

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

March 10, 2017

8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator John Coghill
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 17

"An Act authorizing the University of Alaska to establish, through an agreement with the University of Hawaii, the Ted Stevens - Daniel K. Inouye Exchange Program for political science students at the University of Alaska and the University of Hawaii to commemorate the bipartisan friendship between Senator Ted Stevens and Senator Daniel K. Inouye."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 66

"An Act redesignating the Alaska State Council on the Arts as a public corporation and governmental instrumentality of the state; defining the powers and duties of the Alaska State Council on the Arts; providing exemptions from certain statutes for the Alaska State Council on the Arts; making conforming amendments; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 17

SHORT TITLE: STEVENS/INOUE UNIVERSITY EXCHANGE PROG.

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) COSTELLO

01/13/17 (S) PREFILE RELEASED 1/13/17
01/18/17 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/17 (S) EDC
03/10/17 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR MIA COSTELLO
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 17.

JULIANA MELIN, Staff
Senator Mia Costello
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the sectional analysis for SB 17.

SAICHI OBA, Associate Vice President for Students
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 17.

MILES BAKER, Associate Vice President
Government Relations
University of Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the fiscal note for SB 17.

TIM MCKEEVER, Chairman of the Board
Ted Stevens Foundation
Portland, Oregon
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 17.

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:00:23 AM

CHAIR SHELLEY HUGHES called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Giessel, Begich, Coghill, Stevens, and Chair Hughes.

SB 17-STEVENS/INOUYE UNIVERSITY EXCHANGE PROG.

CHAIR HUGHES announced the consideration of SB 17. She said the committee will wait until the next meeting to hear SB 66. She spoke of the remarkable friendship between Senator Stevens and Senator Inouye of Hawaii. She hoped the bill would provide an

opportunity for the younger generation to learn about their friendship.

[8:02:34 AM](#)

SENATOR MIA COSTELLO, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of SB 17, thanked the committee for hearing her bill. She read from the following sponsor statement:

As recently as yesterday in the news, the decades-long alliance between the late Senators Daniel Inouye of Hawaii and Ted Stevens was mentioned. "The two men struck up a bond, both representing then-young states in the 1960s and formed a powerful alliance, particularly on the Appropriations Committee where they protected federal aid to our states via earmarks."

This bill puts in statute an exchange between the University of Alaska and the University of Hawaii to commemorate that friendship. The details would be worked out by the Universities, but the concept is that students would apply and a UA student would spend time at the University of Hawaii and vice versa.

The similarities between Senators Stevens and Inouye are many. They both served in WWII. Senator Inouye lost his right arm serving with the 442nd Regiment in Italy and received the Medal of Honor. Senator Stevens flew in the Airforce with the Flying Tigers in China. They worked together as ranking members of the Senate Commerce Committee and they co-sponsored legislation in 1996 to re-write the nation's telephone laws, making it fair for residents in their states to pay the same rates the Lower 48 pays. They sat next to each other on the Defense Appropriations Committee and served for four decades.

The similarities between Alaska and Hawaii are significant. They are the only two non-contiguous states in the nation, both have thriving tourism industries, healthy military presence, and Native populations that play a significant role in the cultural fabric of both states. Also, both are in the Pacific Rim and share economic, political, social, cultural, and educational connections. Senator Inouye stood with Stevens for almost every ANWR vote taken in Congress.

She shared a caption in a photo of Senator Inouye and Senator Stevens. "Senator Daniel Inouye, who served with Ted Stevens for four decades, called the Republican his brother and said their friendship was a very special one." Ted Stevens was one of the most powerful figures in Alaska's history and is considered a hero from the greatest generation, an Alaskan icon.

The bill aims to keep alive Senator Stevens' largest legacy, a simple friendship. All politics is about relationships and in this both Senator Stevens and Senator Inouye set the standard. She referred to an article in members' packets titled the "The Stevens - Inouye Friendship." Senator Stevens' daughter Lily wrote, "In the midst of this season of firmly divided politics, here is a reminder of how two people from different political perspectives, and even personalities, can come together. Thank you, Charlie, for the musing on their great friendship. There will never be two like them again, but I hope we can find our way back to this model of friendship, service, and leadership."

[8:06:51 AM](#)

JULIANA MELIN, Staff, Senator Mia Costello, Alaska State Legislature, read the following from sectional analysis:

Senate Bill 17 adds new language in Title 14. Section 14.40.105 creates an opportunity for a reciprocal agreement to be made between the University of Alaska and the University of Hawaii to establish a student exchange program commemorating the bipartisan friendship between Senator Ted Stevens and Senator Daniel K. Inouye. This commemoration is accomplished by providing educational services and opportunities for students who are pursuing a baccalaureate degree in political science at either the University of Hawaii or the University of Alaska.

[8:08:48 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL asked what the Hawaiian delegation thinks of the bill.

MS. MELIN related that they have been working with the Hawaiian delegation, the Daniel K. Inouye Institute, and University of

Hawaiian University members. She added that Saichi Oba from UA has also been working with UH on the bill.

[8:09:25 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL noted it was an open-ended bill. She asked if there is a fiscal note.

MS. MELIN said there is an indeterminate fiscal note in members' packets. She said Mr. Baker from UA would address it.

[8:10:11 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL asked if any student exchanges between UA and HA takes place now.

MS. MELIN said there are currently established exchanges in place.

SENATOR GIESSEL asked why this exchange is being put into state law.

[8:10:56 AM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO said the bill elevates it to the level of legislative support for the university's ability to have this type of exchange. The statute encourages communication such as existed in this friendship. Without the statute the exchange may not happen.

SENATOR GIESSEL reiterated that it is open-ended and raises concern.

