

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

May 7, 2019

8:02 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
Representative Josh Revak

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19

Urging the United States Congress to fully fund the United States Census Bureau for the 2020 Census; urging the governor to prioritize an accurate count for the 2020 Census; and urging local governments to establish local complete count commissions.

- MOVED CSHJR 19 (TRB) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 69

"An Act repealing the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 19

SHORT TITLE: SUPPORT 2020 DECENNIAL CENSUS

SPONSOR(s): TRIBAL AFFAIRS

04/24/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/24/19	(H)	TRB, CRA
04/25/19	(H)	TRB AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/25/19	(H)	Moved CSHJR 19 (TRB) Out of Committee
04/25/19	(H)	MINUTE (TRB)
04/26/19	(H)	TRB RPT CS (TRB) 6DP

04/26/19 (H) DP: VANCE, ORTIZ, LINCOLN, KOPP,
TALERICO, ZULKOSKY
05/07/19 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 69

SHORT TITLE: REPEAL AK PUBLIC BROADCASTING COMM.

SPONSOR(s): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

02/20/19 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/20/19 (H) CRA, STA, FIN
05/07/19 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE TIFFANY ZULKOSKY

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HJR 19.

ELIZABETH MEDICINE CROW, President/CEO

First Alaskans Institute

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HJR 19.

MIKE WALSH, Ph.D., Vice President

Public Policy

Foraker Group; Staff Support

Alaska Census Working Group

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HJR 19.

MARY DAVID

Nome, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified about the importance of the Census in her region during the hearing on HJR 19.

GRACE SINGH, Staff

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HJR 119, on behalf of Representative Zulkosky, prime sponsor.

KELLY TSHIBAKA, Commissioner

Department of Administration

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 69.

KELLY HANKE
Legislative Liaison
Department of Administration
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Read informational documentation from the department and gave a PowerPoint related to the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission (APBC) during the hearing on HB 69.

MOLLIE KABLER, Executive Director
Alaska Public Broadcasting, Inc.
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 69.

RACHEL LORD
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

MIKE COONS, President
Greater Alaska Chapter
Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC)
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 69.

CARL BERGER
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

BILL TREMBLAY, President
KFSK Public Radio Board
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

RUSSELL LYMAN
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

REBECCA MEIRS
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69

CHARLIE WILBER
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

KARY BIRDSALL, Member
Board of Directors

KTNA Radio

Talkeetna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

FRANK KELTY, Mayor

City of Unalaska

Unalaska, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

LIN DAVIS

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

MAUREEN LONGWORTH, M.D.

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

MARK SPRINGER

Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

HANS JAMES

Fort Yukon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 69.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SARA HANNAN called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Representatives Revak, Thompson, Drummond, and Hannan were present at the call to order. Representatives Claman, Kreiss-Tomkins, and Jackson arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HJR 19-SUPPORT 2020 DECENNIAL CENSUS

[8:03:18 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19, Urging the United States Congress to fully fund the United States Census Bureau for the 2020 Census; urging the governor to prioritize an accurate count for the 2020 Census; and urging local governments to establish local complete count commissions. [Before the committee was CSHJR 19(TRB).]

8:03:52 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TIFFANY ZULKOSKY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HJR 19. She stated that the 2020 Census is vital to Alaska. Required under Article I, Section II of the Constitution of the United States, the goal of the Census is to count every resident in the U.S. at their residence "as a basis for sharing resources and determining political representation." She continued as follows:

Dependent on federally established formulas tied to Census data, Alaska receives \$3.2 billion in federal funding each year across 70 programs. In a time of state and local budget constraints, maintaining the amount of federal investment is crucial to Alaska's economies, communities, and programs. Organizations across public, private, and nonprofit sectors rely on funding allocations determined by the Census information, illustrating the importance of accurate account data. ... [Each] uncounted individual results in a loss of roughly \$3,000 of federal funding for Alaska per year, equivalent to a loss of \$30,000 of federal funding for Alaska over a 10-year period, for every person who is not counted. This results in reduced essential services, like health, housing, road repairs, and education. It compounds harm to local and state budget gaps, and it results in improper enforcement in voting in civil rights laws. For these reasons, it is imperative Census data is accurate and we have done everything that we can to ensure Alaskans, communities, and the state ... [are] ready to be counted.

In partnership with the Alaska Census Working Group, a public/private partnership of local organizations in our state, the [House] Special Committee on Tribal Affairs sponsored HJR 19 to highlight the importance of the decennial Census. The resolution also urges the federal delegation to fully fund the Census [and] encourages the state to prioritize outreach, to ensure the accuracy of data, and invite local governments to engage in the count by establishing local complete count commissions. With significant geographic, language, and connectivity barriers, Alaska is considered one of the most difficult states to count in the country.

8:06:45 AM

The difficulty of counting Alaska is even greater in the 2020 Census with the borough's decision to eliminate three things: the notification mailing to [United States Postal Service mailboxes] ("P.O. Boxes"), translation support for materials into Native languages, and transitioning to a mostly online response system. With the Census Bureau launching its count in my home district in Toksook Bay, on January 21, 2020, it is vital that Alaska's leadership, at all levels of government and organizations across the state, prioritize an accurate count before starting conversations about how the data will be used.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY, in conclusion, related that HJR 19 had been unanimously moved out of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs.

