

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 26, 2019

8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Sara Hannan, Co-Chair
Representative Matt Claman
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Sharon Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Josh Revak

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 72

"An Act establishing the month of February as Black History Month."

- HEARD & HELD

PRESENTATION(S): DIVISION OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS
DATABASE

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 72

SHORT TITLE: BLACK HISTORY MONTH

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STORY

02/25/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/25/19	(H)	CRA
03/26/19	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 72.

CAITLYN ELLIS, Staff
Representative Andi Story
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered information and answered questions during the hearing on HB 72, on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor.

SALLY DONALDSON
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 72.

CELESTE HODGE GROWDEN
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 72.

SHERRY PATTERSON
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 72.

SANDRA MOLLER, Director
Division of Community & Regional Affairs (DCRA)
Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a PowerPoint presentation on DCRA.

JADE BICKMORE, Program Manager
Research & Analysis
Division of Community & Regional Affairs (DCRA)
Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a tutorial on using DCRA's Community Database Online to access community information.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SARA HANNAN called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Representatives Claman, Kreiss-Tomkins, Thompson, Drummond, and Hannan were present at the call to order. Representative Jackson arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 72-BLACK HISTORY MONTH

8:01:17 AM

CO-CHAIR HANNAN announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 72, "An Act establishing the month of February as Black History Month."

8:01:40 AM

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, introduced HB 72. She paraphrased from the first three paragraphs of the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 72 establishes February as Black History Month. It celebrates and honors the contributions African-Americans have made to Alaska and the United States.

In recent years, the legislature has offered many resolutions recognizing Black History Month for each individual year. HB 72 and its companion, SB 40, would enshrine the recognition into statute. With passage of HB 72, Alaska joins other states and nations that have adopted Black History Month.

HB 72 celebrates the many accomplishments, both recognized and forgotten, of African-Americans and their contributions to Alaskan communities. The recognition of Black History Month is necessary to acknowledge and promote the continued work of African-Americans who have contributed to Alaska's workforce, economic development, culture, and community.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said HB 72 would ensure that Alaskans learn about people who have contributed to the state, including Bettye Davis, who was the first African-American woman elected to the Senate in 2000. Former Senator Davis also served as chair of the state Board of Education and Early Development and in the Alaska House of Representatives from 1991-1996. Representative Story relayed that before former Senator Davis started a career in government, she was a social worker, mentor, and made life better for children across the state.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY talked about attorney and scholar, Mahala Ashley Dickerson, who was Alaska's first African-American attorney and, in 1983, the first African-American to be elected president of a national association of women lawyers. In 1959

Ms. Dickerson established a law practice in Anchorage, Alaska, and one of her most notable cases was an equal pay lawsuit filed on behalf of a female professor at the University of Alaska. Representative Story said, "It was one of the first cases representing women professors at an American university whose salaries were lower than their male counterparts." She said Ms. Dickerson lost the case, but it was won upon appeal in 1975.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY concluded, "I believe this bill promotes cross-cultural understanding and honors the cultural diversity in our communities and our state." She asked committee members to join her in support of HB 72.

[8:04:15 AM](#)

CAITLYN ELLIS, Staff, Representative Andi Story, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor of HB 72, offered a brief history related to Black History Week. She said it was created in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson, in Washington, D.C., and called "Negro History Week." Mr. Woodson chose the second week in February to correlate this recognition with the celebration of the births of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas. Ms. Ellis quoted an article by Lonnie Bunch that lists two reasons for the establishment of Negro History Week, as follows:

One was to use history to prove to White America that Blacks have played important roles in the creation of America and thereby deserve to be treated equally as citizens. In essence, Woodson, by celebrating the heroic Black figure - be they inventors, entertainers, soldiers - hoped to prove our worth, and by proving our worth, he believed that equality would soon follow. His other goal was to increase the visibility of Black life in history at a time when few newspapers, books, and universities took notice of the Black community, except to dwell upon the negative. Ultimately, Woodson believed Negro History Week, which became Black History Month in 1976, would be a vehicle for racial transformation forever.

