

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 18, 2020
9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes, Vice Chair
Senator John Coghill
Senator Mia Costello
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 169

"An Act relating to special request registration plates celebrating the arts; and relating to the Alaska State Council on the Arts."

- MOVED CSSB 169(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 113

"An Act relating to national board certification for public school teachers."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 169

SHORT TITLE: LICENSE PLATES: COUNCIL ON ARTS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) STEVENS

01/29/20	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/29/20	(S)	EDC, STA, FIN
02/06/20	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
02/06/20	(S)	Heard & Held
02/06/20	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/13/20	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
02/13/20	(S)	Scheduled but Not Heard
02/18/20	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 113

SHORT TITLE: TEACHERS: NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) HUGHES

04/15/19 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/15/19 (S) EDC
02/18/20 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

TIM LAMKIN, Staff
Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained an amendment for SB 169.

BEN BROWN, Chair
Alaska State Council on the Arts
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 169.

ANDREA NOBLE, Executive Director
Alaska State Council on the Arts
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 169.

JUNE ROGERS, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 169.

DAWSON MANN, Intern
Senator Shelley Hughes
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave the sectional for SB 113.

TAMARA VAN WYHE, Director
Educator and School Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions about National Board Certification.

TIM PARKER, President
NEA-Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of SB 113.

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of SB 113.

JESSIE BJORKMAN, Teacher
Nikiski, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 113.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:00:05 AM](#)

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Begich, Hughes, Costello, Coghill, and Chair Stevens.

SB 169-LICENSE PLATES: COUNCIL ON ARTS

[9:00:22 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 169, "An Act relating to special request registration plates celebrating the arts; and relating to the Alaska State Council on the Arts."

[9:00:45 AM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said that since the committee last heard the bill, the Department of Law requested, regarding Section 2 of the bill relating to legal counsel for the Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA), that if and when such an instance occurs, that the Department of Law approve the counsel. He said he looked at precedence for this and found it is important to include language that the Department of Law will not unreasonably withhold approval. There will be an amendment to make that change in the bill.

CHAIR STEVENS invited Ben Brown to the table.

[9:02:35 AM](#)

BEN BROWN, Chair, Alaska State Council on the Arts, Juneau, Alaska, said ASCA is amenable to the Department of Law's request with the proviso language Mr. Lamkin described. As he testified on February 6, the language in the original version of the bill

came from the Limited Entry Act because he was familiar with that provision.

MR. BROWN added that the council would like the bill to have a July 1, 2020 effective date when the fiscal year begins.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Andrea Noble to testify.

[9:04:15 AM](#)

ANDREA NOBLE, Executive Director, Alaska State Council on the Arts, Anchorage, Alaska, said these refinements will reflect the direction of growth that the council wishes to precede in. These changes to the bill will allow flexibility for the council and its goal of serving all Alaskans.

[9:05:18 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if she feels a July 1 effective date is needed.

MS. NOBLE replied the council wished for the bill to start at the beginning of the fiscal year 2021. FY 20 has been unusual because the budget landed very late in the fiscal year and the council is still planning and working through the particulars of that budget.

CHAIR STEVENS advised that there was a conceptual amendment for the committee to consider for the effective date. He called June Rogers to the table.

[9:06:49 AM](#)

JUNE ROGERS, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, said she has lived in Fairbanks all her life. She has worked for community advocacy in a variety of ways, especially through the Alaska State Council on the Arts. It is a special fortress for all who work diligently with volunteers throughout the state. It fuels tremendous energies in the state, and she looks forward to continuing that for their families and grandchildren.

[9:08:14 AM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO asked if an immediate effective date would be better than July 1.

MR. BROWN replied he appreciates the suggestion, but it will be easier for the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to start on July 1, the start of the next fiscal year. The plan is to have regulations ready to implement as soon as the bill is signed into law.

CHAIR STEVENS solicited a motion.

[9:09:36 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES moved to adopt Amendment 1, M.2.

31-LS1433\M.2
Radford
2/12/20

AMENDMENT 1

OFFERED IN THE SENATE

TO: SB 169

Page 2, line 11, following "**counsel.**":

Insert "(a)"

Page 2, lines 14 - 15:

Delete "However, the council may retain additional legal counsel as appropriate at the discretion of the board of trustees."