8:08:11 AM

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY added that her work on the issue has increased her awareness of its importance.

8:09:09 AM

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked the sponsor if she was aware of any discussions that had been held in terms of the capital budget and an appropriation to support local Census committees.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY offered her understanding that Governor Mike Dunleavy put in resources for "the Census work following the count," but she is not aware of any additional resources designated "to help develop community readiness around the Census."

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked Representative Zulkosky how the legislature could [help the state prepare for the Census] other than passing a resolution.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY deferred to invited testifiers to answer that question. She mentioned the confidentiality aspect of Census data gathering and fines resulting from breaching that confidentiality. She said the proposed joint resolution is important, because it would educate Alaskans on how Census information is used to secure resources that support communities.

[8:12:17 AM](#)

ELIZABETH MEDICINE CROW, President/CEO, First Alaskans Institute, by way of introduction, gave the names of her grandparents and parents, as well as her Native affiliation. She said the institute is a statewide, nonprofit organization whose vision is "progress for the next 10,000 years." She remarked upon the combined strengths of Native and non-Native Alaskans and all entities, and she emphasized the importance of counting all Alaskans in the Census. She said Alaska takes in about \$3.2 billion over the ten years between each Census, which calculates to approximately \$31,000 per person annually. She said a household with two parents, a grandparent, and three children, [which does not participate in the Census], would result in a loss of \$186,000 annually, which equals almost \$2 million in a 10-year period. She said these figures are significant when considering the amount of money in the state's budget that may be "a lifesaving amount of money" for programs and services. She referred to an article in The Juneau Empire, in which the author wrote that every 1 percent - or 7,500 people - who don't respond to the Census results in a loss to the state of approximately \$22 million annually. She said the nonresponse rate of the 2010 Census was 36 percent, which equated to \$798.93 million dollars per year for a total of nearly \$8 billion lost over the course of 10 years.

[8:17:58 AM](#)

MS. MEDICINE CROW said in her community of Kake, Alaska, a break in the waterline resulted in half the community without water, and federal funding would be necessary to get it fixed, and those federal funds are allocated [as a result of] Census information. She emphasized that accurate Census counts are imperative for education funding and housing dollars. She talked about the importance of listing the head of household as Alaska Native in mixed race households, because that helps to ensure that federal funding connected with tribal governments is allocated. She said for Alaska Natives, "those are actually political rights, not racial rights." She explained that she came before the committee on behalf of First Alaskans Institute, which ensures that "our community is at the table and able to participate in decision-making that's impacting our community," to share "how these things really affect us on the ground and how it also affects our neighbors all the way across the state of Alaska."

[8:21:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked for clarification regarding "the numbers" related to the Census in Alaska.

MS. MEDICINE CROW mentioned Eddie Hunsinger, with the State of Alaska. She said the U.S. Census Bureau has shared data about the impact [of the Census] on the states. She relayed that the George Washington University has published a series of data points on the impact on Alaska specifically, and that is the source of the aforementioned \$3.2 billion figure. She recollected that that number includes 55 federal programs whose funding allocations are to Alaska annually. She noted that Mike Walsh was available to testify and could add further illumination regarding the statistics.

[8:22:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN, in response to a question from Representative Jackson regarding a fiscal note, confirmed there is no money being sought through HJR 19.

[8:23:40 AM](#)

MS. MEDICINE CROW said the Census is busy setting up complete count committees (CCCs) across Alaska, and anyone interested could form a committee. She stated that "the Census has no money"; therefore, HJR 19 urges Alaska's delegation to fight for full funding in Washington, D.C., as well as urges the Alaska State Legislature to "get behind that complete count committee process." She said there is opportunity for the Census Bureau, the state, and tribes to partner.

[8:24:59 AM](#)

MIKE WALSH, Ph.D., Vice President, Public Policy, Foraker Group; Staff Support, Alaska Census Working Group, said he and Laurie Wolf testified before the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs two weeks ago regarding Census 2020. He reminded committee members that the Foraker Group serves as the state nonprofit association for Alaska and the nonprofit capacity-building organization for nonprofits across the state. He said the Foraker Group gives voice to nonpartisan public policy issues that affect Alaska's nonprofit sector, which directly employs approximately 44,000 people, who provide "services that touch, virtually, every Alaskan, every day." He said nonprofits organizations rely on Census data to do their work. He said it

is the Foraker Group's public policy and focus to ensure every Alaskan is counted, which brings him before the committee to speak in support of HJR 19. He stated, "We get one chance every 10 years to get this right, and HJR 19 will certainly help with that."

DR. WALSH mentioned some of the people who had testified during the aforementioned House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs hearing on HJR 19, including Mr. Hunsinger, a state demographer, and others affiliated with the Alaska Census Working Group. They spoke on the importance of having a complete and accurate Census 2020 in Alaska and how the \$3.2 billion in federal funds are allocated to dozens of federal programs based on Census data. Also discussed at that meeting were specific enumeration issues facing Alaska, especially those communities in rural Alaska that are the most difficult to count. He stated, "We were really pleased to be able to include that figure - about \$3.2 billion - in our 2018 report on the economic impact of the nonprofit sector on Alaska's economy."