... Hopefully a renewed Black History Month can focus attention on the importance of preserving African-American culture.

MS. ELLIS noted that in Alaska communities have their own ways of celebrating Black History Month, including gospel choir

performances in Juneau and Fairbanks, and this year in Anchorage, the first Bettye Davis African-American Summit was held.

MS. ELLIS pointed out that many resolutions have been brought forward over the years recognizing Black History Month. Each resolution was specific to a particular year. In order to establish Black History Month in perpetuity, it must be done statutorily, through a bill such as HB 72.

[8:07:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON said Black History Month is celebrated nationally and in Alaska. She asked what HB 72 would offer that does not already exist.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY clarified that by putting Black History Month in statute, the legislature would not have to bring it up each year as must be done with a resolution. She said this would promote planning and cultural understanding. She said, "Obviously it's one month that it's designated, but it's intertwined through all the months of the year." She said there is a zero fiscal note; the state would not put money into the events but would "continue to rely on communities to celebrate ... as they do."

[8:08:31 AM](#)

MS. ELLIS noted that on line 5 of the proposed legislation, the word "may" is used to indicate that the celebration of Black History Month would not be mandated. She said whereas in the past Black History Month was brought forward through resolutions, perhaps every year or sporadically, under HB 72, it would be in statute for the first time.

[8:09:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN opened public testimony on HB 72.

[8:09:42 AM](#)

SALLY DONALDSON testified in support of HB 72. She said she worked in the Juneau School District for 23 years, and prior to that in North Carolina and Georgia. She said Black History Month has been important in schools and in the community. She opined that having Black History Month placed in statute would be well-deserved by many African-Americans who have contributed

and continue to contribute to Alaska's history. She said she liked what Representative Story stated about the celebration of many accomplishments, both those recognized and those forgotten. Ms. Donaldson indicated that putting Black History Month under statute would emphasize its importance. She said although no appropriation of funds would be required under HB 72, its value would be priceless, because "Alaskans of all ages in schools and communities will recognize the month of February as Black History Month, as written in the statute."

8:11:15 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked whether Ms. Donaldson was saying that currently in schools Black History Month was not being recognized.

MS. DONALDSON answered no, but putting it in statute "would make a statement that our state recognizes this as a month and wants to set aside the entire month of February." She said she knows that schools are celebrating Martin Luther King Day, as well as Black History Month in February.

8:12:23 AM

CELESTE HODGE GROWDEN testified in support of HB 72. She said she served as president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for nearly a decade in the 1980s, and most recently, she has served as president of the Silo Community Development, Inc., which she described as "a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that empowers youth, minorities, and the disadvantaged to improve lives." She continued:

The organization's goal is to enhance the quality of life of those less fortunate by providing transitional assistance, economical and educational opportunity, job search support, health education, prevention and wellness programs, and youth mentorship. The major emphasis of SCDI is to develop and promote programs that advance minorities, youth, and the disadvantaged in health, education, justice, and economic development.

MS. HODGE GROWDEN said she is proud to state that SCDI organized the first Bettye Davis African-American Summit: "Moving towards hope together." She said the organization raised money from the community. Further, SCDI received a grant to support its

"Justice Project," which she described as "a storytelling effort designed to share achievements and contributions of African-American trailblazers in Alaska through a series of vignettes." There have been requests for the vignettes to be shown in schools.

MS. HODGE GROWDEN admitted that Black History Month is recognized in public schools but is limited. For example, when she was in school, she learned about Martin Luther King and slavery during Black History Month. This year, she said, local trailblazers were recognized, such as Bettye Davis, Alonzo Patterson, Blanche Louise Preston McSmith, and Mahala Ashley Dickerson. Ms. Hodge Growden urged passage of HB 72, because "we need it in order to not only recognize Black History Month but to keep it alive and to know locally our trailblazers."

[8:15:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON remarked that she considers herself a trailblazer but had not received an invitation to this event. She emphasized, "We all need to be recognized, and until the internal division is healed, we can't expect legislation to do that work."

