

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 13, 2019

3:18 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Co-Chair  
Representative Adam Wool, Co-Chair  
Representative Zack Fields  
Representative Sara Hannan  
Representative Louise Stutes  
Representative Dave Talerico

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Josh Revak

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :**

Commissioner, Department of Labor & Workforce Development

Tamika Ledbetter, Ph.D. - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

TAMIKA LEDBETTER, Ph.D., Commissioner-Designee  
Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DOLWD)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as commissioner-designee of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:18:50 PM](#)

**CO-CHAIR ADAM WOOL** called the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:18 p.m. Representatives LeDoux,

Wool, Fields, Hannan, Stutes, and Talerico were present at the call to order.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :**  
**Commissioner, Department of Labor**  
**& Workforce Development**

[3:19:19 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR WOOL announced the only order of business would be confirmation hearing(s).

[3:20:05 PM](#)

TAMIKA LEDBETTER, Ph.D., Commissioner-Designee, Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DOLWD), stated she had been with the department since 2007, working in the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS). The core workforce and development philosophy at DETS was to [help people] get a job, keep a job, and earn more income. Commissioner Ledbetter said she believes she represents the embodiment of that philosophy and has contributed in some way to every population served by the department. The commissioner stated, "The answer to many of the ills of society is a good paying job." She shared her fundamental belief that work brings dignity and that a good paying job can fundamentally change the trajectory of someone's life for the better. She believes in hiring and training highly qualified staff to elevate their careers, as well as facilitating the career advancement of those people looking for advancement in their own careers. Commissioner Ledbetter said she holds several degrees but recognizes there are many paths to finding good careers and believes in promoting all avenues of career growth. She mentioned her vision for the department was to lead with integrity, demonstrate commitment to the department's core functions, increase training and employment opportunities, promote workers safety, and ensure Alaskans are paid a commensurate wage for the work they're doing. She welcomed the collective sharing of ideas from all stakeholders who are invested in building partnerships for a stronger workforce and economy. Commissioner Ledbetter expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to build Alaska's workforce and increase job opportunities across the state.

[3:29:26 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR WOOL thanked the commissioner.

3:29:40 PM

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS disclosed he had previously worked with Commissioner Ledbetter and had a positive bias based on his history with the designee. He then asked the commissioner to address recent efforts to assist the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) and other departments with workplace reentry.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER shared she had a meeting scheduled with Commissioner Dahlstrom of DOC to share information regarding what DOLWD had already done and what she would like to have the department continue to do regarding workforce reentry. She mentioned the department's "rapid attachment" environment for citizens returning to the workforce. The commissioner said the way to reduce recidivism is to help individuals get immediate employment upon release. In the past, the department had imbedded employees into some correctional facilities to assist inmates in job skills training, but those services are no longer available. She said she would like to see the department work with local employers to have jobs available for those people reentering the workforce immediately following incarceration.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked whether if the reduction in services to the prisons was related to the end of the Linking Employment Activities for Pre-release (LEAP) grant and, if so, whether there were opportunities to replace that capacity. He then asked if the DOLWD could help the DOC start to look at reentry from the beginning of a person's incarceration.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER answered yes. She explained the department(s) need to develop a plan that starts immediately upon incarceration.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS mentioned that many seafood processors have expressed openness to excepting people reentering the workforce. He asked the commissioner to share where the department was in regard to offering opportunities for Alaskans to work in the seafood processing industry.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER replied the department had talked with seafood processors, and they have many vacancies for people who will show up and do a good job. She discussed the seafood processing industries' needs for workers; and the DOC desire for individuals to have jobs upon release.

3:35:58 PM

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked if it was the commissioner's plan to keep the Muldoon Job Service Center open.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER shared that her goal was to make sure that the Muldoon community had the same level of service or better than they have always had. She shared her belief there is an opportunity to do more in the Muldoon community to make sure people can connect with jobs.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked the commissioner to elaborate on how the department could do more for the Muldoon community.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER explained she started her career at the Muldoon Job Service Center. The commissioner described having more job fairs, specific employer hiring events, and more services that had been provided in the past. She went on to say that across the nation there were 7 million vacancies and many vacant jobs in Alaska. She indicated there is no reason for someone not to have a job, unless there is a skills deficiency issue, and the department needs to work with job seekers to increase their job skills to facilitate finding a job.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked if the commissioner happened to know the lease information for the Muldoon Job Service Center building.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER indicated she would find that information for the committee.

[3:38:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN queried the commissioner regarding the 2020 U.S. Census and what the state needs to do to ensure that there is an accurate account of Alaskans.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER said the department will help in recruiting-services and encourage citizens to complete the Census.