[8:28:19 AM](#)

DR. WALSH said no community in the state goes untouched by the federal programs that operate with Census-driven funding. He said that data is used to determine allocations for roads, marine transportation, water, wastewater systems, housing programs, education, substance abuse prevention and treatment, among others. He said the working group is pleased that HJR 19 addresses the importance of participation in the 2020 Census in all levels of government. He said the group believes that HJR 19 would support the growing efforts within Alaska to ensure that complete and accurate count and appreciates the language within the proposed joint resolution that encourages active participation and coordination by the state. He said the group also supports the language encouraging local governments establishing CCCs. He echoed Ms. Medicine Crow's statement that creating CCCs is an excellent way for tribes and local governments to effectively coordinate and cooperate with the U.S. Census Bureau. Local CCCs can create trust in residents and educate them as to why the Census matters. He said the working group and the Foraker Group have found Alaska's congressional delegation to be 100 percent supportive of the efforts aimed at counting all Alaskans, including the "pursuit of full and adequate funding."

[8:30:23 AM](#)

DR. WALSH addressed previously posed questions. He indicated that Governor Dunleavy had removed money from his proposed budget that had been included in former Governor Bill Walker's budget, and he offered his understanding that the Senate Finance Committee "put forward a \$250,000 line item to support Census activities on behalf of the state." In terms of what could be done to support the work of the Census, he named several things, including that legislators could, with each e-mail, Facebook post, and newsletter, make the public aware of the upcoming Census and the importance of it in terms of funding. He said some legislators have said they will go door to door to spread the word. Other ways to lend support, he suggested, include notice in state correspondence, publications, and applications, including the permanent fund dividend (PFD) application. Mr. Walsh noted that the Alaska Census Working Group has been ramping up its activities in terms of rural outreach to those communities where it is most difficult to get accurate counts. The campaign will include social media, web sites, public radio advertising, and a PO Box outreach campaign.

[8:33:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND, regarding the mentioned of the \$250,000 line item, asked which budget contained it and what the current status is.

DR. WALSH offered his understanding that the funds were included in the Senate Finance Committee's proposed operating budget. He said he does not know the current status, but hoped it would remain. In response to follow-up questions, he reiterated that the funds had originally been in Governor Walker's budget, and said there have been a couple of studies highlighting the importance of state support of Census activities. He said approximately \$1.5 million would be adequate for Census funding in Alaska; therefore, \$250,000 is "woefully inadequate" but "any number is important ... to ensure a fair and accurate account through those outreach activities." He said the Alaska Census Working Group has put forward a budget of approximately \$690,000 that would target the outreach activity. He said Foraker Group, along with its partner, the Cook Inlet Housing Authority, has put forward well over \$200,000 in in-kind support. He said that "a national funder interested in a fair and accurate count" has given \$175,000. He remarked that other dollars are still needed. He noted that the job of the Census Working Group is to supplement - not supplant - the work of the state.

[8:37:27 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN opened public testimony on HJR 19.

[8:37:50 AM](#)

MARY DAVID emphasized the importance of the Census to a region where the cost of infrastructure is so high. She talked about "the cost benefit of funding efforts on the Census for our state." She relayed that a Bering Straits Region Complete Count Committee has been formed and many volunteers are supporting the Census effort. She said she sees the importance of forming regional complete count committees and applauds the statewide efforts; each region knows what will work best [in supporting the Census]. She said in her region the Internet does not always work well. She noted that homes in the region hold multi-generations, so getting an accurate count through the Census is important.

[8:40:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON noted that the Census has taken place every 10 years "forever," and she questioned whether it was just [the 2010 Census] where Ms. David feels there was "a big undercount."

MS. DAVID answered that there are about 10,000 residents in her region, and that number is increasing; therefore, she believes it is important for an accurate count to occur. In order for that to happen, she said, it is important for individuals to understand the benefits they can receive by partaking in the Census. She talked about the importance of outreach beginning long before the Census takes place. She ventured that [people] may be reticent in giving information to a stranger without knowing why the questions are being asked and how the information will be used. She said the Bering Straits Region Complete Count Committee is encouraging local people to apply for Census jobs, because the people being asked questions will feel more comfortable giving the information to someone from their community.

[8:42:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN closed public testimony on HJR 19.

[8:43:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND echoed Ms. David's remark about the importance of beginning outreach long before Census data collecting begins. She urged that the committee not delay in passing out HJR 19. She indicated that two of Alaska's congressional delegation have expressed encouragement toward receiving resolutions. She said, "If we wait until next year to push this out, it will have no meaning."

[8:44:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN said he supports HJR 19 and thinks it makes sense to move it out of committee after just one hearing. He stressed the importance of Census-related work, especially to rural communities in Alaska.

[8:44:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK asked whether the committee had reached out to the U.S. Census Borough and received a response. He said he is interested "to hear what they have to say about it." He asked the bill sponsor if "this was requested by the delegation."

[AN UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER] from the back of the room, in response to Co-Chair Hannan, said she was not authorized to testify before the committee but would be willing to come to individual offices to speak with Representatives.

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK said he was not asking for the joint resolution to be held; he just wants the U.S. Census Borough to "know what we're doing and is in support."

CO-CHAIR HANNAN noted that representatives from the U.S. Census Borough were present during the joint meeting of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs and the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee two weeks ago; they spoke on the hiring of local Census workers, among other things. She said she does not have an answer regarding whether the joint resolution is in response to a request from Alaska's delegation.

