

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

March 7, 2018

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair
Senator Natasha von Imhof
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Kevin Meyer
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Click Bishop

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator John Coghill, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Big Game Commercial Services Board
Adam Trombley

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Regulatory Commission of Alaska
Janis Wilson

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

SJR 13-URGING CO-MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR SEA OTTERS

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13

Urging the United States Congress to amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act and urging the United States Department of the Interior to permit Alaska Native organizations and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to co-manage, take, and study marine mammals under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record.

WITNESS REGISTER

ADAM TROMBLEY

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reappointee to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

JANIS W. WILSON

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reappointee to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA).

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR CATHY GIESSEL called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Bishop, Meyer, Stedman, Wielechowski, Von Imhof, and Chair Giessel. Senator Coghill was excused.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

BIG GAME COMMERCIAL SERVICES BOARD
REGULATORY COMMISSION OF ALASKA

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CHAIR GIESSEL said the committee would take up the reappointment of Adam Trombley to the Big Game Commercial Services Board. She invited him to tell the committee a little bit about himself and why he wants to continue serving on this board.

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ADAM TROMBLEY, representing himself, Anchorage, Alaska, said he had been involved in public service for the last 10 years at the local level and enjoys serving on this board because he respects the disciplinary actions that don't favor anyone within the industry. When someone screws up, it doesn't become just a good-ole boys club. He said he has been on the board one year and at the last meeting he was elected as vice chairman. It has been a real enjoyment to learn about the issues around guiding and transporters.

CHAIR GIESSEL asked his thoughts on the board's budget shortfall.

MR. TROMBLEY answered one of the reasons they started to get themselves out of the financial hole is to start addressing discipline by using consent agreements. So, there is not a lot of litigation after that, which can really drive the cost up. By the time the issue comes to the board, everyone has already agreed. He didn't foresee that changing. The fee structure has changed and he can see the board being completely out of debt in a couple of years.

CHAIR GIESSEL remarked that she didn't realize that consent agreements weren't being used by the board until recently.

MR. TROMBLEY said he couldn't remember how far back the board started using them, but it is really helping keep litigation costs down.

CHAIR GIESSEL noted seeing a substantial increase in fees in the last audit and that many members of the Resources Committee also sit on the Legislature Budget and Audit Committee and will be interested in its review of this board.

She found no further questions for Mr. Trombley from committee members and thanked him.

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At ease

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CHAIR GIESSEL called the meeting back to order and said the committee would next take up the reappointment of Janis Wilson to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA). The term is six years and it is actually a full-time job. Members have salaries at range 27 and have to do some substantial work. She invited Ms. Wilson to tell the committee why she wants to continue serving on the RCA.

JANIS W. WILSON, reappointee to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA), Anchorage, Alaska, said she had been an RCA commissioner for 12 years and would like to continue serving, because it is interesting and challenging work. She makes group decisions with four other very deep-thinking people; she enjoys making those kinds of decisions and further enjoys the reading and studying that all the commissioners have to do.

CHAIR GIESSEL thanked her for her desire to continue and remarked that Ms. Wilson's resume is substantial. She obviously has a great deal of experience in utilities and law.

SENATOR BISHOP said he asked his questions this morning in the Finance Committee and thanked her for putting her name forward.

MS. WILSON remarked that Governor Hammond gave a number of women opportunities to serve as officials in his administration and thanked him for mentioning it this morning.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI thanked her for her long-time service to the state and asked a question on a controversial decision regarding the ML&P/Chugach Electric approval to buy a portion of the Cook Inlet gas field from ConocoPhillips about a year and a half ago. A pretty scathing dissent was issued by Commissioner McAlpine saying the late filing and the ensuing process the utilities engaged in was "abhorrent." He was concerned that it impacted the decision in that case. He asked if that filing timeframe gave her pause in retrospect.

MS. WILSON answered that the whole panel of five commissioners paused when they were asked to make a decision in such a brief period of time, a matter of six to eight weeks. They did the best they could with the information. The reasons had to do with tax and the availability of tax credits. A majority of the commissioners took everything into account and decided that it was acceptable, though not desirable, to make such a short-notice decision.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI said he appreciated her response. It was a tough situation. He asked how she might look at future consolidation in the Railbelt between utilities, something the RCA has suggested in the past.

MS. WILSON answered the RCA submitted a report to the legislature on Railbelt utilities that also made recommendations and one consolidation may come before them soon depending on the outcome of the upcoming municipal election. They will handle it in the same way they handle all transfers of certificates, which is an application will be filed; it will be noticed to the public. The RCA will take public comment and then decide whether to have a public hearing on it. They will gather all the information whether it's hearing information or comment information and make their decision.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked what the consensus on consolidation was in the RCA report.

MS. WILSON recalled there were five recommendations. They did a study and hired a consultant and found that consolidation is a good idea. It would cut down on litigation amongst the Railbelt utilities of which there have been quite a lot.

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CHAIR GIESSEL thanked her and opened public comment on both appointees. Finding no comments, she closed public testimony.

CHAIR GIESSEL thanked both appointees for their service and said in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Resources Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Big Game Commercial Services Board, Adam Trombley, term expires 3/1/2022 and Regulatory Commission of Alaska, Janis Wilson, term expires 3/1/2024. This does not reflect an intent by any of the members to vote for or against the confirmation of the individuals during any further sessions.

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CHAIR GIESSEL adjourned the Senate Resources Committee meeting at 3:47 p.m.