

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 12, 2019

8:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative Josh Revak

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative DeLena Johnson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Janine Todd - Delta Junction
Chris Reitan - Craig
Tamara Van Wyhe - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Alaska Board of Education & Early Development

Tiffany Scott - Kotzebue

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JANINE TODD, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Department of Education and Early Development.

CHRIS REITAN, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission; Superintendent
Craig City School District
Craig, Alaska.

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Department of Education and Early Development.

TAMARA VAN WYHE, Appointee representing the Department of Education and Early Development
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the appointee representing the Department of Education and Early Development to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

TIFFANY SCOTT, Appointee
Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development
Kotzebue, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Board of Education and Early Development.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:01:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Story, Hopkins, Tuck, Revak, and Drummond were present at the call to order. Representative Zulkosky arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): **Professional Teaching Practices Commission**

[8:02:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND announced the first order of business would be consideration of the governor's appointees to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:02:37 AM](#)

JANINE TODD, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), informed the committee she teaches third grade at Delta Junction Elementary School and provided her personal and educational background. She said she has been an Alaska resident since 1989 and has a total of 33 years of teaching experience. Ms. Todd noted, as a long-time member of the teachers' union, she has been asked by her peers to participate in various disciplinary meetings and she opined it is critical that every teacher's actions meet the standards based on the code of ethics. Ms. Todd assured the committee she can review the facts of a case and make hard decisions when necessary. She said she was appointed to PTPC in June [2018] and has attended two meetings. Further, she received training at the National Association of State Directors of Teachers of Education and Certification (NASDTEC). She acknowledged she has a lot to learn; however, her goal is to make the work and the purpose of PTPC known to all educators as an advocate of their profession.

[8:05:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY referred to information included in Ms. Todd's application packet and asked her to explain what she feels is the most effective way to measure student success.

MS. TODD said the problem with testing is sometimes testing becomes the complete measure of child; however, [a teacher] works with students, and observes a child's thinking processes, and thereby can better measure a child and their successes because not all students test well. She expressed her belief a child should not be labeled based on a test, but should be observed as they work through problem-solving activities. In further response to Co-Chair Story, Ms. Todd said since she has been appointed, she has not attended any hearings but is aware of investigations that come before the commission for review of the executive director's decisions.

[8:08:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND questioned whether PTPC meets on a regular basis or only if there is a case to consider.

MS. TODD stated PTPC schedules two-day meetings three times per year, which can be shortened or lengthened to accommodate the agenda. In further response to Co-Chair Drummond, she said the committee meets in person.

8:09:55 AM

CHRIS REITAN, Appointee, PTPC, and Superintendent of Craig City School District, informed the committee he brings a unique background to PTPC due to his over 21 years of experience as a school administrator in Alaska, ranging from positions of assistant principal to superintendent. During his experience, his administrative responsibilities included investigations of student and staff due process issues. Further, his experience includes applying federal and state law to [school] board policy, negotiated agreements, and student and personnel issues. Mr. Reitan expressed his interest in collaborating with professionals statewide to foster and support the public educational system, and to ensure everyone in the educational community achieves the highest standards of conduct. Mr. Reitan also expressed support for the aforementioned goal that PTPC improve advocacy and communication in order to strengthen the role and purpose of the commission, which is to serve the entire public education system.

8:12:14 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK surmised sanctions [of a teacher] can range from those for serious or criminal misconduct to lesser matters, and inquired as to whether some matters can be handled by school district management.

MR. REITAN said all matters should be addressed at the local level first; however, school districts have the responsibility to make PTPC aware of serious potential infractions when necessary. In further response to Representative Tuck, he said in the example of the misuse of sick leave, it would be up to the district or a complainant to refer the issue to PTPC. As an administrator, he said he would refer a complaint to PTPC if serious issues could potentially influence an employee's certification; in addition, he would notify PTPC of an ongoing investigation.

CO-CHAIR STORY asked what members of the teaching profession should know about PTPC.

MR. REITAN opined educators should know what the commission's roles and responsibilities are; in fact, it is PTPC's responsibility to connect with and support professional organizations in a proactive and strategic way throughout the state.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK inquired as to whether Mr. Reitan ever referred teachers [for sanction] to PTPC.

MR. REITAN said during his work history, PTPC never had to proceed with its own investigation; however, there were instances in which he shared information with PTPC.