[8:46:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND observed that the sponsor was not available to answer Representative Revak's question, because she was currently chairing the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs. She said [the Census] happens only every 10 years and

there is pressure to get it "done right." She said a resolution simply tells the delegation that the issue is important to "us."

[8:47:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK asked if the joint resolution is aimed at informing the administration that the legislature wants to work with the administration "to augment the Census."

[8:47:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN pointed to the "**BE IT RESOLVED**" portions of HJR 19, which ask to work with the executive branch agencies and the Alaska Census Working Group for the purpose of establishing complete counts and to encourage every municipality [to participate]. Copies of HJR 19 would be sent to the governor, the Alaska Municipal League, and the congressional delegation. She offered her understanding that the federal government is funding the Census but not any outreach efforts prior to the Census; this includes notifications and alerts to communities. She said the state has not "picked that up as an effort." She then noted that translation to Alaska Native languages is not being done. She recollected that the federal government has in the past supplied translation to some indigenous languages, but would not be doing so this time around. Finally, she said the Census would be largely conducted online, and because this is primarily a new method, the complete count commissions are important to getting the word out.

[8:49:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK said he appreciates knowing the intent behind the proposed joint resolution.

[8:49:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON suggested the information Representative Revak is asking for be made available for him to see. She offered her understanding that the federal government "does advertise," and there will be jobs available that pay up to \$31 per hour. She said, "So, if we can ... focus people to check that out - get a job - then they can communicate the languages of their neighbors, as well. [I'm] just leveraging what we have to make sure we get that to count."

[8:51:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND shared that Governor Dunleavy has already appointed 9-10 people to the 2020 Census Alaska Complete Count Commission through Administrative Order 303. The state demographer is one of those people appointed. She said, "I think we need to find out where that funding is, but I don't think that has anything to do with moving this particular resolution out today and getting it through ... the legislature before we adjourn."

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK emphasized that he thinks it is imperative to ensure everyone is counted [in the Census], and he clarified that he wanted to understand the intent of HJR 19. He remarked that if all the documents were distributed to the former joint committee hearing, he had not seen them.

[8:52:41 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN suggested Representative Revak could listen to the recording of the joint meeting. She recalled some of the presenters from that meeting and suggested the handouts could be collected for Representative Revak.

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK assured Co-Chair Hannan that he could obtain the information.

[8:53:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON noted that Representative Zulkosky's staff had returned, thus was available to respond to questions.

[8:53:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK restated his question.

[8:53:58 AM](#)

GRACE SINGH, Staff, Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Zulkosky, prime sponsor of HJR 19, in response to Representative Revak's concerns, noted that the U.S. Census Borough has been involved in the Alaska Complete Census Working Group. She said, "We didn't have them testify, because we would need to call the D.C. office for that, but they are very involved in the working group; they're invested in making sure that we do have a complete count in Alaska." She continued, "On the federal delegation, we made them aware of this resolution; they're excited; they're also invested in ensuring that Alaska has a

complete count, ... especially [for] the federal funding formulas."

[8:55:07 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND moved to report CSHJR 19(TRB) out of committee with individual recommendations [and the accompanying zero fiscal notes]. There being no objection, CSHJR 19(TRB) was reported out of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.

[8:55:52 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:56 a.m. to 8:58 a.m.

HB 69-REPEAL AK PUBLIC BROADCASTING COMM.

[8:58:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 69, "An Act repealing the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission; and providing for an effective date."

[8:59:34 AM](#)

KELLY TSHIBAKA, Commissioner, Department of Administration, introduced HB 69. She said the proposed legislation would bring statutes into alignment with Governor Mike Dunleavy's proposed budget, which would rescind funding for the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission (APBC). She informed the committee that Kelly Hanke would provide a PowerPoint.

[9:01:41 AM](#)

KELLY HANKE, Legislative Liaison, Department of Administration, read "informational documentation" provided by Commissioner Tshibaka [and included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

HB 69
Repeal Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission
Informational Documentation

Across Alaska, 183 rural and village communities receive emergency notifications through a satellite service, Alaska Rural Communications Service (ARCS),

made available via a contract between the Department of Administration (DOA) and AT&T. These notifications include tsunami, extreme weather, and child abduction alerts.¹ The population of the 183 communities is approximately 102,291.

Alaska Public Broadcasting, Inc. (APBI) has managed ARCS and served as the DOA's source of satellite expertise. ARCS also is used to provide a mix of public and commercial television network content.

FY19 funding for the satellite service is \$879,500 which includes the DOA/AT&T contract and some management contracts with APBI. The contract details between the State of Alaska and AT&T is internal to the DOA.

For the 3-year period from 2015 through 2018 there were 29 emergency alerts on ARCS. ARCS alerts are sent statewide, regardless of the location of the emergency:

- 3 Tsunami Warnings
- 4 Amber Alerts
- 22 Extreme Weather Warnings

Total costs for operating the system from 2015 through 2018 was \$3,809,500. On average, each alert cost \$131,362.

Of the 183 communities, 90 have more than one alternative way of receiving emergency alerts (e.g., symmetrical broadband service, fiber optic connectivity, telephony). In addition, APBI has confirmed all 183 communities can receive emergency alerts via telephone; however, widespread distribution of the information would not occur as quickly or effectively.