[3:40:09 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS mentioned that DOLWD had brought federal money to the state for Primary Care Association (PCA) apprenticeships and asked whether the commissioner anticipated expansion of the program or possibly other apprenticeship programs.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER responded that she didn't foresee any reduction in federal support for apprenticeships and would continue to support apprenticeship programs.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked the commissioner to talk about HB 79 [passed during the 30<sup>th</sup> Legislature] and how she saw the department's support for implementing the bill.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER stated that over the last several weeks the department had worked very hard to streamline the definition of independent contractor to be consistent with what was passed. She shared that the department wants to ensure when employers looks at the definition, they understand it.

[3:43:07 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR WOOL asked the commissioner if a criminal record prohibited people from finding work.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER answered she found that employers in Alaska are very friendly to people who have had troubled backgrounds. She indicated job opportunities are available for everyone, but there is a need to reduce the myth that employers might not want to hire someone because of their background.

CO-CHAIR WOOL asked the commissioner for her thoughts on why many jobs in Alaska are being done by out-of-state workers.

[3:46:19 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER shared her opinion that the state needs to tap into a new workforce, such as younger Alaskans, to help them become aware of Alaska industries. The commissioner explained the need to develop programs for teenagers to be introduced to industries well before they're 18.

[3:47:47 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked the commissioner if she intended to work with the schools to introduce younger students to Alaska jobs and industries.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER replied, "absolutely." She further explained that Governor Mike Dunleavy has put forward legislation to put all monitoring and coordination of career and technical education under the department. The commissioner

indicated her desire to expose children to information and opportunities regarding jobs and industry at an early age.

3:49:45 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES described an encounter with a fisherman whose son was not legally allowed to work hydraulic equipment because he was under 18. She asked for the commissioner's thoughts.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER indicated she had recently talked to [United States Department of Labor] Secretary Acosta, regarding regulations in Alaska which could impede employment opportunities. Commissioner Ledbetter said she was assured that Secretary Acosta would be willing to entertain certain waivers.

3:53:31 PM

CO-CHAIR WOOL asked about the best ways to encourage youth to become interested in taking a job.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER referred Co-Chair Wool to her February letter in Trends Magazine. She explained that in the letter she wrote about first jobs. The commissioner shared her philosophy that work brings dignity and pride.

3:57:29 PM

CO-CHAIR WOOL requested that the commissioner talk about Alaska being one of the states with low unemployment reimbursement.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER shared that unemployment was not to help people live for extended periods of time; it is to provide them the ability to purchase staples while they look for work. The commissioner said all the department's programs are about helping people find a job.

CO-CHAIR WOOL discussed the possibility of a worker with a good salary being laid-off and not being able to adequately support his/her family.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER described DOLWD's support for dislocated workers.

CO-CHAIR WOOL asked if there was a website that would assist someone who was collecting unemployment find a job.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER replied there is a website and a variety of online ways for the department to track unemployment activities.

[4:00:58 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX inquired whether someone seeking unemployment had to physically go to a job center.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER indicated that someone seeking work didn't have to go to the job center, he/she could search online.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX advocated for meeting a person at a job site to "introduce yourself."

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER responded that employers have a variety of ways they search for employees and a job seeker should use the method an employer chooses when seeking a job.

[4:02:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO asked the commissioner to share her thoughts on safety within the workforce.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER shared she had already asked the department's enforcement units to add a consultative approach in how they interact with the business community and to help the business community establish a culture of a safety.

[4:04:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked the commissioner to talk about whether the department is doing anything special regarding state jobs that are being lost in the governor's proposed budget.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER replied that the department had proactively sent out an email to the governor's chief of staff to share with commissioners reminding them what the DOLWD does. She explained that the department's rapid response team was ready to extend services to the laid off employees prior to their last day of work. The commissioner explained how the department helps with a wide variety of job search skills.

[4:08:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked when the governor's safety and health conference is scheduled.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER answered April 2, 2019.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked that the commissioner report back to the committee following the conference.

[4:09:43 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR WOOL asked whether the job centers were keeping up regarding changing times and technologies.

COMMISSIONER LEDBETTER replied that the job centers have kept up with changing times and were successfully marketing what they offer.

[4:11:04 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR WOOL opened public testimony. After determining that no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[4:11:24 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR WOOL asked for final comments from the committee and received none.

[4:11:34 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX stated:

The Labor and Commerce Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the Governor's appointee and recommends that the following name be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Dr. Tanika Ledbetter for the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. This does not reflect the intent by any of the members to vote for or against this individual during any further sessions for the purposes of confirmation.

[4:12:27 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:12 P.M.