

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE

April 3, 2019

6:03 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair
Senator Peter Micciche

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair
Senator Mike Shower
Senator Jesse Kiehl

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4

Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska prohibiting the establishment of, or increase to, a state tax without the approval of the voters of the state; and relating to the initiative process.

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5

Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to the Alaska permanent fund and the permanent fund dividend.

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SJR 4

SHORT TITLE: CONST. AM: STATE TAX; INTIATIVE

SPONSOR(s): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/30/19	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/30/19	(S)	STA, JUD, FIN
03/26/19	(S)	STA AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/26/19	(S)	Heard & Held
03/26/19	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/27/19	(S)	STA AT 6:00 PM BUTROVICH 205

03/27/19	(S)	Heard & Held
03/27/19	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/28/19	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/28/19	(S)	Moved CSSJR 4(STA) Out of Committee
03/28/19	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/29/19	(S)	STA RPT CS 5NR SAME TITLE
03/29/19	(S)	NR: SHOWER, REINBOLD, MICCICHE, COGHILL, KAWASAKI
04/01/19	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/01/19	(S)	Scheduled but Not Heard
04/03/19	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/03/19	(S)	Heard and Held
04/03/19	(S)	JUD AT 6:00 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

LYNETTE CLARK, representing herself
Fox, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

CHRISTINE HUTCHISON, representing herself
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

MARK SESLER, representing himself
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

NORIA CLARK, representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

KAREN PERRY, representing herself
Chugiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

ROD PERRY, representing himself
Chugiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Stated support for SJR 4.

KEN BROWN, representing himself
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

GAIL LIMBAUGH-MOORE, representing herself
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Stated support for SJR 4.

SHOSHANA KUN, representing herself
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: testified in opposition to SJR 4.

SUZAN DENZINE, representing herself
Kasilof, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

LINN MCCABE, representing herself
Big Lake, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

WILLY KEPPEL, representing himself
Quinhagak, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: testified in support of SJR 4.

JULIE SMITH, representing herself
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition of SJR 4.

JAMES SQUYERS, representing himself
Rural Deltana, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

MITCHEL SHARMAN, representing himself
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

MARSHA MUELLER-SHARMAN, representing herself
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

ALEX KOPLIN, representing himself
Homer, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4.

JOHN LAMBORN, representing himself
Wasilla, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

KATHY SWANSON, representing herself
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

BOB SWANSON, representing himself
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

CHRISTINA SINCLAIR, representing herself
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4.

SABRINA MARTINO, representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

LINDSAY WYATT, representing herself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

ROBBI DOUGLAS, representing herself
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

HAYDEN NEVILL, representing himself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4.

VERT HOUGHTALING, representing himself
Big Lake, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

ABIGAIL STESSEN, representing herself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4.

JAMES SANTORO, representing himself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4.

TRISTAN GLOWA, representing himself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4.

TRAVIS COLE, representing himself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4

TRISTAN SINCLAIR, representing himself
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4.

ERIC MUEHLING, representing himself

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 4.

RONALD HOWARD JR., representing himself

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 4.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[6:03:18 PM](#)

CHAIR SHELLEY HUGHES called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senator Micciche and Chair Hughes.

SJR 4-CONST. AM: STATE TAX; INTIATIVE

[6:03:43 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES announced that the only order of business would be SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4, Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska prohibiting the establishment of, or increase to, a state tax without the approval of the voters of the state; and relating to the initiative process.

[CSSJR 4(STA) was before the committee.]

[6:03:56 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES made opening remarks.

[6:04:33 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES opened public testimony on SJR 4.

[6:04:56 PM](#)

LYNETTE CLARK, representing herself, Fox, testified in support of SJR 4. She stated that Alaskans started to feel ignored a few years ago and their trust in elected officials began to diminish. She opined that SJR 4 will give Alaskans more power, which is what art I, secs 1 and 2, Constitution of the State of Alaska envisioned. It is the people who are in charge. She emphasized that restoring trust in both bodies of the legislature is important.

