

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

February 17, 2015

9:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Bill Stoltze, Chair
Senator John Coghill, Vice Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Charlie Huggins
Senator Lesil McGuire

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Commissioner - Department of Corrections
Ronald Taylor

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Board of Game
Kip Fanning
Teresa Sager Albaugh

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

Alaska Public Offices Commission
Mark Fish
William McCord

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, Public Members
Dennis "Skip" Cook
Herman G. Walker, Jr.

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

RONALD TAYLOR, Commissioner-elect
Department of Corrections
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee.

DENNIS "SKIP" COOK, Appointee
Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, Public Member
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee.

HERMAN G. WALKER, JR., Appointee
Select Committee on Legislative Ethics
Public Member
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee.

WILLIAM MCCORD, Appointee
Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC)
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee.

KIP FANNING, Appointee
Board of Game
Yakutat, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee.

TERESA SAGER ALBAUGH, Appointee
Board of Game
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee.

MIKE TINKER, Member
Alaska Wildlife Conservation Association
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of the two Board of Game candidates.

AL BARRETTE, Member
Alaska Outdoor Council
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of the two Board of Game candidates.

TERRY VERBEC, Deputy Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner
Department of Public Safety
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of Commissioner-elect Ronald Taylor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:01:08 AM](#)

CHAIR BILL STOLTZE called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Wielechowski, Coghill, and Chair Stoltze.

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

[9:02:01 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE announced that there would be a number of confirmation hearings. The first would be for commissioner of the Department of Corrections.

Commissioner - Department of Corrections

[9:02:28 AM](#)

RONALD TAYLOR, Commissioner-designee, Department of Corrections, stated that this nomination is an incredible and unique opportunity to serve the people of Alaska at this time of budget reductions and looking at ways to improve the overall effectiveness of the department. He noted that for the past several years the department has been working hard with the legislature and the criminal justice community, overall, to reduce recidivism and look for ways to make improvements to the system. He said the budget will be a challenge. He opined that the department's mission is to ensure that they are doing everything possible to help people be successful when they re-enter society.

[9:04:11 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE asked for Mr. Taylor's vision.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR said his focus is on re-entry management, low recidivism rates, and comprehensive programming.

SENATOR COGHILL thanked Mr. Taylor for offering to take the position. He said he would work with Mr. Taylor on recidivism prevention. He noted the problem of the large pre-trial population.

[9:06:36 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR replied that 40 percent of the prison population is not sentenced and it causes major problems. The department is working with other criminal justice partners to see if that population needs to be in custody or could be electronically monitored or held in half-way houses.

[9:08:14 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL asked whether risk assessment is done on the pre-trial population.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR said no, but it will be looked at.

SENATOR COGHILL asked if it has been recommended by the court.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR answered that it could be recommended by the court or Corrections staff could assess the risk and make recommendations.

SENATOR COGHILL spoke of half-way house issues in Fairbanks. He asked if half-way houses can be improved.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR said yes, in terms of quality assessment and the introduction of service dogs.

[9:09:58 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE explained that half-way houses differ greatly from prisons.

SENATOR COGHILL noted the problem of drugs.

[9:10:23 AM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI commended Commissioner Taylor. He asked about the reasons for closing down some of the community jails.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR explained that they are not advocating closing community jails, but are terminating some contracts with them, such as the minimum facility in Palmer which will become a half-way house.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI replied that he stands corrected.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR explained closing challenges, including staffing.

[9:13:54 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE asked about the morale within Corrections.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR answered that communication is very important. He said they have reached out to the employees to give them access to the Commissioner's Office and will continue to work to improve morale. He said he views improving morale a top consideration.

CHAIR STOLTZE noted that officer safety is a concern of his. He said he appreciates the steps Mr. Taylor has already taken.

[9:16:42 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE announced that Mr. Taylor's name will be forwarded to the joint session for confirmation.

[9:17:23 AM](#)

At ease.

Select Committee on Legislative Ethics

[9:17:50 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE brought the meeting back to order and turned to the nominations for the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics. He asked Mr. Cook to tell the committee what motivates him to be involved in regulating ethical behavior.

[9:18:20 AM](#)

DENNIS "SKIP" COOK, Appointee, Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, Public Member, testified as an appointee. He explained his background as an attorney and with state and city government. He said he has been on the Ethics Committee since 1998 and enjoys the work, especially training. He said the Committee is in transition with a new director and he is willing to continue to serve to provide continuity.

[9:21:02 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL expressed appreciation for Mr. Cook's work and his willingness to continue to serve.

CHAIR STOLTZE said he does not have any issues with Mr. Cook's nomination and he appreciates his service.

CHAIR STOLTZE recognized Mr. Walker and asked him to provide a brief biography and why he wants to continue serving on the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics.

[9:23:25 AM](#)

HERMAN G. WALKER, JR., Appointee, Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, Public Member, testified as an appointee. He provided his background and work as a lawyer. He said he has been a member of the Legislative Ethics Committee since 2002. He wished to stay on to share his institutional memory.

CHAIR STOLTZE wondered who forwards the appointments to the Ethics Committee.