Included with this document, please find graphs that illustrate the above information.

¹ The emergency alerts that the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission pushes do not include forest fire alerts.

[9:04:19 AM](#)

MS. HANKE began the PowerPoint presentation. She drew attention to slide 2, titled "AKPBC Rural Communities," and noted that the blue area of the circle graph shows the Alaska population [of 736,239, 88 percent] versus the orange area, which shows the rural site community population of 102,291, [12 percent]. Slide 3, titled "AKPBC Rural Sites - Community Size," depicts bar graphs showing that the average community size is 565, the largest is Fort Wainwright, with 7,374, and the smallest is Bettles, with a community size of 13. The median is approximately 237.

[9:05:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND referred back to slide 2, and noted that by adding the two numbers together, it appears that the department is saying Alaska's population is approximately 838,000.

[9:05:48 AM](#)

MS. HANKE answered that the numbers came to her from "another department," and she stated her assumption that "these are probably older numbers." She said DOA worked directly with APBI to get a lot of the information.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she does not think Alaska's population has been declining, and she would like explanation about the numbers that have been provided for the graph on slide 2.

[9:06:54 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND, in response to Co-Chair Hannan clarified that the graph on slide 2 "appears to be representing too many Alaskans."

[9:07:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK suggested that the number in blue may represent the entire population; the maker of the circle graph may have forgotten to subtract the number in orange to get the number in blue.

MS. HANKE said she would have to check to see if that is what happened.

[9:07:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON, referring to slide 3, noted that Fort Wainwright is completely within the City of Fairbanks, thus he questioned what "Wainwright" means in the graph.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked, "Fort Wainwright or the Village of Wainwright?"

MS. HANKE apologized and explained that the graph should read as the Village of Wainwright.

[9:08:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND observed that the graph on slide 3 shows [the Village of] Wainwright as having a population of 7,374. She said a quick "Google search" shows that as of 2010 the village had 556 people. She told Co-Chair Hannan that she has "serious concerns with the numbers in this PowerPoint."

MS. HANKE said, "These numbers actually came directly from AKPBC as to who they service." She said she could check with the commission regarding the numbers.

[9:09:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON surmised the number could include the area around Wainwright.

MS. HANKE answered that could be possible.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN noted that AKPBC would be testifying and could be asked to clarify.

[9:10:00 AM](#)

MS. HANKE moved on to slide 4, titled "Emergency Alerts By Year." She noted the alerts on the bar graph show for years 2015 through 2018. She said the alerts "go out to everybody." To slide 5, "Emergency Alerts by Type," she said the graphs lists tsunami, extreme weather, amber alerts, and total alerts. She offered her understanding that the graph does not include earthquakes. She showed slide 6, titled "AKPBC Rural Community Sites By Population," and she explained the sites listed depict the number of people the commission reaches through its system.

[9:11:44 AM](#)

MOLLY KABLER, Executive Director, Alaska Public Broadcasting, Inc., explained that APBI is a small nonprofit which serves in an executive capacity for APBC. Regarding the system and information just discussed, she explained that Alaska Rural Communications System (ARCS) is not under the purview of APBC; therefore, HB 69 has no direct relevance to ARCS. She said ARCS is a low-powered television system owned by the State of Alaska, and APBI, under contract with the Department of Administration, manages ARCS; however, HB 69 is actually about the APBC, which is, under statute, a group of nine commissioners appointed by the governor that oversee Alaska Public Broadcasting stations. She further clarified that there are 27 licensees of radio and television stations funded through APBC. She explained, "ARCS is something that we collaborate with and share some services, ... but the commission has no oversight of ARCS."

[9:13:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS asked if the commission is responsible for the allocation of resources among public radio stations in Alaska on "an equitable and rational basis."

MS. KABLER answered that is correct.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS offered his understanding that the role the commission plays is similar to the role the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) plays in dispersing resources to domestic violence and sexual assault prevention organizations. In other words, one main entity with the expertise is charged with distributing the resources. He asked Ms. Kabler to describe the process and considerations of the commission.

MS. KABLER responded that the commission spends considerable time learning how the 27 licensees serve their communities, work together, receive federal funding, and how that federal funding may match that which comes through the commission. It is a complex system. She said there is a large annual survey and there are service reports, which help in understanding where the dollars go.

[9:16:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked how Ms. Kabler's clarification may relate to the PowerPoint slides the committee had just viewed.

MS. KABLER answered that she had not seen the slides before, and while some of the community names are that of the ARCS community, she did not compile the information. She continued:

I'm a little surprised, because although we work well together with the commissioner of the Department of Administration and the liaison, Kelly Hanke, this is not under the purview of the commission. So, this isn't particularly relevant to the bill. ... I think this demonstrates the problem ... that there's a lot of detail here, and it's, in my mind, the reason why we have the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission: ... those are nine volunteers from around the state that understand what public broadcasting does in communities and spend their time and energy on that topic. They don't actually work on ARCS for this ARCS information that's been presented by the Department of Administration.

9:18:00 AM

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN mentioned the governor's proposed budget and suggested that without any funding in place it would make sense to eliminate the commission, but with funding still in place, it would "be in our interest to keep the commission running." He asked, "Have I got that right?"