[8:18:24 AM](#)

TAMARA VAN WYHE, Appointee representing the Department of Education and Early Development (EED), PTPC, explained one seat on the nine-member commission is to be held by a representative of EED; she has been designated by Commissioner Johnson to represent EED and she said she is pleased to serve because PTPC activities align with teacher quality as related to her position as director of the division of Educator and School Excellence at EED. In addition, she expressed her passion for educator quality and opined PTPC plays a very important role to ensure educators who are serving Alaska's students are committed to ethical behavior.

CO-CHAIR STORY referred to information provided in the committee packet related to the number of sanctions that have been issued by PTPC; she asked at what point PTPC reports sanctions to the general public.

MS. VAN WYHE said from her previous experience as a school superintendent and administrator, three or four times per year PTPC publishes a list of the number of complaints and information on sanctions, such as certificates that have been revoked.

CO-CHAIR STORY questioned whether Ms. Van Wyhe agrees with previous testimony that teachers are not aware of PTPC's purpose.

MS. VAN WYHE indicated yes. As a school district teacher, she was only vaguely familiar with PTPC; however, her awareness rose as a district administrator. She stressed teachers need to have a full understanding of the code of ethics and the consequences of violations thereof.

[8:24:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY read the following statement:

The House Special Committee on Education has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission and recommends [the names of] Janine Todd, Chris Reitan, and Tamara Van Wyhe be forwarded for consideration by a joint session of the legislature. This does not reflect intent by any of the members to vote for or against these individuals during any further sessions for the purposes of confirmation.

[Although a motion was not made, the appointments were considered advanced.]

[8:25:13 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

Alaska Board of Education & Early Development

[8:26:48 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced the final order of business would be consideration of the governor's appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development.

[8:26:57 AM](#)

TIFFANY SCOTT, Appointee, Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development, began her testimony speaking in the Inupiaq language and then informed the committee she is from Kotzebue and Noorvik. Ms. Scott said she was appointed by former Governor Bill Walker to fill a vacancy representing the Second Judicial District on the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development (board). She has now been appointed to the same seat by Governor Michael Dunleavy for a five-year term. Ms. Scott states she is a registered nurse at the Maniilaq Health Center in Kotzebue, which serves twelve federally recognized tribes and the village of Tikigaq, also known as Point Hope. She provided her educational background and a history of her service in other volunteer positions. Ms. Scott expressed her hope her perspective - along with that of other board members - will inform the board's work to advance three [public] commitments of EED's Strategic Plan, Meeting Alaska's Education Challenge (AEC) Together: increase student success; support responsible and reflective learners; cultivate safety and well-being. Turning to her goals, she said she would support the five positive trajectories of AEC: support all

students to read at grade level by the end of third grade; increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs; close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources; prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals; improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes. Ms. Scott closed, noting her district faces some of the most difficult challenges in the state such as high rates of suicide, sexual assault, and domestic violence; however, the residents are resilient, and education will help them adapt to a changing environment and overcome challenges.

8:30:07 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK recalled testimony from previous board appointees who have stood in solidarity against acting on the [governor's fiscal year 2020 (FY 20) budget proposal] and asked for Ms. Scott's stance in this regard.

MS. SCOTT said she stands behind the board's commitment to AEC and referred to a statement from board members who seek to fulfill the commitments made through AEC [document not provided].

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK acknowledged Ms. Scott's commitment to AEC and restated his question related to the budgeting process.

MS. SCOTT responded:

I think that as a board through the events that occurred this spring, at least for myself personally, ... I would be ... more assertive in ... being engaged in the budget that's prepared. I think that the governor's proposed budget, it would be hard pressed for anybody in education to get behind the budget that looks the way that it does, so I look forward to the Senate reviewing the budget that the House has sent over, and the conference committee deliberation.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK remarked:

... what I'm trying ... to get to is making sure that you understand your role and responsibility and authority for the preparation and execution of, of the budget. We rely on you heavily to know what resources the board of education's going to require to be able

to fulfil any vision whether it's the [AEC] vision or others

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK described how the Anchorage School District School Board and the superintendent of the Anchorage School District work with the Anchorage mayor to propose a budget. He said:

It seems like there's an avoidance of obligation on [the part of] this board of education, especially standing in solidarity of doing nothing, and I just want to make sure ... I just want to know, from your perspective, where you fit in the budgeting process.