Page 2, following line 15:

Insert a new subsection to read:

"(b) The council may employ temporary legal counsel for good cause and with the approval of the attorney general. The attorney general may not unreasonably withhold approval."

[9:09:42 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS objected for purposes of discussion.

SENATOR HUGHES asked whether there were any parameters for the language, "the attorney general may not unreasonably withhold approval." She asked Mr. Brown if he was comfortable with that language.

MR. BROWN answered yes. That language is in many contracts and is a standard of reasonableness that both parties have to be aware of when acting pursuant to the statute. He said hiring outside counsel would be necessary if the Department of Law was unable to provide an assistant attorney general who had enough of a firewall between his or her operations at the Department of Law and an attorney who was advising another potentially adverse party. The situation arose last year when the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) was trying to implement the governor's budget after the June 28 vetoes and Mr. Brown was

trying to keep the council open as long as possible in the hopes of another outcome coming to pass. The language creates balance.

[9:12:19 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS removed his objection and hearing no objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[9:12:38 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES moved Conceptual Amendment 2, "to include an effective date of July 1, 2020."

[9:12:49 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS objected for purposes of discussion.

SENATOR HUGHES thanked Mr. Brown for considering how the Division of Motor Vehicles might enact this.

[9:13:32 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS removed his objection and hearing no objection, conceptual Amendment 2 was adopted. Chair Stevens opened public testimony and after ascertaining there was none, closed public testimony.

[9:14:02 AM](#)

At ease

[9:14:06 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked for the will of the committee.

[9:14:32 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES moved to report SB 169, work order 31-LS1433\M as amended, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal notes.

There being no objection, CSSB 169(EDU) was reported from the Senate Education Standing Committee.]

[9:14:43 AM](#)

At ease

SB 113-TEACHERS: NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

[9:16:38 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 113, "An Act relating to national board certification for public school teachers."

He stated his intention to hear an overview and then to hold the bill in committee for further review.

[9:16:50 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES, speaking as sponsor of SB 113, said the bill originated in the office of Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, but she also wants students to have the best teachers possible. High-quality teachers can make a difference in a child's ability to learn and achieve. SB 113 pertains to certification by the National Board as an indication of teacher quality. It would require schools to display the name of each National Board Certified (NBC) teacher in the school in the hopes of inspiring other teachers to go after this esteemed certification. The goal is that by 2025 4 percent of public school teachers in Alaska would be National Board Certified.

DAWSON MANN, Intern, Senator Shelley Hughes, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said National Board Certification is an indication that a teacher has met the defined standards for accomplished teaching grounded in the organization's five core propositions:

Teachers are committed to their students and their learning. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning. Teachers will be systematic about their practice and learn from experience. Teachers are members of learning communities.

Studies have shown that National Board Certification has been beneficial to teachers and learning outcomes for students.

[9:19:43 AM](#)

MR. MANN presented the sectional analysis:

Sec. 1 - AS 14.20.010 Page 1, Lines 3-9
Section one of the bill amends AS 14.20.010 by adding that public schools must prominently display names of national board-certified teachers. The section also outlines the 2025 four percent national board certification goal for the state and further clarifies that "national board certification" means certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Sec. 2 - AS 14.20.010(c) Page 1, Line 10

This section establishes a repeal date of July 1, 2026.

[9:20:36 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked what the cost is for a teacher to become National Board Certified.

MR. MANN answered that the four components of the certification cost \$475 each for a total of \$1,900, plus a \$75 registration fee.

SENATOR BEGICH pointed out that in the past, at least through 2013, the state used to subsidize this cost. He has a concern about the potential disadvantage for some teachers if their districts do not support National Board Certification. He asked if there has been any consideration of how to make certification available to all teachers.

SENATOR HUGHES said Tim Parker [president of NEA-Alaska] might be able to speak to it from the teacher perspective. Many districts do provide \$2,000 after teachers have completed National Board Certification. Tamara Van Wyhe with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) is an NBC teacher and online. Mr. Parker is working on his National Board Certification. The program takes 250 to 400 hours to complete. The certification is good for 10 years. It is going to switch to 5 years with a requirement for renewal. Currently, that cost is \$1,250, but efforts are being made to lower the cost. Tara Bivins in the Anchorage School District would also be happy to answer questions that perhaps cannot be answered today.