MS. KABLER answered yes. She said at this point both bodies of the legislature have included funding for public broadcasting in their budget proposals and, while HB 69 "would represent a companion to eliminating funding," she surmised that the Department of Administration would support the need for a commission "if there's going to be funding coming through."

9:19:23 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked if nine commissioners would still be necessary if funding was cut in half.

MS. KABLER answered yes, because regardless of the amount of money, the process would be the same for those commissioners. In response to follow-up questions from Representative Jackson, she reviewed that there are 27 stations, and they are all broadcast licensees that are licensed through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC); therefore they all have an over-the-air broadcast component, and most have a digital stream, as well.

[9:20:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked for the Section Analysis [included in the committee packet] to be covered.

[9:21:13 AM](#)

MS. HANKE reviewed the Sectional Analysis, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Sections 1 through 3: repeal state statutes establishing the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission and removes responsibilities from the Department of Administration pursuant to Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission activities.

Section 4: provides that the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission transfer all assets to the Commissioner of Administration and allows the Commissioner to transfer the assets at no cost to Alaska nonprofit broadcasting entities.

Section 5: establishes an effective date of June 30, 2019.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN next asked someone to speak to the four fiscal notes included in the committee packet.

[9:22:42 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA said each of the fiscal notes in the committee packet assumes that funding for APBC is being repealed. The commission carries all the funding for radio, television, and emergency satellite service, which are separated in the fiscal notes. Commissioner Tshibaka highlighted the amounts in each fiscal note and the entity assigned to each amount: [fiscal note 1], \$46.7 thousand to the Public Broadcasting Commission; [fiscal note 2], \$2,036.6 thousand to radio; [fiscal note 3], \$633.3 thousand to television; and [fiscal note 4], \$879.5 thousand to satellite.

[9:24:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON asked for clarification regarding what was proposed under HB 69.

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA responded that HB 69 would transfer any assets in the commission to the Department of Administration; however, the intent is that "it goes in parallel with the proposal to eliminate all of the funding under the commission." She continued, "And so, there would be very minimal assets at this point that transfer into the Department of Administration. And so, when we represent the fiscal note as carrying all these consequences, it's because it's supposed to be read in tandem with the other proposal."

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON said the Division of Homeland Security, through the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), administers the emergency alert system (EAS). He said he has read that "the FCC is a mandated function that we're supposed to do." He asked Ms. Tshibaka if she has considered how eliminating the satellite funding would affect Alaska's emergency alert system and whether the state would then be out of compliance with federal mandate.

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA said the commission has considered alternative ways of reaching communities if it cannot fund satellite service. She said there are approximately 91 smaller communities that would have emergency connectivity only to a telephone; other communities have multiple ways of sending emergency alerts, such as through fiber optic cables. She said the department would have to work with DMVA or the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to develop emergency management plans "for each of those communities." She said telephone is obviously not as optimal a method by which to reach a mass audience as is satellite, so the department would have to work with those communities to development emergency management plans specific to each community.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON expressed curiosity about "the television side of it being unfunded." He said, "No we've got a hundred and some thousand people in the state that have no ... ability to see what's going on with our state legislature, with Gavel to Gavel." He asked if it was "part of this" to eliminate the ability of people to watch Gavel to Gavel.

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA answered that HB 69 only addresses the commission and "the group that Ms. Kabler runs" and whether "they would be part of deciding who these funds go to." She said "the broader package" considers whether to eliminate the commission altogether and the state funding of those funds. She said, "Altogether, what that would represent is a 17 percent reduction in funding for public broadcasting across the state;

83 percent of the funds - local and federal - would be preserved." That said, she remarked that Representative Thompson is correct that the communities currently receiving television service through the satellite funds would no longer be able to receive that service if the legislature decides not to fund the service.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON asked for information regarding fiscal note 4, which shows a proposed reduction of \$879,500.

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA explained that amount reflects a contract the state had with AT&T for satellite service. Approximately \$719,000 was for the actual use of the satellite, while approximately \$160,000 was for maintenance agreements to service the satellite.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON expressed that he does not understand how eliminating that satellite is going to help anybody in such a vast state with so many miles between locales. He said he thinks this would be a disservice to anyone living in rural Alaska, and this bothers him.

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA responded that the reason for the PowerPoint that was given was to provide the numbers for the legislature in order for them to best make a difficult policy decision.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON said, "I understand on the ... emergency alert system, but how about just for Gavel to Gavel? I mean, that television, I'm sure that connection must be utilized for that also, isn't it, in rural areas?"

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA deferred to Ms. Kabler.

[9:31:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN said Ms. Kabler was nodding in the affirmative that ARCS carries Gavel to Gavel as part of its programming.

[9:31:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON concluded that the committee was being told that ARCS carries Gavel to Gavel; however, she pointed out that the committee had been told that Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) was a different entity. She asked for clarification.

[9:32:37 AM](#)

MS. KABLER explained that the challenge is that many of the services being discussed are created by one entity and distributed by another. She said Gavel to Gavel is created by KTOO in Juneau, Alaska, and is part of PBS, which is overseen by APBC. However, ARCS, which is not under APBC, also distributes [Gavel to Gavel] as a service to Alaskans. She said ARCS is owned by the State of Alaska. She said this is why the commission is of value, because it understands this integrated system.

[9:33:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN opened public testimony on HB 69.