MS. HODGE GROWDEN explained that the aforementioned individuals were recognized through a process opened by SCDI wherein people could nominate those individuals that they wanted recognized. She expressed hope that another grant would be received from the Alaska Community Foundation, and someone may submit Representative Jackson's name for consideration.

[8:16:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked Ms. Hodge Growden if she had sent out an official invitation.

MS. HODGE GROWDEN responded that the community was invited through a post on Facebook.

[8:17:28 AM](#)

SHERRY PATTERSON opined that it is important to "enshrine Black History Month" in statute. She said her heart breaks each February when "we have to strive to sponsor events here in the capital city," though she indicated those events are "eventually attended and supported by the community." She stated, "Unless something happens in our hearts, it won't go too much further

than it already has." Ms. Patterson said she loves that she has family members who are honored during Black History Month. She stated her support and appreciation of HB 72.

[8:19:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN recollected that the aforementioned Ms. McSmith, in Anchorage, had been friends with Rosa Parks. She asked Ms. Patterson if her recollection is correct.

MS. PATTERSON offered her understanding that was correct. She said she knew Ms. McSmith and called her a force in Alaska that should be recognized.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN indicated that the connection between Rosa Parks and Ms. McSmith reminded her how small the world is.

[8:20:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN closed public testimony on HB 72.

[8:20:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON indicated that she had gone to an event where Ms. Patterson sang. She exclaimed, "This lady can sing your hearts into this statutory change." She stated that the proposed bill is appreciated, "but truth and light need to be shined on the whole situation, right?" Using the permanent fund dividend (PFD) as an example, she noted that just because something is put in statute, does not mean it cannot be taken away. She emphasized the need "to look at the whole picture." She concluded, "Thank you all for all of your work and for your great intention in changing the heart of Alaska."

[8:22:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN announced that HB 72 was held over.

[8:22:34 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:22 a.m. to 8:28 a.m.

PRESENTATION(S) : DIVISION OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS
DATABASE

[8:28:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN announced that the final order of business would be the presentation on the Division of Community and Regional Affairs database.

[8:28:48 AM](#)

SANDRA MOLLER, Director, Division of Community & Regional Affairs (DCRA), Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED), gave a PowerPoint presentation on DCRA. She began with slide 2, "Community and Regional Affairs," and brought attention to the mission statement: "Helping Alaska's communities build sustainable economies and a means of self-governance." She mentioned Article X, Section 14 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska, which, on slide 2, read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

An agency shall be established by law in the executive branch of the state government to advise and assist local governments. It shall review their activities, collect and publish local government information, and perform other duties prescribed by law.

MS. MOLLER explained that she had "highlighted" the phrase "collect and publish" because that would be the focus of her presentation. She said the division has 54 employees and collects and produces the community database through the division's Research and Analysis Section. As shown on slide 3, Ms. Moller listed the other functions of the division, which are: the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Planning and Land Management; the Local Government Assistance Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program; the Office of the State Assessor; the Local Boundary Commission; the Community Aid and Accountability Grants; the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council; and Serve Alaska.

[8:30:52 AM](#)

MS. MOLLER directed attention to slide 4, titled "What is the CDO?" [Community Database Online]. She explained that the CDO provides useful information for those new to a community. Previously it was a mapping program used for infrastructure; it showed aerial mapping, utilities, types of government, and local representatives. It evolved into online usage to put maps into tables and provide a variety of data that can be downloaded. She said the CDO provides community resource information and economic indicators. A person can print reports. She said Jade Bickmore's part of the presentation would guide the committee

members through the online data. She said it is possible to import data into maps for geographical information.

MS. MOLLER moved on to slide 5, titled "Sample queries." She said this gives an idea of the types of answers that can be sourced from the database. She recollected that the division had conducted a survey in 2017 to discern the interest of the online resource users. The division will conduct another survey in the future in order to stay current with what people want from the CDO.