[8:12:11 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS appreciated the bill. He noted that the East West Center at UH has had an extensive relationship with Alaska students over the years. This particular bill speaks to political science which he deemed important. He spoke in support of the bill.

CHAIR HUGHES thought there could be a large cost to the exchange if it were one-sided. She asked how it could be a balanced exchange.

SENATOR COSTELLO replied that she has met with the president of UA and they decided to leave the exchange open-ended so that various forms could exist as the program expands. It can be as small or as large as the university would like to see. She said she sits on the Civics Task Force and has seen that there are many ways to fashion an exchange.

8:15:09 AM

CHAIR HUGHES asked where Senator Costello got the original idea.

SENATOR COSTELLO related a story about an experience during a leadership meeting where she discussed the importance of the Stevens/Inouye friendship. She thought it important to memorialize this friendship.

8:16:49 AM

SENATOR COGHILL asked if tuition would be aligned.

MS. MELIN said some programs align tuition, but the details can be worked out between the universities.

SENATOR STEVENS noted that the exchange program is for those seeking a baccalaureate degree. He inquired if there was any consideration for graduate program students.

MS. MELIN said it could be considered.

8:17:55 AM

SENATOR BEGICH spoke in support of the bill and the positive emphasis on political science. He assumed the primary purpose of the bill is to emphasize a collaborative relationship in politics and modeling good behavior.

SENATOR COSTELLO envisioned that students would have to apply and in that process, would have to look into the senators' relationship, which would help keep the history alive and provide opportunities to further positive elements of politics.

CHAIR HUGHES opened public testimony.

8:19:45 AM

SAICHI OBA, Associate Vice President for Students, University of Alaska, testified in support of SB 17. He said that exchange programs, in general, provide benefits to students and institutions. SB 17 helps leverage the long-time friendship and working relationship of both Senators. He said UA has extensive experience in both national and international exchanges. He shared that he is originally from Hawaii and thought Senator Stevens would be pleased with this legislation.

He described how current student exchanges work. The university belongs to a consortium that allows UA students to attend exchanges with all fifty states. They would pattern the Stevens-

Inouye Exchange after those the university currently has. Most exchanges are for one year, but can be as short as one semester.

He explained that the national student exchange allows out-of-state students to pay in-state tuition so that UA will have the same benefit when they go out on exchange. He said they have reached out to the University of Hawaii regarding this exchange, but have not heard back yet. There is a small team that is looking at the requirements of this proposed legislation.

[8:24:04 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES asked if UH is interested.

MR. OBA said UA has not heard back from them yet.

SENATOR STEVENS asked about past exchanges with Hawaii.

MR. OBA said the national student exchange is in place with UH and the numbers are not overly dramatic. It has been a part of the UA system since the 90's.

SENATOR STEVENS agreed that reciprocity is a good way to do exchanges so there is no outlay of monies.

[8:25:54 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES asked whether exchange numbers must be balanced.

MR. OBA said the exchange could be set up in several ways. It could be on a one-to-one basis or open-ended. Those are details that would need to be worked out.

[8:27:17 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL asked for clarification whether a lot of students are doing an exchange.

MR. OBA said he does not have exact numbers; maybe 50 are on an exchange in a given year. He called that very little. He offered to provide those numbers.

SENATOR GIESSEL wanted specific numbers related to Hawaii. She provided an example of an out-of-state student wishing to go on an exchange.

[8:29:32 AM](#)

MR. OBA thought it was a detail that had to be worked out.

CHAIR HUGHES asked how student residence is considered currently.

MR. OBA explained that if the student has been in Alaska for a year in-state tuition would be allowed.

SENATOR STEVENS thought there should be an opportunity for graduate students to be a part of the exchange.

[8:30:54 AM](#)

MR. OBA was not aware of graduate student going on national exchange due to the specific requirements of masters programs. A graduate exchange is not impossible to offer and could be looked at.

[8:31:53 AM](#)

MILES BAKER, Associate Vice President, Government Relations, University of Alaska, explained the fiscal note for SB 17. He noted the fiscal note was indeterminate because there are a lot of details to work out, but the university expects any cost associated with the bill to be minimal because staff are already in place.

CHAIR HUGHES commented that no new staff are planned and tuition would basically cover costs. The university doesn't expect to be approaching the legislature in a few years for funding.

MR. BAKER said correct.

[8:33:29 AM](#)

TIM MCKEEVER, Chairman of the Board, Ted Stevens Foundation, testified in support of SB 17. He commented on the importance of the Senate Commerce Committee to both Senator Stevens and Senator Inouye since they represented non-contiguous states and worked together on issues of concern. He listed many of their common interests, such as national defense and Pacific Rim resources, across party lines.

He concluded that the Foundation supports the bill because it recognizes their contributions, but also because they worked together. Given today's political system, cooperation should be noted and encouraged. He hoped the program could include students in other fields besides political science, as well. He said Senator Inouye's Foundation also supports the bill.

[8:39:22 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL asked if the Foundation might provide financial support.

MR. MCKEEVER thought that was a possibility and they would be interested in doing so. The cost does not appear to be substantial.

SENATOR STEVENS thought the bigger issue is that the relationship between the two Senators be documented and recorded.

MR. MCKEEVER agreed and said they are working on that.

[8:41:58 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH suggested that if the bill becomes law, one of the requirements could be to include an aspect of the Senators' relationship in the application essay.

CHAIR HUGHES agreed. It would provide opportunity to research and preserve their legacy.

CHAIR HUGHES closed public testimony and held SB 17 in committee.

[8:43:26 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Hughes adjourned the Senate Education Committee at 8:43 a.m.