

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

February 15, 2018

1:37 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Kevin Meyer, Vice Chair
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Berta Gardner
Senator Peter Micciche

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Mia Costello, Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Commissioner, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic
Development

Mike Navarre

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

Mike Navarre, Commissioner Designee
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the position of
Commissioner of the Department of Commerce, Community, and
Economic Development.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:37:14 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR KEVIN MEYER called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:37 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Gardner, Micciche, and Vice Chair Meyer.

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Commissioner, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development

[1:38:06 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MEYER announced the business before the committee would be a confirmation hearing for Mike Navarre, Commissioner Designee of the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development. He was appointed on October 17, 2017, which gives him four months on the job. Prior to this appointment he served as Kenai Peninsula Borough mayor and as a member in the Alaska State House of Representatives. He asked Commissioner Designee Navarre to tell the committee about himself and why he wants to be commissioner of DCCED.

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MIKE NAVARRE, Commissioner Designee, Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Anchorage, Alaska, said he started the job November 6 to get a feel for the department and the people working there prior to the legislative session. He opined that there are a lot of good people in the department who are focused on service to the public. He looks forward to working with this committee and the legislature to advance economic development and take care of communities throughout the state. The reason he accepted this position was because he's spent time thinking about the state's fiscal situation and talking to his community about what needs to be done to take advantage of economic opportunity and further diversify the economy and revenue base. He related that he's had a good working relationship at both the local and state level and wants to help in the dialog that's taking place on these important issues.

[1:41:01 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked his perspective of DCEED and if he sees changes that need to be made going forward.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE NAVARRE said he's been learning about the different areas of responsibility and has been fostering a brainstorming approach to find common ground on areas that need to be addressed within the department and the legislature. He explained that his approach is to look for ways to advance a

matter and not get stuck in routine. He cited the transition to online professional licensing applications as an example of the department responding to criticism and looking for a better way to do business. It's being tested right now, and the processing timeframes have already been reduced from six months to about four weeks. The belief is that there will be both cost and time savings with this innovation.

SENATOR STEVENS said he appreciates those efforts.

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SENATOR GARDNER asked, "Is there something that you think that we should be doing that we're not doing at all?"

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE NAVARRE replied he doesn't have a list of things the legislature isn't doing but there are things the department has strong interest in. One is HB 170. It amends the Alaska Securities Act and separates those responsibilities and oversight from the Native Claims Settlement portion, which is not regulated by the FCC. The department is also interested in SB 165. It extends the ACHIA fund another five years so that the state can continue to take advantage of the reinsurance program. Another interest is SB 76. It is the Title IV rewrite to narrow some of the definitions and authority for interpreting those so that the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board is clear as to its regulatory authorities.

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SENATOR MICCICHE said he's thrilled his friend is interested in the position. He is a worthwhile adversary who always has an answer in the middle that proves to be right. "I look forward to serving with you."

VICE COMMISSIONER MEYER noted that he attended Snow College and asked where it is located.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE NAVARRE replied it's a junior college in Utah. He related his reason for attending.

SENATOR MICCICHE asked how he sees his role helping the state tap new economic opportunities.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE NAVARRE said the data shows that the Alaska economy has been significantly diversified over the last 30 years, but the state has failed to diversify its revenue stream. He described one of the governor's initiatives to build year-round toll roads on the North Slope, which will be

critically important in ANWR (Arctic National Wildlife Refuge) to build access for ice roads and ice pads to develop those fields. He also highlighted the significant military buildout in Fairbanks associated with the F-35s at Eielson Air Force Base. He said opportunities abound, but the state must build a foundation that recognizes the costs associated with economic opportunity.

[1:56:21 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE agreed there is a disconnect getting new industry and new residents to help pay the way. He added, "I don't have the answer, but it'll be good having you there to bat solutions back and forth as we try to solve that problem."

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE NAVARRE expressed optimism for getting there because everybody wants a strong economy and strong economic opportunities.

SENATOR STEVENS asked from which location will he manage the department.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE NAVARRE replied he is renting a place in Juneau at least through April. After that he will spend time between Juneau and Anchorage.

VICE CHAIR MEYER expressed support for Commissioner Designee Navarre and noted the family business in ARBY restaurants and his role in youth sports.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE NAVARRE clarified that he is still involved with the ARBY restaurants, but his role is limited to financial oversight and does not conflict with this job.

VICE CHAIR MEYER found no further questions and stated that the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee will forward the name Mike Navarre to a joint session of the legislature for consideration at a future date. He reminded the members that this does not reflect any intent of the members to vote for or against the confirmation of the nominee during the further session.

[2:00:31 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE moved to forward the name of Commissioner Designee Mike Navarre for consideration by the joint legislature.

VICE CHAIR MEYER asked members to sign the report and reiterated that the name would be forwarded to the full body for consideration at a future date.

2:01:13 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Vice Chair Meyer adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 2:01 pm.