[8:33:48 AM](#)

MS. MOLLER directed attention to slide 6, titled "Future applications." She said the slide shows how the division is trying to modernize its collection by adding: economic metrics to attract investment in the state; Alaska natural resource data; and additional community utility infrastructure. She emphasized the division's willingness to hear suggestions from users.

[8:34:48 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked who the primary users of the CDO are.

MS. MOLLER answered mostly state and regional entities looking at how they can work with a community. She expressed hope that the division can expand its user base. Part of the reason for taking part in the presentation today, she said, is to get the word out about the resource.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked how often the division receives queries from private sector businesses.

[8:35:52 AM](#)

JADE BICKMORE, Program Manager, Research & Analysis, Division of Community & Regional Affairs (DCRA), Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED), answered that DCRA gets a lot of inquiries, many from researchers. The CDO system allows users to download the data and "look at it any way they want." She said a lot of businesses and grantees inquire as to areas and contacts in communities.

MS. BICKMORE began to show, live online, how anyone can access information via the division's CDO. She started by showing the "main page" and links to the division home page. She next

showed a metadata page, which shows the source of the data, with direct links to agencies. Ms. Bickmore illustrated an important tool, called "How To." She said it describes the features and icons and how to find data. She said a user can download all the data or filter the data to specific communities. She said this is a totally new system. In response to a question from Co-Chair Hannan, she relayed that the system came online November 27, [2018]. She noted that the division is "constantly evolving and adding new data," which is something the old system did not allow. She explained that the old system would override old data with new, whereas the new system allows historical information to remain, which allows users to look at trends and do research.

[8:39:56 AM](#)

MS. BICKMORE showed a "What's New" tab, by which a user can access the most recently added information through links. She recommended checking the tab on a regular basis. She recommended using browsers Chrome or Firefox, because she said the CDO does not work as well with Internet Explorer.

MS. BICKMORE displayed a highlighted area showing the organized boroughs and communities throughout Alaska. A user can look at a particular community and the information pertaining to that community, including incorporation date, pronunciation of name, history, geographic and climate information, and demographics. She showed how a user can "scroll in" to look at the details. She showed population by race, by age, by sex - all of the information sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau. She said someone inquired as to who was responsible for plowing a certain road, and the CDO provided that information. Ms. Bickmore showed how to find out about schools; she mentioned that historical data was still to come.

[8:45:11 AM](#)

MS. BICKMORE said a user can find out information on a wealth of topics, including: representatives; alcohol restrictions; taxes; household income; poverty; general services; healthcare facilities; utilities; water source; affiliation with ANCSA; community contacts; and tribal information. She said the website shows the business licenses for those communities with populations fewer than 2,500, and there is a "do-your-own" search for businesses in larger communities.

[8:47:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON asked if the web site lists the sources of the taxes.

MS. BICKMORE answered yes. She mentioned "Alaska taxable 2018," and she said a user can search through a story map or look at the data for a spreadsheet. She said she would demonstrate. She pointed out that when a user clicks on a certain community name, that community will be highlighted on a map to show its location. Also available to view are community photos, community plans, profile maps, and financial documents.

8:49:28 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked whether clicking a dot on a map will bring up the information about that area.

MS. BICKMORE answered yes and offered further details about the interactivity of the map. She then continued, showing a navigation bar, on which is the aforementioned "What's New?" and "Interactive Applications." Regarding the latter, she explained that the division has designed applications ("apps") specific to a given topic, but she emphasized this is just one way of getting information on topics. She showed tables pulled down and related to other agencies and said a user can download the data. People can send a survey to DCRA requesting certain data, and the division will respond. She said there is also a GIF link, which is for other state agencies that have geographic information system (GIS); this allows the division to pull that information from those agencies into its web site.

8:52:05 AM

MS. BICKMORE next showed the community contact directory. She mentioned the division is working on video tutorials. She talked about the various topics that can be found in the directory, including communities, schools, and Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs). She pointed to an attribute table and reiterated that the information from the maps can be downloaded. She said a user can filter and "add expressions" as a means of focusing on information for a particular community, for example. In response to a question from Co-Chair Hannan, she indicated that "expressions" related to fields. She illustrated this by showing various columns and demonstrating a search related to one community. She stated, "As you move around in the map, the map and the data below will change, depending on where you are." Under options, a user can "export to CSB," which will export

either all the data or the data the user has filtered. She offered further demonstration. She said labels can be made for all the division's datasets.