CHAIR STEVENS shared that he took a sabbatical to get his doctorate degree and everything was tax deductible at that time. He would be interested in knowing what the tax laws are today.

SENATOR HUGHES replied that question came up in the other body. The answer was the cost is not deductible. That could be because the standard deduction is now so high. If a person exceeded the standard deduction and did not get reimbursed for the \$2000, perhaps it would be tax deductible. That would need to be confirmed by a tax attorney.

[9:25:09 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked whether National Board Certification would count toward teacher recertification. He noted that would fit well with the conversations the committee had the last two weeks with SB 6 and the certification process.

SENATOR HUGHES deferred the question to Tamara Van Wyhe. She said she too was interested in what literacy training is provided in the National Board Certification process.

CHAIR STEVENS called on Tamara Van Wyhe to testify.

9:26:50 AM

TAMARA VAN WYHE, Director, Educator and School Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Anchorage, Alaska, said teachers who hold National Board Certification qualify for master level teacher certification within the state certification system.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if there is any literacy training as part of National Board Certification that would tie into the Alaska Reads Act.

MS. VAN WYHE replied teachers who apply for National Board Certification apply for a specific discipline and certificate level depending on the content area and classroom grade level. For a language arts teacher, their National Board content work would address literacy. National Board candidates focus on four components: content knowledge, differentiation in instruction, teaching practice and learning environment, and effectiveness and reflectiveness as a practitioner. Literacy can tie into those components. It depends on the content area that a teacher is applying for.

CHAIR STEVENS called Tim Parker to the table.

9:29:09 AM

TIM PARKER, President, NEA-Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska, said he is a high school English teacher from Fairbanks. He said his association is in favor of SB 113 and likes the goal of 4 percent of Alaskan teachers being National Board Certified by 2025. Displaying names prominently is okay, but the concern is that this recognition probably will not provide enough motivation to reach that goal. The actual motivation stems from how much learning happens in their classrooms.

MR. PARKER shared that he has completed two of the four components to National Board Certification and opined that the process makes someone a better teacher. Teachers who have completed the national certification will say it is the best professional development in their careers. People tend to go through this process after the first five years of teaching.

When teachers work through the process and become better at teaching, the joy of teaching increases. Achieving National Board Certification is a fairly good recipe to be successful in the classroom. He pointed out that money is a factor. Some bills have been proposed to address that but have not passed. Some districts offer an additional \$2,000 per year for achieving National Board Certification. That amount of money has not necessarily moved the dial. The website has 199 teachers from Alaska listed as National Board Certified. Last year, the House did a close count of who is actually in front of kids in a teaching role and the number is only 58. That is not even 1 percent.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if some of those teachers have become principals.

MR. PARKER responded that some of the teachers on the list are principals, some are retired, and some are out of state. By contrast, Washington state has tackled National Board Certification by adding a significant financial incentive. Since 2013, the state gives \$5,500 on an annual basis to each teacher who achieves National Board Certification. In terms of addressing equity, teachers who teach in a Title I or high-needs school get an additional \$5,000. That resulted in change. The average salary for teachers is about \$65,000, so an increase of \$10,000 can be a big deal. Many teachers have second jobs so this financial boost is a way to allow teachers to dedicate themselves to their craft.

MR. PARKER in 2013, 12.5 percent or 7,336 of the 57,897 teachers in Washington were National Board Certified. In 2019, 17 percent or 11,365 of the 66,409 teachers in Washington were National Board Certified. The monetary incentive for teachers to attain National Board Certification benefited many students. NEA-Alaska supports the ideas and concepts in the bill and appreciates the work in this area.

[9:35:56 AM](#)

MR. PARKER added that no interest loans also pay a role. He noted that Senator Wielechowski introduced a bill two years ago that provided about \$1,500 and an interest-free loan of \$2,500. Washington state has also done that. It costs close to \$2,000 to complete National Board Certification, plus 250 to 400 hours to complete the four components. It is a big investment and a lot of time, but the end result is a big win for students.

