training providers. He said partnerships are in place for a strong workforce.

[11:26:36 AM](#)

MR. ANDREWS listed the Arctic Regional Training Centers: Kotzebue - the Alaska Technical Education Center and Nome's Northwest Arctic Career and Technical Education Center. He noted

RTC programs are funded, in part, through the Alaska Technical and Vocation Education Program (TVEP).

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL highlighted the training center in Kotzebue and the excellent tele-education studio there.

MR. ANDREWS agreed and said it is not easy there - that type of training is the key to the future.

SENATOR OLSON inquired how the budget crisis would affect workforce development programs.

MR. ANDREWS responded that it is a big concern. He suggested that industry needs to become more involved in creative ways to partner and fund training. It will have a big impact on the department's ability to deliver services. He added that there are also some federal resources available.

SENATOR OLSON did not think industry is inclined to become involved financially, due to current low oil prices. He asked if the state has alternatives in mind to sustain the training programs.

MR. ANDREWS said that is the question the department is struggling with. He stated that the department has not concluded that industry does not want to be involved.

[11:30:19 AM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP recalled his time "in the shop." He pointed out that the maritime part of AVTEC has had tremendous industry support and in-kind donations, such as donating charts.

MR. CASHEN added that the oil industry is continuing to provide funds for AVTEC and in-kind contributions, such as software.

SENATOR COGHILL thought both training centers, in Nome and in Kotzebue, were significant players in the Red Dog Mine, in shipping, and in the safety industry.

MR. CASHEN said he is familiar with Kotzebue training center's mining program for Red Dog.

SENATOR COGHILL thought Kotzebue offered certificated training and Nome provided longer-term training.

MR. CASHEN clarified that the difference is NACTEC is more for secondary training and AVTEC was for both high school students and adults.

MR. ANDREWS spoke of support by native corporations for training centers.

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MR. ANDREWS highlighted the Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center which is: specializing in teaching Arctic construction skills, building large diameter pipelines for oil and gas, and providing training in heavy equipment operation and maintenance, as well as in industrial welding and pipefitting. It offers a Process Technology Associates degree for facility operations from the University of Alaska and certificates in Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health, as well as a safety OSH Associates degree. It has a campus with housing for Arctic trainees.

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SENATOR BISHOP noted that the campus housing was built with elders in mind to come in and be the bridge between culture and job training.

MR. ANDREWS related that Alaska has several relevant industry sector workforce plans in place. Skills are transportable and transferable. All aligned with Alaska's career and technical education plan.

He noted that the workforce plans are tied to a quote by the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission to "Create workforce development programs to prepare Arctic residents to participate in all aspects and phases of Arctic development." Currently there are plans for construction, health care, mining, oil and gas, and maritime industry. All industry workforce plans are linked to Alaska's Career and Technical Education Plan.

He pointed out that the workforce plans were created through collaborative partnerships with industry, employers, educators, and trainers to meet the challenge of supplying a ready workforce today and developing tomorrow's talent. The industry sector workforce plans help guide policy makers, educators, counselor, and industry trainers. The plans created education and training pathways for students and adults to jobs, careers, and advanced learning - for Arctic Region industry occupations and careers.

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SENATOR BISHOP commented on how the workforce plans were developed. He said research was used to identify the occupations and to devise the plans. He credited the Department of Labor for their excellent research and analysis work.

MR. ANDREWS said several workforce planning areas have been identified by the Alaska Arctic Council for consideration: emergency and environmental response, search and rescue, telecommunications, maritime, transportation, ports, roads, and civil construction, and oil and gas development and facility operations.

He turned to the key Arctic workforce planning principles: ensure career and technical education planning for Alaska's Arctic economy with local communities, involve industry, regional employers, educators, and community representatives in planning, and design training programs that are sustainable.

[11:42:08 AM](#)

MR. ANDREWS concluded that planning must be researched based. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development will perform an Arctic workforce education and training gap analysis. The department will provide labor market research to help policy makers better understand emerging and expanding Arctic occupations. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board and the department will recommend action steps to address Alaska Arctic workforce system gaps.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL asked who serves on the board.

MR. ANDREWS replied that it has 26 members; some from departments, four from education, an Alaska Native Employment Training representative, the majority from business and industry, and the Lieutenant Governor.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL noted the Alaska Resource Education Group, from the private sector, has provided modules for teachers in order to make students aware of their job opportunities. She agreed with Mr. Andrews that "Alaska policy is Arctic policy and Arctic policy is Alaska policy." She gave examples of related industries throughout Alaska.

MR. ANDREWS reiterated that the whole state is in the Arctic.

SENATOR BISHOP concluded that as Alaska works to diversify its economy, a goal of his is to be the Arctic pipeline training

center of circumpolar countries and to be recognized as a world leader in that discipline. He suggested that other disciplines could also be showcased due to their training assets.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL agreed it was a great goal. She said the commission previously talked about UAF being the reference point on Arctic research. She concluded it was a worthy goal for Arctic workforce development.

SENATOR COGHILL said Alaska is an international partner in the Arctic. Alaska needs to show its successes but also look to successes in Norway, Sweden, and Canada. He said Alaska is a steward in the Arctic. He predicted that engineering will become the unique challenge of the Arctic. Also, that Alaska is the repository of migration. He concluded that the Arctic plays a role in so many other parts of the world.

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CO-CHAIR GIESSEL said Senator Coghill's comments reminded her of another active private sector group, Alaska Process Industry Careers Association, which targets careers in environmental engineering, as well as safety occupations.

She thanked the presenters.

[11:50:18 AM](#)

There being nothing further to come before the committee, Co-Chair Giessel adjourned the Senate Special Committee on the Arctic at 11:50 p.m.