[8:56:47 AM](#)

MS. BICKMORE talked about story maps, a community overview of a story map, and information that shows whether a committee is unincorporated. Some communities have photos, while the division is working on getting good photos for others. The division does not have as much data on the unincorporated cities; therefore, there is less information on those maps. In response to Co-Chair Hannan and Representative Thompson, Ms. Bickmore mentioned the term "Census-designated place" (CDP), and she said the information the division gets from unincorporated cities, such as population, is important in terms grants related to those communities. As more communities become incorporated, "it is nice to have that information there," she stated.

[8:59:28 AM](#)

MS. BICKMORE stated that Alaska is different from other states, because it does not have counties. The state has a lot of unincorporated boroughs, she noted. She said it made sense to have story maps that showed U.S. Census areas and boroughs and "information that is related to that and not so much of a community." She illustrated by showing the Fairbanks North Star Borough. She mentioned square miles, and then she listed the CDPs. She explained what was shown related to demographics on the borough level rather than the city level. She showed school information, economics, types of taxes, and poverty level. She said some [CDPs] have more information than others do. In response to Co-Chair Hannan and Representative Thompson, she said sales tax information could be broken down in a variety of ways.

[9:04:25 AM](#)

MS. BICKMORE next showed the committee the interactive maps, which are predefined story maps and apps in which the division has already pulled information. She said the division had just posted the Alaska Field Price Report. She explained that the division looks at the field prices in 100 communities annually. She said this used to be published as "a regular report" but is now more interactive, and people are enjoying the new format. She illustrated how fuel gets to communities and the struggles involved; transportation methods; and gasoline prices in the

state. She showed another map that changed color to reflect gas prices over the years. She highlighted price comparisons to national prices. She showed heating fuel prices. She called Anchorage the "donut hole" on the map, as well as the North Slope Borough, because there is no data from those places. She explained that is because the North Slope Borough has subsidized heating. She said any of the associated maps will take the user via links to the sources of the information.

[9:09:00 AM](#)

MS. BICKMORE talked about a web page to find datasets for download. She demonstrated by looking up information on transportation in Alaska, from data to spreadsheet. She showed how the map changes based on filters. She then showed a feature wherein users can build their own map by deciding which information they want. She said this feature is tied into information from the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF). She explained that currently DCRA downloads the information from other agencies, but once those other agencies use the same system, then that won't be necessary. She showed how to put population information on the map. She indicated three dots to the right and said there is access to an attribute table. A person can utilize this by choosing data and then seeing it on the map. The data can also be exported to a spreadsheet.

[9:14:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON asked how much of the data is supplied by communities and how much is put in by the division. He inquired about the number of staff in the division that works on this project.

MS. BICKMORE answered that she has a total of 5 people in her group. She said they were able to do this project with little information technology (IT) support. She said the tool has opened the ability to look at data and compare information from past years. She said the old system was time-consuming and required all time spent just in updating. She imparted that anything someone wants to research can be found, as long as the information is public and tied to community. She offered examples.

[9:16:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked whose idea this was and how long it took to create.

MS. BICKMORE relayed that this was not her idea but that of her predecessor. She indicated that the division was looking to replace a failing system and put out for bid, and the cost just to replace the existing system would have been over half a million dollars. The division had neither the money nor the IT resources, so it looked for other options. The division already had an Esri tool to create many of the maps. The division worked with Esri. In 2017, the division created the Alaska Taxable and the RUBA report and began looking at how it could "display that information in this format." Once that was successful, the division moved to "this new forum," which she said is more of a data warehouse rather than database. She said the division updates the data as a dataset rather than as "a single line" for most of its data. She said this system has made it possible to "delve into areas we've never had to opportunity to."