CHAIR STEVENS asked about the process to get National Board Certification.

MR. PARKER replied that in 2002, NEA-Alaska began Jump Start. It is a one-week program offered annually. Teachers spend five days studying the components, looking at a specific content area, and planning out the year because the 250 to 400 hours will be spread out over 12 months. Teachers think about what will be done in their classrooms and spend the next year executing the plan. Teaching practice and learning environment requires a video of students learning in the classroom. One component is to take a test to demonstrate personal content knowledge. The two other components require submitting a lot of lessons and other things that connect how students learned. The process is challenging, he said.

9:39:36 AM

CHAIR STEVENS asked how long it will take him to complete the process.

MR. PARKER replied he completed two components in one year and hopes to complete all four in one year. Teachers are given three years to complete National Board Certification. Each component is done separately, and components can be redone.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if the expenses are tax deductible.

MR. PARKER answered they are not deductible.

SENATOR BEGICH asked how Senator Wielechowski's bill on low-interest loans would have worked.

MR. PARKER replied he didn't recall the mechanism to offer low-interest loans but he recalled amount was around \$1,500.

CHAIR STEVENS commented that that is the type of thing the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education would be involved in.

9:42:03 AM

SENATOR HUGHES asked how many teachers represent 4 percent and if he believes that goal is achievable.

MR. PARKER answered that there are just under 8,000 teachers in the state, so 4 percent would be about 320. He added that Washington is close to 17 percent of one in six teachers. If Alaska got to that point, each of the 500 schools in Alaska

could have a National Board Certified teacher. He opined that an incentive like Washington offers would be a modest fiscal note.

SENATOR HUGHES asked why Washington had 11 percent of its teachers National Board Certified before offering a financial incentive and Alaska has less than 1 percent.

MR. PARKER responded that Washington had an extensive internal program and was famous for the Jump Start. Training was provided throughout the state, which was supported by the districts and union. With additional money, the numbers grew even more. He said he could look into the matter further, but he believes it was dedication at the district level and union level for professional development.

SENATOR HUGHES asked him to please follow up on that because the difference in percentages of National Board Certified teachers between the two states shows that something is missing in Alaska.

[9:45:27 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL noted that the committee has heard about struggles with teacher and principal retention. He asked how much horizontal support is needed with administration and with teachers to make this happen.

MR. PARKER replied a recipe for success is to have a principal or school board that is supportive and willing to give teachers time to do work on certification. Horizontal support such as creating cohorts of teachers to work together is a recipe for success. As far as retention, teachers who are National Board Certified do stay longer and do not turn over as fast.

CHAIR STEVENS asked whether he thought being National Board Certified would be a good qualification for a principal.

MR. PARKER deferred the question to Lisa Parady [Executive Director of the Alaska Council of School Administrators]. He said the certification is very specific about content and making learning happen in classrooms. Somebody with certification would be viewed as an instructional leader, both at the principal and superintendent level. Tamara Van Wyhe is working for DEED now, but she has worked as a principal and a superintendent. She prides herself on knowledge of subject and content areas. Management is a big part of a principal's and superintendent's job, but this is about students and their learning.

[9:49:48 AM](#)

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards, Juneau, Alaska, said National Board Certification makes for a more highly qualified teacher. School boards believe that the backbone of public education in this state and across the nation is teachers. The guide to National Board Certification is contained in the committee's packet. The requirements for becoming National Board Certified are rigorous. It is not something that is undertaken lightly by any teacher. It takes a dedicated teacher to commit to that rigorous process. The four components relate to a lot of the other things that the committee has been considering with the Alaska Reads Act. The cost is significant. That is quite a personal investment. It gives assurance to parents that those teachers are the very best. The association is behind anything that elevates the profession of teaching and puts great teachers in front of students.

CHAIR STEVENS asked what school boards can do to make that certification important and give support so that teachers can see this through to the end.