[9:34:23 AM](#)

RACHEL LORD said she is a mother, small business owner, and member of the Homer City Council, but she is testifying on behalf of herself. She emphasized the important service public broadcasting provides, not only by providing Gavel to Gavel, but also by airing city council and borough assembly meetings. She said people "from every shade of the political spectrum" tune in to listen. Ms. Lord shared that a couple months ago, an all-hazards training through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Texas A&M University was held in Homer, and local public radio was "a major player" in the discussion. She said in all communities, public broadcasting is important. She said, "Suggesting that we spend time and money recreating the important value that they provide currently seems irresponsible at best." Ms. Lord concluded by stating her opposition to HB 69. She said she believes it is completely unwise to divest from a critical and wide-ranging statewide tool that leverages local and federal support to assist in the response to disasters and helps engage Alaskans and local and state government." She encouraged the committee not to move HB 69 out of committee.

[9:36:52 AM](#)

MIKE COONS, President, Greater Alaska Chapter, Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC), said AMAC comprises 200 members in the valley and Anchorage area of Alaska - all conservative seniors fully in support of Governor Dunleavy's proposed budget. He stated full support of HB 69. He said the state is in a \$1.6 million deficit. He mentioned \$3.5 million in state funds and federal, local, tribal, and private entities in relation to PBS.

He also mentioned "Pick, Click, Give" - a program available to Alaskans to donate from their permanent fund dividends (PFDs). He opined that Alaska needs to join the 14 other states working toward PBS getting donations and grants from private entities. He said ARCS and Gavel to Gavel get donations "from other people," whose names are listed "on their shows." He encouraged the committee to move HB 69 out of committee.

[9:38:11 AM](#)

CARL BERGER said he serves on the APBC, but he is testifying on behalf of himself. He said "we" have raised money for public broadcasting from many sources; however, the amount of money that the state gives to stations is important in terms of obtaining federal match money or replacing equipment. He said, "The loss of state funds would prevent stations from being able to do that." He talked about how [HB 69 proposes] the transference of power of key broadcasting decisions and funding to the executive branch and change of the current statewide geographic representation, which he said has worked well for many years. He encouraged continuing with the current system and stated his opposition to HB 69.

[9:40:11 AM](#)

BILL TREMBLAY, President, KFSK Public Radio Board, testified in opposition to HB 69. He said Petersburg is a community of approximately 3,200, 1,200 of which are subscribers to the radio station. He noted that in his transmittal letter, Governor Dunleavy had noted that the function of the commission could be accomplished using nongovernmental entities that could be attuned to be more responsive to local broadcasting needs of the community. He said, "Saying that is one thing; identifying what those are is totally something different." He said the program manager of KFSK works hard to increase funding through various grants, and he opined that saying that "it can be done elsewhere" is not useful. He said the governor stated during campaigning that he does not support public broadcasting; therefore, Mr. Tremblay indicated that [the proposed legislation] is a move toward eliminating the commission altogether.

MR. TREMBLAY reminded the committee that during the administration of former Governor Bill Walker, public broadcasting already had to absorb a 48 percent reduction in state funding to local stations, which increased the need for fundraising. He said, "The state levels, as identified for this

year, only represent 16 percent of what our total station budget is; however, it's a critical component in meeting our federal matches, which we probably won't do without the state funds." Mr. Tremblay said the commission is important in understanding "how things move across the state" and for the allocation of funds to all the resources. He indicated that the people of Petersburg consider the local radio station as an essential service and don't want it to lose any more than it already has. Regarding an emergency response system, he opined that it is irresponsible to remove funding without having an alternative plan in place.

[9:42:57 AM](#)

RUSSELL LYMAN testified in opposition to HB 69. He said APBC makes decisions that keep public broadcasting operating, and this broadcasting is vital because it provides communities with emergency information, local government meeting broadcasting, and safety information. He asked the committee to "block HB 69."

[9:44:02 AM](#)

REBECCA MEIRS said she is "a part of" KCAW radio station, [in Sitka, Alaska], and strongly opposes HB 69. She said she thinks there is "a primary misunderstanding around what public broadcasting does," and it would be shortsighted to destroy the infrastructure that allows communities to share important information. She characterized herself as "a strong supporter of public broadcasting in general," and she urged the committee not to pass HB 69 out of committee.

[9:45:06 AM](#)

CHARLIE WILBER testified in opposition to HB 69. He opined, "Maintaining the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission is essential to protecting the economic health and vitality of public broadcasting in Alaska." He said doing away with the commission would lead to the elimination of public broadcasting in Alaska, and he urged that it must be maintained. Mr. Wilber said the community of Sitka depends upon local radio to stay informed regarding local, state, and legislative news - all of which he said are "very important." He asked the committee [not to pass] HB 69.

[9:46:01 AM](#)

KARY BIRDSALL, Member, Board of Directors, KTNA Radio, pointed out that Representative Kreiss-Thompkins is the only member of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee that does not live in a large population center, and Talkeetna is even less populated than Sitka. He listed local news, public safety, public access, unifying community, "so many little things that make up day-to-day life," and political campaigning, and said "all this would be gone without public radio." He named people on other stations across the state that can be heard on public radio. He talked about the support that is available, both educational and technical. He said public broadcasting in Alaska does not pay for itself. He explained that it costs the state less than .03 percent of its budget, and communities triple that investment with member pledges, volunteer support, and grants, but communities need the state money in order to leverage the other money. Mr. Birdsall stated, "I know this legislation does not expressly kill public broadcasting in Alaska, but it's a pretty sizable nail in our coffin." He urged the committee to advise the executive branch that repealing APBC is against the best interest of Alaska. He posited that communities are what make Alaska, and public broadcasting connects those communities and the state.