MS. BICKMORE introduced her staff in the room: Emma Hatcher, Esri Research Analyst; Kevin Prestegard, Research Analyst; Eric Caldwell; George Plumley, GIS Analyst; and Grace Beaujean, Research Analyst.

[9:19:51 AM](#)

MS. MOLLER interjected that this group has won awards for this cutting-edge application.

[9:20:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN suggested there may be a way "to patent the intellectual property of a collective."

[9:20:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS asked if contracting with Esri was a "one-off" contract entered into by DCCED or if the division piggy-backed on "something" already in existence within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

MS. BICKMORE answered that DCCED already had a license, and the division added to that. It has a server where it posts the data, and then it posts that data online. She said the division also gets credit, which it can use for additional training and support [from] Esri. She explained that Esri helped the

division get to the next level in terms of customizations. In response to a follow-up question, she said the most current license was \$80,000, and it gives more credit to work one-on-one with developers. She talked about automating the process so that multiple community story maps could be created. She explained that all the data was on separate tables, so "it was just a matter of matching up the different communities." She expressed pride at her group's ability to "push the envelope" to make a better product.

[9:23:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND opined that the database is wonderful, with consistent access across a variety of information. She asked if Alaska is the only state that uses something like this.

MS. BICKMORE confirmed that Alaska is unique in having this tool. She said the Esri software is geo-spatial software, and she mentioned other states have more photos and information readily available. She said the division does not have that in Alaska, which is a huge state with a vast number of areas, climates, and communities. She said the tool allows a user to look at those things in ways he/she could never have done before. She offered examples wherein information is shown regarding communities and that may lead to solving potential problems.

[9:25:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN queried whether other research entities in Alaska, such as Legislative Legal and Research Services, have been made aware of the tool provided by DCRA.

[9:26:25 AM](#)

MS. MOLLER said this is something the division is trying to promote, for example, through presentations like this one. The division is looking at making the foundation strong, and then it will add economic data, as well as other data. She said the division has spoken with the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) about its personal consumption expenditure (PCE) data and considering how to incorporate it. She said AEA has a separate platform that it uses. She indicated that the division is "on the beginning parts of letting people know that this is up and going." She said that is why the division welcomes feedback.

MS. BICKMORE added that the division has been working with other agencies and asked some of them to test out the product through presentations followed by feedback. She said the division is doing weekly presentations and has an hour-long session to teach people how to build their own maps. She said several agencies and researchers have attended. She said the division would like to extend that up into the Anchorage area.

[9:28:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked about access to the product.

MS. BICKMORE showed the committee how to access the community database online.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON congratulated the team who worked on making this data available. She said she has visited the web page in the past and it is apparent much has been added since then.

[9:29:46 AM](#)

MS. BICKMORE continued with demonstration of the website. She drew attention to "Alaska Taxable 2018." She said the old system took a long time to navigate. She said the new product was highlighted in Esri Magazine and won an award. She scrolled down the screen to show: taxation in Alaska; legends of unified and non-unified communities; various classifications of municipality; tax determination for second-class cities; which communities have taxes, and which have not; borough tax information; tax revenues; city revenues; and municipalities reporting tax revenue or not.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN suggested Ms. Bickmore show the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

MS. BICKMORE demonstrated looking at the information for the borough and how to filter for specific information for the city. In response to Co-Chair Hannan and Representative Thompson, she related statistics related to bed tax, tobacco tax, and marijuana tax.

[9:37:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON thanked the department on an incredible job being done with "a small crew."

[9:38:41 AM](#)

MS. MOLLER concluded that the department is tasked to get this data and works hard to make it presentable and usable. She encouraged committee members to let her know if there is missing data they would like to see added.

[9:39:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND expressed appreciation for the information presented.

[9:39:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN thanked the presenters and staff for their work in developing the community database online and for reaching out to the committee for the opportunity to present the information. She stated, "I'm looking forward to learning more and helping improve Alaska's policy by using data-informed decision-making."

[9:40:25 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.