

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS

April 25, 2019

8:07 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair
Representative John Lincoln
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Dave Talerico
Representative Sarah Vance

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bryce Edgmon, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 78

"An Act establishing May 31 of each year as Katie John Day."

- MOVED HCS SB 78 (TRB) OUT OF COMMITTEE

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

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 78

SHORT TITLE: ESTABLISH MAY 31 AS KATIE JOHN DAY

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) BISHOP

03/06/19	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/06/19	(S)	STA
03/29/19	(S)	STA WAIVED PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE, RULE 23
04/04/19	(S)	STA AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/04/19	(S)	Moved SB 78 Out of Committee
04/04/19	(S)	MINUTE (STA)
04/05/19	(S)	STA RPT 4DP

04/05/19 (S) DP: SHOWER, KAWASAKI, COGHILL, MICCICHE
04/12/19 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
04/12/19 (S) VERSION: SB 78
04/15/19 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/15/19 (H) TRB
04/25/19 (H) TRB AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

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

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR CLICK BISHOP
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented SB 78.

KATHRYN MARTIN
Ahtna, Inc.
Glennallen, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of SB 78.

MICHELLE ANDERSON, President
Ahtna, Inc.
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT:

BRUCE CAIN
Glennallen, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: testified during the hearing on SB 78.

GRACE SINGH, Staff
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HJR 19 on behalf of Representative Zulkosky, prime sponsor.

GREG BRINGHURST, Director
Public Policy and External Affairs
Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HJR 19.

MIKE WALSH, Ph.D., Vice President
Public Policy
The Foraker Group
City & State

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HJR 19.

NILS ANDREASSEN, Executive Director
Alaska Municipal League (AML)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified regarding the importance of HJR 19 to AML members.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:07:52 AM](#)

CHAIR TIFFANY ZULKOSKY called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 8:07 a.m. Representatives Vance, Ortiz, Lincoln, and Zulkosky were present at the call to order. Representatives Talerico and Kopp arrived as the meeting was in progress.

SB 78-ESTABLISH MAY 31 AS KATIE JOHN DAY

[8:08:47 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that the first order of business would be SENATE BILL NO. 78, "An Act establishing May 31 of each year as Katie John Day."

[8:09:07 AM](#)

SENATOR CLICK BISHOP, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented SB 78. He acknowledged Representative Foster for sponsoring a companion bill in the House. He paraphrased the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Athabascan elder Katie John was well known for her determination and persistence in defense of Alaska Native customary and traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering rights. She was a mentor to many Alaskans through her teachings, humor, gentle spirit and loving ways. Katie John is an Alaska icon who devoted her life to protect the traditions of her ancestral

homeland. Katie John died May 31, 2013. She was 97 years old.

Katie John lived in Mentasta Lake and was raised to live off the land under the tutelage of her mother, grandmother and other elders of her community. She was a consummate teacher and was always willing to share her ancestral traditions, culture and history. She was well known and respected throughout Alaska and around the world for her advocacy of Native rights.

Katie John was a member of the Ahtna Regional Native Corporation. According to Ahtna President Michelle Anderson, "Every great culture in the world is known by their traditional foods and the survival of a culture depends on the people's ability to gather those foods. Katie fought for our right to access our traditional homelands because she knew that we need to be able to feed our families. It was a matter of cultural and human survival."

Always passionate about preserving the Athabascan culture and language, Katie John was involved in teaching her Native language since 1974 and helped create the alphabet for the Ahtna dialect. She received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2011. Katie John and her husband, Chief Fred John, who died in 2000, raised 14 children and 6 foster children. She leaves behind approximately 250 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

Due to her impressive role in protecting ancestral traditions in Alaska, SB 78 will establish the date of May 31 as Katie John Day in honor of her memory. This bill is a simple yet fitting tribute to a powerful woman who cherished the Alaskan way of life.

SENATOR BISHOP shared the reason for the selection of May 31 as the date to honor Ms. John is not because she died that day, but because that is the first day in spring that she could put fish wheels in the Copper River.

[8:12:00 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY opened public testimony on SB 78.

[8:12:21 AM](#)

KATHRYN MARTIN, Ahtna, Inc., stated that she is a grandchild of Katie John and expressed appreciation to Senator Bishop and Representative Foster for the efforts to honor her grandmother for all her accomplishments.

[8:13:26 AM](#)

MICHELLE ANDERSON, President, Ahtna, Inc., described her pleasure in fulfilling the simple request for picked berries Ms. John made when she was in the hospital, especially considering all Ms. John had done for Alaska Natives. She expressed appreciation for the work done by Senator Bishop and Representative Foster and their staff, who have advocated for this legislation. Ms. Anderson stated her belief that Ms. John is a hero to all in Alaska who practice and believe in subsistence. She said she thinks it is right and fitting to recognize Ms. John's name on the calendar for all she has done. She said this would be a legacy to pass down for generations. She said Ms. John welcomed anyone who wanted to learn about "our culture and our way of life." She said it is difficult not to become emotional when this issue is brought up "every single year." She said there are few people in the state who have done what Ms. John has done.