[9:26:19 AM](#)

MR. WALKER replied that he received a phone call from the State Supreme Court Justice, Dana Fabe, requesting that he serve on the Ethics Committee.

CHAIR STOLTZE voiced appreciation for his service.

SENATOR COGHILL noted his past work with Mr. Walker when he served on the Ethics Committee and the clarity he provided.

[9:28:09 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE announced that his name will be forwarded to the joint session for confirmation.

Alaska Public Offices Commission

CHAIR STOLTZE welcomed Mr. McCord and asked him to tell the committee about himself, his time in Alaska and his interest in serving on the Alaska Public Offices Commission.

[9:29:37 AM](#)

WILLIAM MCCORD, Appointee, Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC), testified as an appointee. He noted that he has only been in Alaska since May coming from Washington State. He explained that he is a Libertarian and a retired teacher. He provided his educational background and relevant experience in a variety of organizations.

[9:32:47 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE asked what he views as his role.

MR. MCCORD answered that he has an interest in fair and objective evaluations, and is not necessarily a party advocate.

SENATOR COGHILL said the committee is looking for fair objectivity.

[9:34:11 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE announced that Mr. McCord's name will be forwarded to the joint session for confirmation. He thanked Mr. McCord.

Board of Game

CHAIR STOLTZE welcomed Mr. Fanning and asked him to tell the committee about himself and his interest in serving on the Board of Game.

[9:36:27 AM](#)

KIP FANNING, Appointee, Board of Game, testified as an appointee. He shared his background in the hunting and fishing business. He said it would be an honor to serve on the board.

CHAIR STOLTZE noted meeting his father in the past. He asked what Mr. Fanning does for a living.

[9:38:23 AM](#)

MR. FANNING answered that his family owns a lodge in Yakutat and he serves as a guide. He spoke of the balance needed in protecting resources.

CHAIR STOLTZE noted Mr. Fanning had involvement in the game industry, but does not now.

MR. FANNING answered correct; he is no longer a registered game guide.

[9:39:37 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL asked for Mr. Fanning's opinion on guiding regulations and game management.

MR. FANNING shared how guiding was handled in the past. He said he would need more information to discuss the current situation.

[9:41:16 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL brought up concerns about predator control regarding moose and fish populations. He asked if Mr. Fanning has knowledge of that issue.

MR. FANNING answered that he is going to have to learn about it, but he is not against predator control.

CHAIR STOLTZE said Mr. Fanning should not be embarrassed about not knowing about the guide concessions. He opined that having an open mind is an asset.

SENATOR COGHILL noted he does not have all the answers for his questions. He discussed moose population control controversies.

[9:44:27 AM](#)

MR. FANNING said he does not have information about that, but is willing to study the issue and try to come up with the best answers.

SENATOR COGHILL appreciated that.

[9:46:30 AM](#)

TERESA SAGER ALBAUGH, Appointee, Board of Game, testified as an appointee. She shared her background as a person who was raised in a hunting and fishing family and who now lives off the grid. She shared her employment history. She said she has devoted volunteer time to efforts that protect and enhance hunting, fishing, and trapping and the public's right to enjoy outdoor experiences. She noted she has served two terms on the Board of Game and she hoped to continue to contribute to people who value wildlife.

[9:48:54 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL thanked Ms. Sager Albaugh for serving on the Board. He asked about regulations regarding antler-less hunting in a unit near Fairbanks.

MS. SAGER ALBAUGH agreed that the issue is contentious and complex. She explained that the antler-less moose hunts are provided and adopted by the Board because they prevent the moose population from overgrazing the range and causing a population crash. The goal is to build a sustainable moose population. She said she understands concerns people have with the regulation, but she has voted in favor of the hunts when the science is right. She said she voted against the re-authorization in Unit 20-A when the moose population dropped below the population objective. She pointed out that advisory committees have veto power over antler-less hunts and the Board cannot override it.

[9:53:31 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL asked about the growing bear population in the Interior and a problem with predation.

MS. SAGER ALBAUGH answered that bear predation is significant in a number of areas in the state. She commented that when it becomes necessary to reduce predators, the Board has the responsibility to act and to look at management options.

SENATOR COGHILL appreciated Ms. Sager Albaugh's knowledge.

[9:56:38 AM](#)

MIKE TINKER, Member, Alaska Wildlife Conservation Association, testified in favor of the two Board of Game candidates. He voiced appreciation for Ms. Sager Albaugh's service. He opined that Mr. Fanning will do an excellent job on the Board and has the background to ask questions on the issues.

[9:59:01 AM](#)

AL BARRETTE, Member, Alaska Outdoor Council, testified in favor of the two Board of Game candidates. He echoed the previous speaker's comments.

CHAIR STOLTZE announced that both names will be forwarded to the joint session for confirmation. He noted his affiliation with the Alaska Outdoor Council.

[10:03:11 AM](#)

TERRY VERBEC, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Public Safety, testified in favor of appointee Ronald Taylor. He said they have had a great working relationship and he looks forward to working with him and his staff.

[10:04:16 AM](#)

CHAIR STOLTZE stated that all names will be forwarded to a joint session for further consideration. He 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.

[10:05:00 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stoltze adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee hearing at 10:05 a.m.