MS. SCOTT related the governor released his [FY 20] budget on [2/13/19] and on 2/14/19 the board failed to provide an "up or down vote" on the budget that had been released. She elaborated:

For me [it] indicated for review the appropriateness of the statute and at what point the state board comes in and offers insight into the budget development process. So, that's, that's where I stand. ... Most of the testimony that we heard asked the board outright to, you know, listen to the concerns of the citizens of the state and their testimony and to ... not take up that vote that day.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK questioned whether the vote was symbolic.

MS. SCOTT acknowledged there are differing legal opinions in this regard; however, her belief is work on the board is not symbolic and she added, "so I would hope for a more intense and engaging process with the board and the governor in the development of a budget, but also realizing that we meet in person only twice a year." She noted the need for more in-person board meetings.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK suggested additional in-person board meetings should be included in the budget.

[8:35:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS acknowledged Ms. Scott's volunteer service to the state. He asked how the board could implement more culturally relevant curriculum over the next five years.

MS. SCOTT spoke of her children's successful experience in their local immersion school and credited community participation in part with their success.

[Due to recording difficulties, a portion of the audio was lost.]

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether Ms. Scott was familiar with the University of Alaska (UA) K-12 Outreach Program that has a culturally relevant office at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF).

MS. SCOTT said no; she said she is more familiar with the Alaska Humanities Forum and the work they do with educators.

[Due to recording difficulties, a portion of the audio was lost.]

CO-CHAIR STORY observed there are many policymakers involved in education, such as elected school boards, school administrators, the university system, and educational staff. She asked for the role of the board to solicit comments from said interested groups in order to shape and elevate the quality of public education.

MS. SCOTT recalled AEC utilized hundreds of Alaskans through various stakeholder groups to meet and discuss positive trajectories that enable the state to achieve educational growth. She opined the role of the board is to report feedback, data, and ideas from the strategic plan in order to develop action plans.

CO-CHAIR STORY urged the board to invite said groups to board meetings to hear policymakers' ideas. Furthermore, because the legislature is mandated to maintain a system of public schools, and she asked for the board's role in conjunction with the legislature.

MS. SCOTT noted the board provides an annual report to the legislature; she expressed her personal value of the opportunities to meet with legislators in person to discuss priorities and concerns through open-minded communication.

[8:40:27 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY urged for the committee and the board to work together to address challenges through better communication between policymakers.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND pointed out members of the House Education Standing Committee represent about 30 years of local school board experience, and described how the Anchorage School Board developed its budget.

MS. SCOTT, in response to Co-Chair Drummond, said she was appointed by former Governor Walker in February 2018.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND surmised at that time former Governor Walker had already submitted a budget thus Ms. Scott did not participate in the development of [the FY 19] budget. She expressed her hope that, as a board member, Ms. Scott would ask the administration and commissioner [of EED] to work with the board when developing a budget, and to allow for the consideration of the complexities of delivering education in Alaska.

MS. SCOTT, in further response to Co-Chair Drummond, clarified she serves on the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board, appointed to the seat representing the [Alaska State Board of Education and Early Education].

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND observed the board serves as the local school board for Mt. Edgecumbe High School and asked if, in her position as the appointed member to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board, Ms. Scott believes the [state] board has sufficient opportunity to govern the affairs of Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

MS. SCOTT opined the opinions and work of the advisory board have primacy and the [state] board works very well with Mt. Edgecumbe High School's advisory board and superintendent.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY inquired as to Ms. Scott's support of [Head Start federal services provided to low-income children and families] and pre-K early learning opportunities throughout Alaska.

MS. SCOTT related, from her family's long history as educators, she learned of the importance of early literacy; also evident from AEC data is that children with a basic knowledge of reading experience increased academic success, higher levels of education, and more secure employment. She said she understands

the importance of Head Start and early literacy to students over time, especially in the Northwest Arctic Borough.

CO-CHAIR STORY read the following statement:

The House Special Committee on Education has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointee to the Alaska Board of Education and Early Development and recommends [the name of] Tiffany Scott be forwarded for consideration by a joint session of the legislature. This does not reflect intent by any of the members to vote for or against this individual during any further sessions for the purposes of confirmation.

[Although a motion was not made, the confirmation was considered advanced.]

[8:47:26 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:47 a.m.