MR. WOOTEN replied he served about 30 years on the Kodiak School Board, and at one point, the board would provide sabbaticals to teachers to obtain advanced degrees and certifications to become principals and administrations. Then times got tougher and the board back-peddled on a lot of those things. School districts could provide support through professional development and set up professional learning communities. There are many things school boards could do and are doing, such as providing time to do this and moral support. Superintendents, principals, and school boards across the state are doing that, he said.

[9:55:07 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked what the association is doing.

MR. WOOTEN answered that AASB does not provide rules to school districts. It acts in an advisory capacity and provides services to school districts, who are members. The association is consistent and deliberate and intentional in having school boards understand what can be done. Better governance leads to better student achievement. Governance encompasses many things, including providing every support possible to teachers.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if school boards are aware of the teachers who are working on board certification and whether that was information he could gather.

MR. WOOTEN offered to work with Dr. Parady to find data or at least some anecdotal information and also to elevate the knowledge about that and explain the benefits of National Board Certification.

SENATOR HUGHES suggested that Tara Bivins or Tamara Van Wyhe might know how many are working on certification. She commented that the bill sets a high bar to reach by 2025.

CHAIR STEVENS added that the committee would look forward to getting that information.

SENATOR BEGICH said the data the National Board provided shows that 38 teachers are currently pursuing National Board Certification. He articulated his concern that 32 of those are in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai, Juneau, and Ketchikan, and only six are in other districts. He asked what strategies would spread the gospel of National Board Certification to more of these districts and what is holding districts back from encouraging their teachers to seek National Board Certification.

MR. WOOTEN answered that it is difficult being a teacher in a remote rural school district because they do a myriad of other things on a daily basis. Teachers are always on duty and often live in teacher-provided housing. He has seen teachers in rural Alaska work after school hours to become more heavily involved in extracurricular activities than in urban school districts. It becomes even more difficult, but doable, for the administration in those school districts to provide that support. Just listening to this testimony and reading the bill has elevated, in his mind, the need to pay more attention to this.

[10:00:55 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS opened public testimony and noted written testimony could be sent to senate.education@akleg.gov.

[10:01:26 AM](#)

JESSIE BJORKMAN, Teacher, Nikiski, Alaska, said he also serves on the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly, but he is speaking as a teacher. He teaches at Nikiski Middle High School and has been a National Board candidate. Regarding Senator Hughes' question about literacy, the second component is all about differentiation in instruction. Teachers must submit student writing samples as proof and evidence of how they teach to different readiness levels and improve student writing. Teachers submit writing samples before a unit or period of time and then

after to show growth. That component has excellent measures of progress to show that teaching is effective. Another component is reflecting on practice and how to make it better.

MR. BJORKMAN suggested that districts might be more reticent to pick up things that are tried and true because it does not seem as innovative. He knows as a National Board candidate that the process is the best professional development he has ever done. He has heard of a study through the Alaska Staff Development Network that students can recognize National Board Certified teachers. That matters. Teachers who decide to become a National Board Certified teacher have horizontal support. There are National Board Certified teachers in their district these teachers can speak to about the process. Plus, school districts talk about the value of National Board Certified teachers. He contended that school districts could focus more on National Board Certificate training.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if he could recommend things that the legislature, the school board association, school districts, and principals could be doing to increase the recognition of those who have completed this certification.

MR. BJORKMAN opined that Senator Hughes' bill to recognize National Board Certified teachers in public is a great start. Money does not make things better all of a sudden, but it does show the state values and prioritizes teachers as a community of learners. But it has to be more than that. It has to be what the education industry calls collective teacher efficacy, which means teachers feel part of a team and function as a team. That allows them to work better.

CHAIR STEVENS expressed appreciation for his candid comments.

[10:08:00 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS stated he would hold public testimony open on SB 113.

SENATOR HUGHES calculated that to achieve the 4 percent goal, the state needs 89 more Nationally Certified teachers by 2025. She described that as reasonable and achievable. She also recommended looking into what the state of Washington did before adding the financial incentive. She expressed the desire for Alaska to have 11 percent of its teachers have National Board Certification. She added that great teachers need to be paid well, although the fiscal situation might not allow that now.

10:09:50 AM

CHAIR STEVENS held SB 113 in committee.

10:10:04 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 10:10 a.m.