[6:07:49 PM](#)

CHRISTINE HUTCHISON, representing herself, Kenai, testified in support and echoed Ms. Clark's testimony. The people can help the legislature make the tough decisions about cutting spending,

she said. She stated support for what the governor is doing and thanked Senator Micciche and the other committee members for their work.

[6:09:08 PM](#)

MARK SESLER, representing himself, Soldotna, testified in support of SJR 4 and agreed with Ms. Clark. The people need to take back their state from special interests, he said. He warned that 2020 will have consequences for legislators who are not abiding by their campaign promises. The governor was elected for a reason, he said.

[6:10:15 PM](#)

NORIA CLARK, representing herself, Anchorage, testified in support of SJR 4. She said an egregious amount of money has been and continues to be wasted in this state, especially in Anchorage. She said many people became complacent after the last election when their candidate was elected but there is still a fight ahead to support the governor. She said she is speaking from experience when she says that taxing people is not useful. The fight before us is boots on the ground, she concluded

[6:11:49 PM](#)

KAREN PERRY, representing herself, Chugiak, testified in support of SJR 4. She reported that her family is "Dunleavy-strong." She said we are tired of wasteful spending and taking from many to benefit a few.

ROD PERRY, representing himself, Chugiak, stated support for SJR 4.

[6:12:58 PM](#)

KEN BROWN, representing himself, Soldotna, testified in support of SJR 4. He echoed first caller's comments and said he'd leave it at that.

[6:13:34 PM](#)

GAIL LIMBAUGH-MOORE, representing herself, Soldotna, stated support for SJR 4.

[6:14:22 PM](#)}S

SHOSHANA KUN, representing herself, Fairbanks, testified in opposition to SJR 4. She opined that the resolution will tie officials' hands at the city and borough level from considering a sales tax as a form of revenue.

[6:15:01 PM](#)

SUZAN DENZINE, representing herself, Kasilof, testified in support of SJR 4. She offered her belief that the budgets in all departments need to be made more efficient. She also stated support for increasing revenue by drilling for gas. She urged legislators to work while they're in Juneau so extra [per diem] isn't necessary. Otherwise, they'll be hurt at the ballot box, she warned.

[6:15:58 PM](#)

LINN MCCABE, representing herself, Big Lake, testified in support of SJR 4. She pointed out that Alaska is supposed to be a representative government and input from the people is essential. She opined that giving the public the ability to vote on implementing taxes means legislators will have to convince the public of the need for more money. More people will become in the process, she said.

[6:17:06 PM](#)

WILLY KEPPEL, representing himself, Quinhagak, testified in support of SJR 4. He also stated support for Governor Dunleavy and reminded the committee that [the colonies] rejected King George in 1776 over the issue of taxation without representation. "I'm for cut, cut, cut," he said.

[6:17:43 PM](#)

JULIE SMITH, representing herself, Fairbanks, testified in opposition of SJR 4. She said a system already exists for local governments to impose taxes.

[6:18:31 PM](#)

JAMES SQUYERS, representing himself, Rural Deltana, testified in support of SJR 4. He said he was also speaking for his wife Pam Good. He related that he listened to the House Finance Committee as amendments were offered to the budget and that convinced him of the need for this resolution.

[6:19:11 PM](#)

MITCHEL SHARMAN, representing himself, Juneau, testified in support of SJR 4. He opined that the budget should be cut a lot and that there are other ways to get prisons to pay for themselves.

[6:20:14 PM](#)

MARSHA MUELLER-SHARMAN, representing herself, Juneau, stated support for SJR 4.

[6:20:46 PM](#)

ALEX KOPLIN, representing himself, Homer, testified in opposition to SJR 4 because the state needs additional sources of revenue. Many people come to Alaska to work and revenue could be generated from that through a fair tax system. He said he doesn't always agree with legislators but he does support them in their efforts to make Alaska healthy. He said cutting the budget is not working and he believes that taxing is healthy because everyone has skin in the game. We need to address this issue sooner rather than later because the problem escalates as time goes on, he said.

[6:22:33 PM](#)

JOHN LAMBORN, representing himself, Wasilla, testified in support of SJR 4. He said he and his wife would like Alaskans to have more say in what goes on in government. He added that they also support the governor's plan.

