

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 15, 2017

8:03 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Harriet Drummond, Chair  
Representative Justin Parish, Vice Chair  
Representative Zach Fansler  
Representative Ivy Spohnholz  
Representative Jennifer Johnston  
Representative Chuck Kopp  
Representative David Talerico

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Lora Reinbold (alternate)  
Representative Geran Tarr (alternate)

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS(S) :

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

David Piazza - Dillingham  
Maureen van Wagner - Anchorage  
Kent Runion - Nome

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Karen Perdue - Fairbanks

CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 102

"An Act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and relating to limited teacher certificates."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

DAVID PIAZZA, Superintendent  
Southwest Region School District  
Dillingham, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Department of Education and Early Development.

MAUREEN VAN WAGNER, Special Education Teacher  
East High School  
Anchorage School District  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Department of Education and Early Development.

KENT RUNION, Teacher  
Nome Public Schools  
Nome, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Department of Education and Early Development.

KAREN PERDUE  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:03:21 AM](#)

**CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Drummond, Kopp, Fansler, Johnston, and Talerico were present at the call to order. Representatives Parish and Spohnholz arrived as the meeting was in progress.

[8:04:22 AM](#)

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :**

**Professional Teaching Practices Commission**

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the first order of business would

be consideration of the appointees to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

8:04:54 AM

DAVID PIAZZA, Superintendent, Southwest Region School District, provided a statement of interest and outlined his qualifications paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

I am the Superintendent for the Southwest Region School District and have been in this role for almost 6 years. I have served the public educational system within Alaska for the past 32 years as a teacher, district-level specialist, district-level administrator, and superintendent.

Chair Drummond and members of the House Education Committee, it is my pleasure to be here for confirmation for the re-appointment to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission as the Superintendent representative.

I look forward to continuing on the PTPC. As role models, providing instruction and guidance to the next generation, it is imperative that teachers and administrators adhere to the code of ethics. The PTPC is important as it provides educators with training to help prevent violations, as well as, serves as an avenue for accused individuals to receive a fair and impartial review before any career-impacting sanctions are imposed. The legislature in 1966 established the PTPC as an independent commission to be governed by members made up by representatives practicing their profession within the K-20 educational community.

8:06:58 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked Mr. Piazza for further information concerning individual learning programs that are not limited to distance education.

MR. PIAZZA said a school system that seeks to meet the needs of individual students, in addition to distance learning, can utilize software or learning systems that encourage students to work independently or with teachers. It is known that independent learning systems are not best for every student, and

that quality instructors are necessary for support; however, the district has implemented exploratory sessions that allow students access to additional elective possibilities that are difficult to provide in small, rural schools. Restructuring school days during a quarter, or a semester, can provide weeklong and intensive training for students as elective classes, and thereby promote a higher level of student engagement. In further response to Representative Johnston, he said he has served on the [commission] for three years and the upcoming term would be his second.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON questioned whether Alaska is at status quo related to certifying and finding qualified teachers, or if the certification process has changed in the past three years.

MR. PIAZZA responded that the teacher certification process seeks to place the highest quality teachers in classrooms. Over time, teacher requirements have been strengthened and teachers are required to demonstrate measured basic competency; teachers new to the state must take classes in Alaska history and culture. In addition, the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession has been reviewed to ensure that its policies and procedures are in place to address possible violations.

[8:12:55 AM](#)

MAUREEN VAN WAGNER, Special Education Teacher, East High School, Anchorage School District, informed the committee she has been an educator for twenty-one years. She said she has served as the teacher representative on the Professional Teaching Practices Commission for the past three years and wishes to continue her service.

[8:13:50 AM](#)

KENT RUNION, Teacher, Nome Public Schools, informed the committee he has been a high school social studies teacher at Nome-Beltz High School for seven years. He said this is his first appointment to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:14:46 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:15 a.m. to 8:38 a.m.

[8:38:08 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the final order of business would be consideration of the appointee to the University of Alaska (UA) Board of Regents.

[8:38:20 AM](#)

KAREN PERDUE provided brief personal background information. She then listed reasons she is interested in serving on the University of Alaska Board of Regents. She spoke of the importance of mentoring, and said in her youth she was mentored by former U.S. Senator Ted Stevens and began her career in state government working for former Lieutenant Governor Terry Miller. Subsequently, she served four governors, serving eight years as the commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services for former Governor Tony Knowles. As now, oil prices were low during her first term as commissioner, thus she learned how to manage and motivate employees during times of hardship. In 2001, Ms. Perdue returned to Fairbanks and worked for 10 years as associate vice president at UA, thus is very familiar with academic programs on all the campuses, and during her time there she and faculty members wrote an academic plan for health care that was adopted by the board of regents. She noted the importance of UA to the economy of Alaska and the importance of reversing the brain drain of students from the state; most importantly, she stressed UA must meet students' needs in order to attract and retain students. Further, her experience includes service on various boards of directors - and as the director of a board - which taught her the important difference between governance and management. The board of regents was intended to be a powerful oversight to one state university, as directed by the Alaska Constitution, which also directs the board of regents to guide UA's policy and hire its president. At this time, UA is facing declining enrollment and severe budget cuts, and needs to assure its students that it will continue to offer high-quality education and world-class research. Ms. Perdue expressed her interest in serving UA during a turning point in the university's 100-year history.

