

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
March 19, 2015
1:37 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair MacKinnon called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:37 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Anna MacKinnon, Co-Chair
Senator Pete Kelly, Co-Chair
Senator Peter Micciche, Vice-Chair
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Mike Dunleavy
Senator Donny Olson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman

ALSO PRESENT

Chuck Collins, Juneau.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Lake Williams, Fairbanks; Stacy A. Allen, Palmer; Pamela J. Cline, Anchorage; Jacob A. Howdeshell, Fairbanks; Linda Hutchings, Soldotna; Patricia A. Vollendorf, Anchorage; Robert Weel, Anchorage; Rick Traini, Anchorage.

SUMMARY

^CONFIRMATION HEARING: ALASKA WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

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Co-Chair MacKinnon explained that the Alaska Workers' Compensation Board was located in AS 23.30.005. The Alaska Workers' Compensation Board consisted of a southern panel of the three members for the first judicial district; two northern panels of three members sitting for the second and fourth districts; five south-central panels of three

members each sitting for the third judicial district; and one panel of three members that may sit in any judicial district. Each panel must include the commissioner of Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), or a hearing officer designated to represent the commissioner; a representative of the industry; and a representative of labor. The latter two members of each panel shall be appointed by the governor and were subject to confirmations by the majority of members of the legislature in a joint session. Each member, except the commissioner of DLWD, served a term of three years.

Co-Chair MacKinnon asked for some comments regarding Mr. Williams' desire to continue service on the board.

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LAKE WILLIAMS, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), announced that he was initially nominated for the board under Governor Parnell, and was denominated under Governor Walker. He was never officially confirmed, but found his service continually enjoyable. He felt that his work on the board had a balance of helping the workers and companies. There were some difficult decisions on the board, but he enjoyed the work and service of the board.

Co-Chair MacKinnon asked for some experience as related to the board. Mr. Williams explained some of his qualifications. He was currently the District 7 representative in Fairbanks for Local 302; he was the presidents of Fairbanks Building and Trades; he was a member of the Fairbanks Chamber Board; he was born and raised in Fairbanks; he had a degree from the University of Iowa in Business Administration; and was in the industry for over 20 years. He felt that there was room for improvement in the industry, and looked forward to making a positive difference.

Co-Chair MacKinnon requested some opening comments regarding Ms. Allen's nomination.

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STACY A. ALLEN, PALMER (via teleconference), highlighted some of her qualifications and experience on the board. She stated that she worked in the health care industry as an obstetrics nurse. She remarked that there were not many

workers' compensation cases in the obstetrical practice, but she remarked that the nursing industry faced workers' compensation issues. She was the health care representative for the members of Local 341, so she was able to demystify the workers' compensation issues for the injured worker. She stated that she was also able to help the relationship between the employer and employee. She stressed that the workers' compensation system was not adversarial, and should not be feared. The system benefited both the employer and employee. She remarked that it was interesting to observe how the board worked among all facets. The hearing officers were able to explain the laws. She announced that she had enjoyed the collaborative process of the board, and felt that her experience was beneficial to the membership.

Co-Chair MacKinnon requested a description of Ms. Cline's board qualifications.

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PAMELA J. CLINE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), announced that she had a very positive experience serving on the board. She felt that the board served in a capacity to maintain fairness. She stressed the importance of getting the individuals back to work after their injuries, whether in their previous field or retrained in a new career. She was a certified pharmacy tech, and worked at Mat-Su Regional Hospital as a certified pharmacy tech in its retail pharmacy. She restated that she enjoyed her membership of the board, and felt it was an important board for the community.

Co-Chair MacKinnon noted that Ms. Cline was a former PTA president.

Co-Chair MacKinnon queried the qualifications of Mr. Collins.

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CHUCK COLLINS, JUNEAU, stated that he was a former local business owner. He felt that his service on the board was a good use of his time. He remarked that the board changed during his service, and currently worked well together. He felt that the board worked well to make the system work more efficiently. He stressed the importance of

rehabilitation and retraining. He felt that Alaskan businesses could work to ensure the safety of all workers.