[9:47:58 AM](#)

FRANK KELTY, Mayor, City of Unalaska, testified in opposition to HB 69. He said public broadcasting is important to the City of Unalaska, because it is a link to the emergency alert system. He said the city works closely with DPS to get emergency information to the City of Unalaska, which is "on the Ring of Fire" and has seen numerous earthquakes and subsequent tsunami drills. He said the City of Unalaska has given its local radio station a grant of over \$100,000. The loss of funding would cripple the radio station. Without the station, the City of Unalaska would have no access to public radio, because it is too far west to receive satellite programming from National Public Radio (NPR). Mayor Kelty said that [without its radio service], the community would no longer receive programming for the Alaska Public Radio Network, and "the statewide emergency system would suffer." He explained that the City of Unalaska relies on statewide satellite services for several of its emergency alert channels. He said he had heard someone comment that the cost of each alert is \$100,000, and he opined that that is a small price to pay to save even one person.

[9:50:00 AM](#)

LIN DAVIS remarked that "the quest to abolish public broadcasting ... [is] making the rounds of state capitals." She called HB 69 "a democracy alert." She opined that public television and radio need to be separate from politics, because "none of us" wants state-run Alaska broadcasting. She said, "If HB 69 passes, we will need Voice of America to let us know what is really going on." She indicated there have been 50 years of attacks on public broadcasting, and PBS and NPR "continue to win bipartisan congressional funding support." She opined, "It is a tsunami alarm for Alaska that certain political leaders continue to wage war against public tv and radio. There is no reason to pass HB 69."

[9:51:50 AM](#)

MAUREEN LONGWORTH, M.D., said she has been a physician for 29 years and has practiced medicine from Ketchikan to Bethel. She said, "Like most Americans in repeated surveys over the past 30 years, I also rely on PBS to deliver nonpartisan facts by radio and television." She said this broadcasting benefits communities, health, homes, education, and gives all families equal access while providing "local news, safety messages, public health warnings, and community social news." She said she has championed community outreach, cancer prevention, palliative care, public health education, and patient rights. She talked about the growth of some of her efforts in Juneau, Alaska, and she said she thinks "these kinds of activities would not mushroom into the awareness they are today ... [without] the word of public radio." She said partisan broadcasting would be a restriction of democracy; therefore, funneling funds through a state entity would take away the current nonpartisan management of a public service. She asked the committee to stop HB 69 and vote instead to preserve the state's democracy.

[9:54:34 AM](#)

MARK SPRINGER said he is a consumer of broadcast media. To Representative Jackson's previous question, he explained that Alaska's broadcasting is traditional AM/FM broadcasting; the television station in Bethel broadcasts in digital, with four channels, which is the current requirement of the FCC. He said the nice thing about analog radio is that he can leave town, as is typical for the traveling communities of Bethel and the Yukon-Kuskokwim area, and bring an inexpensive radio along to receive public broadcasting. He characterized broadcasting as "a quilt that covers the state" and the commission as "the quilters that keep that system tied together." He stated

opposition to HB 69 and urged the committee to "keep the bill in committee for further study." He indicated that he appreciated the legislature's support of "a robust public broadcasting system."

[9:56:56 AM](#)

HANS JAMES opined that broadcast radio is an essential service and [the commission] is part of that service that provides news, weather, and alerts. In springtime, there are swollen rivers, and the community has had great need for public fundraising through radio stations. He stated his opposition to HB 69.

[9:58:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN announced that public testimony would be held open.

[9:58:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN, on behalf of a committee member no longer in the room, asked Commissioner Tshibaka to clarify whether the \$879,00 in fiscal note 4 is currently used to pay for emergency notification for rural Alaska.

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA answered yes.

[9:58:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked whether the majority of public broadcasting is paid for federally.

COMMISSIONER TSHIBAKA offered her understanding that it is not - the majority of the funds are raised locally and subsidized federally - but she deferred to Ms. Kabler for confirmation.

[9:59:31 AM](#)

MS. KABLER stated that the funding for each station is different depending on the size of the station. She said, "There's significant federal funding, local funding, and state funding; it's a complement of all three that funds each station." She said for small stations, a larger percentage of the funding is sourced federally, and that is because there are only so many people in the community from which to raise money. Conversely, in large communities, the majority of the funding is sourced from local members and businesses.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked if "the stations would be able to continue to move on" should the state cut funding.

MS. KABLER answered that if the funding from the State of Alaska is cut, then the impact would be that matching federal funds would be reduced. She said the tipping point upon which a station would no longer be viable would vary from station to station. Funding cuts have already been faced in fiscal year 2016 (FY 16) and FY 17. She said cuts result in diminished service, but said she cannot predict at what point funding cuts would cause the end of each station. She reemphasized that the biggest impact of state funding loss would be to the smaller stations.

[10:01:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN [announced that HB 69 was held over].

[10:01:40 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.