[6:23:10 PM](#)

KATHY SWANSON, representing herself, Juneau, testified in support of SJR 4. She said she does not believe taxpayers have enough say on taxes.

[6:23:50 PM](#)

BOB SWANSON, representing himself, Juneau, testified in support of SJR 4. He offered his belief that it is not possible to tax one's way into prosperity. He said it has not worked in the past and will not work in the future. He pointed out that Alaska has plenty of natural resources to offset the budget deficit. He stated agreement with the governor that throwing more money at a problem doesn't necessarily solve the problem. He cited education as an example. He reiterated his support for SJR 4.

[6:25:33 PM](#)

CHRISTINA SINCLAIR, representing herself, North Pole, testified in opposition to SJR 4. She said elected officials should make these sorts of decisions for the people.

[6:26:14 PM](#)

SABRINA MARTINO, representing herself, Anchorage, testified in support of SJR 4. She said she believes that the people should have a voice in whether or not they will be taxed. "I don't think the legislative body has listened to the people," she said. She also voiced support for the governor's budget plan.

[6:27:04 PM](#)

LINDSAY WYATT, representing herself, Fairbanks, testified in support of SJR 4. She said there should not be any kind of state

tax without a vote of the people because the legislature doesn't know whether the people have the ability to pay.

[6:28:00 PM](#)

ROBBI DOUGLAS, representing herself, North Pole, testified in support of SJR 4. She said it's obvious to her that the people cannot trust elected officials to pay attention to "we the people."

[6:29:03 PM](#)

HAYDEN NEVILL, representing himself, Fairbanks, testified in opposition to SJR 4. He said the people elect legislators to make difficult decisions on their behalf about maintaining the health of the state. They are qualified to make the myriad of complex decisions about whether or not to impose taxes to raise revenue. He opined that the people who can't afford it won't necessarily be taxed.

[6:30:08 PM](#)

VERT HOUGHTALING, representing himself, Big Lake, testified in support of SJR 4. He said the state needs to get spending under control and SJR 4 will give power to the people to decide whether or not new taxes are necessary.

[6:31:03 PM](#)

ABIGAIL STESSEN, representing herself, Fairbanks, testified in opposition to SJR 4. She said she believes that the people elect officials to represent them and this amendment doesn't allow that.

[6:31:34 PM](#)

At-ease.

[6:31:39 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES reconvened the meeting.

[6:36:32 PM](#)

JAMES SANTORO, representing himself, Anchorage, testified in opposition to SJR 4. He said everyone has to pay taxes even if they don't like it. He described the resolution as a divide and conquer measure that will split Alaskans. He said the people elect their legislators to make these hard choices. He reiterated his opposition to the resolution and most of the proposals Governor Dunleavy has put forward.

[6:37:38 PM](#)

TRISTAN GLOWA, representing himself, Fairbanks, testified in opposition to SJR 4. He said he has not heard much support for constraining the legislature's flexibility to solve the state's fiscal problems. Imposing barriers to solve the fiscal problems is not appropriate, he said.

[6:38:40 PM](#)

TRAVIS COLE, representing himself, Fairbanks, testified in opposition to SJR 4. He said elected officials are the voice of the people and they should make these decisions. He further stated his objection to the governor's approach to take power away from the legislature.

[6:39:37 PM](#)

TRISTAN SINCLAIR, representing himself, North Pole, testified in opposition to SJR 4. He said the state was created as a constitutional republic for a reason. Legislators are elected to educate themselves and make informed decisions on behalf of the people.

[6:40:22 PM](#)

ERIC MUEHLING, representing himself, Fairbanks, testified in opposition to SJR 4. He said this resolution will limit legislative power and restrict the legislature's ability to raise and spend money. That is their role, he said. Let them do their job.

[6:40:55 PM](#)

RONALD HOWARD JR., representing himself, Ketchikan, testified in support of SJR 4 to give people an up or down vote on new taxes.

[6:41:41 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES closed public testimony on SJR 4.

[6:41:56 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE expressed appreciation for the testimony.

[SJR 4 was held in committee.]

[6:42:36 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Hughes adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 6:42 p.m.