Senator Bishop complimented Mr. Collins, and appreciated his service. He understood that the work was difficult.

Co-Chair Kelly agreed that the board was a difficult board. He shared that he had some experience with the board.

Co-Chair MacKinnon commented that the following appointee was the only first-year appointee.

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JACOB A. HOWDESHELL, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), explained that the committee had a document which was an application for the Alaska Safety Advisory Council, on which he currently served as a member. He would provide an updated resume at a later date. He had worked in the construction industry for ten years out of Local 942, and he was currently employed as a business representative. He had also served on the executive board of Local 942 for six years. He was a member of the Alaska Petroleum Joint Crafts Council (APJCC), and the Alaska Safety Advisory Council. He was recently elected to the Alaska District Council of Labors. He wished to serve on the Workers' Compensation Board to ensure that Alaska's workforce had the opportunity to recover from workplace injuries without undue economic hardship, and to protect all participants of the program against fraud.

Co-Chair MacKinnon queried Ms. Hutchings' qualifications.

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LINDA HUTCHINGS, SOLDOTNA (via teleconference), explained that she was initially appointed to the board under Governor Murkowski. She remarked that the board had become more efficient, and become more active than what it had been at her initial appointment. She pointed out that it was difficult to receive a full complement on the board. She stressed that the board currently offered board training, and remarked that it took approximately two years to understand the full expectations of the work of the board.

Vice-Chair Micciche thanked Ms. Hutchings for her dedication to the board.

Senator Bishop echoed Vice-Chair Micciche's comments. He felt that Alaska could benefit from her service.

Co-Chair MacKinnon asked for a description of Ms. Vollendorf's qualifications.

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PATRICIA A. VOLLENDORF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), stated that she was a teacher in Anchorage from 1963 to 1993. She was initially appointed to the board under Governor Hickel, and served from 1993 to 1997. She was reappointed in 2004, and had served on the board subsequently. She remarked that board had changed over the years, and hoped that the board had done proper work to return the injured person to work. She stressed the importance of providing the statutorily benefits to the injured worker.

Co-Chair MacKinnon queried the qualifications of Mr. Weel.

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ROBERT WEEL, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), stated that he was initially appointed to the board in 2005 by Governor Murkowski, and had served since his initial appointment. He was a resident of Alaska since 1957. He was currently retired, but enjoyed serving on the board. He stated that the focus of the board was getting employees back to work. He provided experience in management and business to represent the industry. He stressed his desire to continue service on the board.

Vice-Chair Micciche wondered if Mr. Weel was appointed in 2006. He thought there may be a mistake in the documentation. Mr. Weel replied that he was born in 1952.

Vice-Chair Micciche queried the first appointment date. Mr. Weel replied that he believed that he was initially appointed by Governor Murkowski in 2005.

Co-Chair MacKinnon wondered if there was a cooperative effort between the industry and workers, and whether there was a balanced board. Mr. Weel replied in the affirmative.

There were currently 18 board members with 9 representing industry and 9 representing labor. He stressed that there were at least 2 members from each facet represented at each meeting, as well as a hearing officer.

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RICK TRAINI, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), stated that he was initially appointed to the board by Governor Parnell in 2010, to fill a partial term. He was appointed to a full term on the board in 2012. He worked for the Alaska Teamsters for approximately 9 years, and was the executive director and negotiation coordinator. He shared that he had served on a special committee within the Workers' Compensation Board to offer listening sessions as related to the cost of employer premium. The focus of the committee was to ensure the affordability of employer premiums, and provide better employee benefits. He remarked that there was a steep learning curve, but it provided an adjudication opportunity for employers and employee cases.

Co-Chair MacKinnon FORWARDED the appointments of Lake Williams, Stacy Allen, Pamela Cline, Chuck Collins, Jacob Howdenshell, Linda Hutchings, Rick Traini, Patricia Vollendorf, and Robert Weel to a Joint Session for consideration in accordance with AS 39.05.080. This did not reflect an intent by any member to vote for or against the confirmation of the individuals during any further sessions.

Co-Chair MacKinnon discussed the following week's schedule.

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ADJOURNMENT

2:09:39 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 2:09 p.m.