[8:16:07 AM](#)

BRUCE CAIN stated that although he serves as president of Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce, he was testifying on behalf of himself. He reflected that he used to drive 100 miles to attend prayer meetings held by Ms. John. He shared that he was wearing the last pair of moccasins made by Ms. John in her mid-90s. He described Ms. John as a wonderful, loving human being. He stated that she was well-loved by the community.

[8:18:51 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on SB 78.

[8:19:15 AM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP indicated that he sought to have the proposed legislation amended to provide for an immediate effective date so that it can be presented to Ms. John's family and the Ahtna people in order for them to have a celebration on [May] 31.

[8:19:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LINCOLN moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1, to establish an immediate effective date for SB 78. There being no objection, Conceptual Amendment 1 was adopted.

[8:20:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LINCOLN moved to report SB 78, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal note. There being no objection, HCSSB 78(TRB) was reported out of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs.

[8:20:29 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:20 a.m. to 8:22 a.m.

HJR 19-SUPPORT 2020 DECENNIAL CENSUS

[8:22:49 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that the final 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.

[8:23:10 AM](#)

GRACE SINGH, Staff, Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, presented HJR 19 on behalf of Representative Zulkosky, prime sponsor. She said Alaska receives \$3.2 billion in federal funding each year, and the receipt of that funding is tied to U.S. Census data. She said the maintenance of that federal funding during times of budget constraint is critical to Alaska's economy. Lack of accurate census data "discourages investments in communities across the state." Organizations across the state rely on the funds. The undercounting of Alaskans in the U.S. Census can result in a loss of \$3,000 per person annually, which amounts to \$30,000 per person over a 10-year period. She said Alaska is considered one of the most difficult states to count in the U.S. Census because of its geographic, language, and connectivity barriers.

MS. SINGH stated that Alaska needs a count commission that can prioritize an accurate count of the population "before starting conversations about how the data will be used." She concluded, "As the 2020 Census launches its count in Toksook Bay, on January 21, 2020, it is imperative that Alaska's leadership at all levels of government prioritize an accurate count."

[8:25:06 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY related that HJR 19 was crafted in response to a presentation heard by the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee on Tuesday.

[8:25:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP noted that the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED) uses information from the U.S. Census for state revenue sharing purposes.

[8:26:34 AM](#)

GREG BRINGHURST, Director, Public Policy and External Affairs, Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA), testified in support of HJR 19. He said the data gained through the U.S. Census is used to determine allocations for many programs, including those pertaining to roads, transportation, housing programs, water and wastewater systems, education, and substance abuse prevention and treatment. He said CIHA believes that HJR 19 would support the ongoing efforts in Alaska to ensure a complete and accurate count. He expressed appreciation for language in the joint resolution that encourages participation and coordination with the State of Alaska, as well as encouraging local governments to establish complete count commissions (CCCs), many of which are ongoing or being established currently. He said a CCC is an excellent way for tribal and local governments to "coordinate and cooperate with the U.S. Census Borough in a formal way." Local knowledge can be used to build trust in communities and educate residents on why the U.S. Census really matters and to promote full participation.

[8:29:57 AM](#)

MIKE WALSH, Ph.D., Vice President, Public Policy, The Foraker Group, testified in support of HJR 29. He relayed his involvement with the Alaska Census Work Group. He echoed the point about Alaska being difficult to count in the U.S. Census because of its remote locations. He stated that The Foraker

Group believes HJR 19 emphasizes the importance of a fair and accurate count, highlights the important role the federal government plays in funding the U.S. Census Bureau effort and the essential role of the state in engaging all Alaskans to be counted, and brings attention to the importance of local governments to establish the CCCs. He expressed appreciation for the related discussion heard during the joint meeting of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee and the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs early this week.

[8:32:24 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY opened public testimony on HJR 19.

[8:32:39 AM](#)

NILS ANDREASSEN, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League (AML), emphasized the importance of ensuring an accurate count in the U.S. Census. He listed the amounts other states are considering investing toward ensuring a complete count: Colorado, \$12 million; Virginia, \$1.5 million; Maryland, \$4 million; Washington, \$12 million; Nevada, \$5 million; California, \$90 million; and North Carolina, \$1.5 million. He said even though the Office of Management & Budget has confirmed the availability of "some" funding, he feels HJR 19 and the legislature's support of a complete count is important. He said AML is encouraged that the CCC includes local governments but encourages "increased and meaningful cooperation and coordination" between the Office of the Governor, the United States Census Bureau, and AML. Mr. Andreassen related that AML is offering incentives to local governments to form CCCs and will continue to do so in the next months. More importantly, AML will encourage communities to try to change the numbers from the 2010 United States Census. He expressed AML's support of "your" efforts.

[8:34:49 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HJR 19.

[8:35:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HJR 19, as follows:

On page 3, line 3:

Following "shall be sent to"
Insert "Governor Michael J. Dunleavy"

There being no objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

8:35:55 AM

REPRESENTATIVE LINCOLN moved to report HJR 19, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal note.

8:36:10 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO objected for the purpose of discussion. He emphasized the importance of an accurate census toward ensuring equal representation throughout Alaska. He then removed his objection.

8:37:09 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that there being no further objection [CSHJR 19(TRB)] was reported out of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs.

8:37:44 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 8:38 a.m.