

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 15, 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

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Karen Perdue - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Maureen van Wagner - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

KAREN PERDUE, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Fairbanks, Alaska

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

MAUREEN VAN WAGNER, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC)

Anchorage, Alaska

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

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:56 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 Begich, Giessel, Stevens, and Chair Hughes. Senator Coghill arrived shortly thereafter.

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

[8:01:32 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES announced that the only order of business would be confirmation hearings.

University of Alaska Board of Regents

CHAIR HUGHES introduced Ms. Perdue.

[8:02:02 AM](#)

KAREN PERDUE, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, shared her professional and personal background. She said she is a lifelong Alaskan, lived in Juneau for 20 years while serving in state government, and has traveled all over Alaska. She retired in 2014 and has been volunteering since then.

She related qualifications related to her appointment to the Board of Regents. She worked in Senator Ted Stevens' office as a press secretary and policy aide and then served under four governors and as commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services for eight years. She said oil was \$9 per barrel when she served under Governor Knowles and she learned how to motivate people even during hard times.

She then served as the Associate Vice President for Health Programs at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. During that time, she developed innovative academic programs with the faculty and worked with leadership on every campus on a statewide academic health plan. She learned the importance of the university to the state's economy and to employers and that the university must meet students' needs to attract and retain them. She said higher education is very competitive and students have options for it. They are very skilled consumers with

legitimate expectations for ease of use of the system, for course sequencing, and for high quality.

MS. PERDUE related that she has worked in large institutional systems with a lot of missions and has served on several boards, such as the Denali Commission, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and as director of the State Hospital and Nursing Home Board where she learned the difference between management and governance. For 10 years she represented the U.S. on the International Arctic Council Forum, in Human Dimension.

[8:07:07 AM](#)

MS. PERDUE stated that the Board of Regents is one of the few boards that is listed in the state constitution. It is intended to be a powerful oversight to a one-state university. Its mission is to guide the policy of the university and hire the president. The board and the president work together to administer a system that is now comprised of 30,000 students and \$850 million.

She noted that the university is facing severe financial pressures and declining enrollment. The regents and the president will be making tough decisions over the next several years. She stated the need to continue to send a signal to students that the university will provide a quality academic experience and conduct world-class research, even in times of financial difficulty.

She related the reasons she wants to serve on the University of Alaska Board of Regents. She said the University of Alaska is going to be celebrating its 100th year and the founders would be delighted with the system that has been built. She wants to participate in guiding the university in this trying time so that it is around for at least another 100 years, if not more. She noted her three children will have graduated from the UA system and her oldest grandson has started at UAF.

[8:09:12 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS thanked Ms. Perdue for her years of service. He asked how the regents will address the financial situation.

MS. PERDUE said the Board's job is to set values and guidelines for the president and the chancellors in looking at budget reductions and to listen to the president's ideas and vote on them. The Board's job is not to come up with the ideas, but to set the timeline and to listen to the public and stakeholders on

the impacts of financial decisions. She shared her experience at her first Board meeting.

8:11:04 AM

CHAIR HUGHES asked what is causing declining enrollment.

MS. PERDUE said she would like to delve into that problem by looking at several issues, such as fewer high school graduates, outward migration of students, and flat job growth.

8:12:17 AM

SENATOR COGHILL spoke of the consolidation and alignment of university campuses.

MS. PERDUE asked for clarification.

SENATOR COGHILL asked specifically about alignment of the Nursing Program certifications.

8:13:24 AM

MS. PERDUE summarized the organization of the Nursing Programs noting that one of the problems students have has is that the campuses do not have a common calendar. She understood that course transfers have improved. Also, she said the three faculty have aligned general education requirements.

SENATOR COGHILL said University President Johnsen is looking for endowment money and to resolve the Land Grant issue for sources of increased revenues. He asked about outreach to economic communities for the benefit of the university.

8:15:29 AM

MS. PERDUE thought the tax credit did help certain businesses participate in supporting the university and it is being reexamined. She related that when she worked in the health field, the industry was willing to contribute to the program in the form of block grants, as long as results were reported. She said that process could continue because graduates are their future employees.

8:16:28 AM

SENATOR COGHILL spoke of the need to compete with other universities and to attract students. He noted a goal to work better between K-12 and the university. The struggle is that the university system is partly a junior college and partly an accredited university. He asked if she has been looking at the president's initiative to work with the K-12 system.

MS. PERDUE responded that she has read some materials and received a briefing from UAA about the Middle College.

[8:18:02 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES thought there was misalignment between K-12 and the university due to the high level of remediation needed for freshmen students.

[8:18:42 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL spoke of the Middle College and wondered if college credits earned in high school are at a lower standard. She wanted to verify the authenticity of high school-earned college credits. She also said there is still a problem with transfer of credits.

She brought up the topic of lack of faculty for President Johnsen.

MS. PERDUE said the Board needs to hear unified input from all stakeholders. The president has increased on-campus meetings lately. She stressed that it is a hard time and it is hard to make cuts. The president has created the Strategic Pathways structure which is getting better according to the faculty.

[8:21:29 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL pointed out that the state was at \$9 per barrel oil last year. She voiced concern that the state subsidizes university students at \$20,000 per student. The next state subsidizes at about \$9 per student. She noted that alumni organizations do not support the university's sports programs like other colleges do. She asked where Ms. Perdue saw opportunity there.

[8:22:47 AM](#)

MS. PERDUE said she does not have enough information yet on that issue.

CHAIR HUGHES asked for clarification of the \$9 amount. She thought perhaps Senator Giessel meant \$9,000.

SENATOR GIESSEL agreed.