[8:45:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON said the president of UA has presented Strategic Pathways [a multi-part, multi-year process to reconfigure UA administrative and academic programs to address funding cuts] which includes restructuring of the education department. She recalled the political discourse surrounding

previous restructuring of the UA medical program, and asked for the candidate's vision in regard to the current restructuring.

MS. PERDUE noted at the time of restructuring the school of nursing - which was accredited at UAA - in 2001, there was dissatisfaction among employers and students about a lack of access to the nursing program. Previous chancellors [Marshall Lind and John Pugh] sought to initiate additional nursing programs on the Fairbanks and Juneau campuses; however, they were asked by [former UA president Mark Hamilton] to instead form an integrated group so that the school of nursing could meet educational needs statewide. Ms. Perdue opined the faculty "rose to the occasion" and increased the number of nursing graduates by adding a third semester to the schedule, and by developing a successful distance [education] program that is now available at 16 sites. She said engaging the faculty to set goals for education - such as increasing the number of Alaskan teachers as was suggested by the president - and asking the faculty to design and "retool" appropriate academic programs, would result in less "territorial" discussion.

[8:49:31 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND expressed optimism for improved retention of K-12 teachers and for educating teachers in Alaska.

MS. PERDUE agreed recruitment in education and teacher retention are vital, and UA has focused on young teacher mentoring, but perhaps more could be done.

CHAIR DRUMMOND said the mentoring program has suffered due to a lack of funding.

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked the appointee to compare the Strategic Pathways plan with the alternatives proposed by Professor Abel Bult-Ito [University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Department of Biology and Wildlife].

MS. PERDUE advised she has not seen the proposal made by the professor; however, her impression is his proposal is focused on "more decentralization of the university and less in statewide ...." She said she would be attending an upcoming presentation on this issue and noted Professor Bult-Ito has conducted an analysis on the university for many years. She opined the Alaska State Constitution and related Alaska Statutes envision a one-university system with centralized management. Although each UA is individually accredited, the public expects Alaska to

have one state university as directed by its constitution. Ms. Perdue acknowledged there must be a balance so administrative processes can strengthen UA and, at the same time, ensure the faculty can function. Consistency in the system can be provided by, for example: one legal department, one payroll system, one information technology department, and one human resources department. She expressed her belief that students seek one university that allows the transfer of credits between campuses, and where courses are sequenced to allow students to progress to their degrees.

[8:53:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ stated part of the challenge the university is experiencing is a disconnect between the administration and faculty, particularly related to Strategic Pathways, and the no confidence votes by the faculty associations at two campuses. Although it is not the Board of Regents responsibility to manage the internal processes of UA, she asked how the appointee would guide the president, as this issue is addressed.

MS. PERDUE said at the one meeting she attended [chair of the board Gloria O'Neill] provided an appropriate amount of time in the agenda to discuss governance with the faculty and with student government. She understood additional board time will be devoted to continuing dialogue, and the president has directed more time to campuses with affected faculty; ultimately, once the process discussion has been closed, money will still be an issue, which may result in reductions and very difficult decisions.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ returned to the discord over nursing education and expressed her belief that one of the successful strategies to solving the issue was involving the faculty in becoming part of the solution.

MS. PERDUE agreed the faculty members created the solution and achieved accreditation for the distance nursing program. She stressed the role of the faculty is to ensure the quality of the curriculum.

[8:57:09 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND has heard criticism regarding the cost of statewide functions in relation to the amount cut from

legislative funding, and asked whether the appointee has thoughts in advance of her appointment.

MS. PERDUE remarked:

We reviewed some numbers that were provided by the administration on the reductions at statewide ... I'm thinking something like 38 percent, I can't remember exactly but, and so I wondered if the numbers were agreed upon, and that would be a start for us, at inside our system is to really fully vet those. The numbers should be known; they should be agreed upon as a start because as I hear, some people, I hear them thinking that there's been consolidation, in statewide, when the information that we're provided is that there's not, there's not been any consolidation in statewide. ... That would be my first step.

[8:58:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH moved to advance the confirmations of Maureen van Wagner, David Piazza, and Kent Runion, appointees to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, and of Karen Purdue, appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, to a joint session of the House and Senate for consideration. Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees, and the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection. There being no objection, the confirmations were advanced.

[8:59:10 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:59 a.m.