[8:23:41 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH noted his relationship with Ms. Perdue when she hired him as the Community Justice Coordinator in the Department of Health and Social Services. He asked for her vision of

teacher training and whether there is a role for the Board of Regents in helping define teacher education for this century and beyond.

[8:24:30 AM](#)

MS. PERDUE said the process of reporting to the Board through the Academic Student Affairs Committee will help address how academic programs address rural teachers and teacher retention. The university has also adopted a teacher mentor program for new teachers. The Board's role is to challenge the Schools of Education to address the issues that the data shows are problems.

[8:25:46 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH noted Ms. Perdue mentioned that the constitution requires one university in Alaska. He asked what that means to the state.

MS. PERDUE opined that the university was meant to be a portion of the state's economy and to serve the people across the state. Many of the jobs the university educates for are in both small and large communities. Health care jobs and teaching are examples. She stressed the need to look at students as "place committed" as opposed to "place bound." The university needs to look at distance delivery and other methods of fulfilling that responsibility.

SENATOR BEGICH agreed that it is a high-level goal and one he has been looking for. He spoke of the difficulty of making budget cuts and President Johnsen's funding recommendations, yet the Senate is instead looking at another \$16 million in cuts on top of the Governor's proposed budget. He asked how the state should meet the vision of a place-committed university, in light of those budget cuts, and what the Board is looking to do.

MS. PERDUE replied that she has heard that Strategic Pathways is an effective tool to look at business processes in trying to ensure efficiency and customer satisfaction. She said she did not have an answer that addressed academic programs and athletics. She suggested a need to challenge the chancellors and faculty with the awareness of the current financial environment.

[8:29:35 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked if she has taken a distance education class.

MS. PERDUE said she has taught a 3-hour distance education graduate-level class. She said some students are very comfortable with that type of learning, others are not, and it is challenging to the instructor, but with training, very rewarding.

[8:30:26 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES commented that Mat-Su wished to have representation on the Board. She described how their campus has changed to become a thriving university. She asked Ms. Perdue to keep that area in mind, noting there is great potential there.

MS. PERDUE thanked the committee.

[8:32:50 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES thanked Ms. Perdue and introduced Ms. van Wagner. She requested a review of what the Professional Teaching Practices Commission does.

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

MAUREEN VAN WAGNER, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), shared her professional background. She said she is currently a special education teacher in Anchorage and has been an educator for 21 years. She said she has served as the teacher representative on PTPC for the last three years.

She related that PTPC is a process that deals with education policy and reviews teacher sanctions and makes decisions. They strengthened the language in the Code of Ethics for teachers in order to highlight the high expectations placed on teachers. She is happy to spend another three years on the PTPC and share her historical knowledge.

[8:35:41 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL thanked Ms. van Wagner for her service. He said there is a struggle to keep teachers in Alaska. He asked how the state could do a better job retaining teachers.

MS. VAN WAGNER shared her experience in a teacher training program and the importance of knowing clearly what she was getting into as a teacher. She is currently a mentor to new teachers and works with teachers who are on improvement plans. In that role, she stresses the importance of the code of ethics and an understanding of what is expected of teachers.

SENATOR COGHILL noted the importance of classroom management and described the challenging classroom environment. He appreciated Ms. van Wagner's willingness to work with teachers.

[8:38:39 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH thanked Ms. van Wagner for serving again. He spoke of a recommendation from the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Education that the 2016 Performance Review of the Department of Education and Early Development finding related to objective #9 be pursued. That recommendation was to consolidate the work of PTPC into the Office of Teacher Certification for cost reduction purposes and to eliminate duplication of processes. He asked if that recommendation makes sense.

[8:40:22 AM](#)

MS. VAN WAGNER said PTPC has discussed this recommendation. She opined that it would not be a good idea because the two serve opposite roles. The Office of Teacher Certification enables teachers to teach; PTPC revokes certifications. She described the makeup of the Board and their ability to make good decisions. The Office of Teacher Certification already has a difficult time getting certifications out in a timely manner. PTPC serves the teaching community best as it currently functions.

[8:41:55 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL thanked her for serving. She inquired how many suspensions or revocations have taken place.

MS. VAN WAGNER suggested she go the PTPC website for that data. She guessed there were 4 to 5 cases per year; not many revocations.

[8:43:19 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL asked how the actions of PTPC affect teacher retention. She asked if they follow up on the results of sanctions.

MS. VAN WAGNER said she does not have that information and suggested Senator Giessel ask the director, James Seitz. She did not think their actions would affect teacher retention. Only a small fraction of teachers have sanctions.

SENATOR GIESSEL clarified that she meant a specific educator who receives a disciplinary action.

MS. VAN WAGNER said sanctions are warnings. It is up to districts to decide what happens after that.

SENATOR GIESSEL asked if tenured teachers can be fired.

MS. VAN WAGNER said it depends on each district. She has seen teachers fired, tenured or not. Anyone can be recommended to PTPC. Most of those teachers are not tenured teachers and need support and mentoring.

[8:47:25 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES followed up on Senator Begich's question of merging administrative functions of PTPC and the Office of Teacher Certification.

MS. VAN WAGNER asked for clarification.

CHAIR HUGHES said she was thinking of streamlining of the administration.

MS. VAN WAGNER said PTPC has been streamlined already; the director no longer has a secretary.

[8:49:39 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL, in accordance with AS 39.05.080, moved that the appointment of Maureen van Wagner to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, and Karen Perdue to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, be forwarded to a joint session for consideration. This does not reflect an intent of any members to vote for or against the confirmation of these individuals during any further sessions.

[8:50:23 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES opened public testimony and, seeing none, closed public testimony.

She said the appointments of Ms. Wagner and Ms. Perdue will be forwarded to the joint session.

[8:50:52 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Hughes adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 8:50 a.m.