

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 13, 2020

1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator John Coghill, Chair
Senator Peter Micciche, Vice Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes
Senator Lora Reinbold (via teleconference)
Senator Jesse Kiehl

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Public Defender Agency
Samantha Cherot - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar
William Granger - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Alaska State Commission for Human Rights
Jamie Allard - Eagle River

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Alaska Police Standards Council
Daniel Weatherly - Anchor Point

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13
Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of
Alaska relating to abortion.

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 76

"An Act repealing the Workers' Compensation Appeals Commission; relating to decisions and orders of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Commission; relating to superior court jurisdiction over appeals from Alaska Workers' Compensation Board decisions; repealing Rules 201.1, 401.1, and 501.1, Alaska Rules of Appellate Procedure, and amending Rules 202(a), 204(a) - (c), 210(e), 601(b), 602(c) and (h), and 603(a), Alaska Rules of Appellate Procedure; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SJR 13

SHORT TITLE: CONST. AM: PROHIBIT ABORTION/FUNDING

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) HUGHES

01/21/20	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/21/20	(S)	HSS, JUD, FIN
02/26/20	(S)	HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/26/20	(S)	Heard & Held
02/26/20	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
03/06/20	(S)	HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/06/20	(S)	Moved SJR 13 Out of Committee
03/06/20	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
03/09/20	(S)	HSS RPT 3DP
03/09/20	(S)	DP: WILSON, SHOWER, GIESSEL
03/09/20	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/09/20	(S)	Heard & Held
03/09/20	(S)	MINUTE(JUD)
03/11/20	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/11/20	(S)	Heard & Held
03/11/20	(S)	MINUTE(JUD)
03/13/20	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

SAMANTHA CHEROT, Appointee
Public Defender Agency
Department of Administration
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Public Defender Agency.

CARY JOKIEL, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Cherot's appointment to the Public Defender Agency.

JOHN CASHION, Attorney representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Cherot's appointment to the Public Defender Agency.

JACK ROBINSON, Attorney representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Cherot's appointment to the Public Defender Agency.

WILLIAM GRANGER, Appointee

Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar

Office of the Governor

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar.

JAMIE ALLARD, Appointee

Alaska State Commission for Human Rights

Office of the Governor

Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights.

DANIEL WEATHERLY, Appointee

Alaska Police Standards Council

Department of Public Safety

Anchor Point, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

MARGARET MCDONAGH, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

MATT DUNCAN, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

CHERYL LOVEGREEN, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

SAVANNA SCHOESSLER, representing self
Soldotna, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

HAYDEN NEVILL, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

TERRISA BUKOVINAC, Founder
Pro-Life San Francisco
San Francisco, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 13.

KATHY TAYLOR YOKEL, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

MOIRA PYHALA, representing self
Soldotna, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

DIANA REDWOOD, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

CHRISTINE ROBBINS, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 13.

ANDY RICE, representing self
North Pole, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 13.

ROBYN STEVENS, representing self
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SJR 13.

DANIEL DAUGHERTY, Student
University of Alaska Fairbanks; President
Arctic Students for Life
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 13.

PRINCE NWANKUDU, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 13.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:31:26 PM](#)

CHAIR JOHN COGHILL called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Present at call to order were Senators Kiehl, Hughes, and Chair Coghill. Senator Micciche joined the meeting shortly thereafter.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)
Public Defender Agency
Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar
Alaska State Commission for Human Rights
Alaska Police Standards Council

[1:33:11 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL announced that the first order of business would be consideration of governor appointees to boards and commissions.

He said the first hearing is a continuation of the hearing for Samantha Cherot to the Public Defender Agency.

[1:33:37 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked Ms. Cherot to describe her role, interaction, and independence when answering questions that policy makers have on policy or proposed legislation related to the Public Defender Agency.

[1:34:11 PM](#)

SAMANTHA CHEROT, Appointee, Public Defender Agency, Department of Administration, Anchorage, Alaska, answered that when the legislature has questions, she does not take a position on legislation but would speak to the impact of proposed legislation on the agency. She said the agency also tracks bills that it deems may have an impact on the agency, provides fiscal notes, and provides testimony on proposed legislation.

[1:34:42 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked if impacts on the agency meant impacts on the rights of the clients of the Public Defender Agency.

MS. CHEROT answered yes.

[1:35:10 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said members were provided a document after the last hearing that showed a hiring memo for a person mentioned

during the previous hearing had gone forward and was signed and approved. She asked if the person was hired or if a decision was made later not to hire her.

MS. CHEROT said that since the last hearing she reviewed the personnel act and rules and conferred with the personnel director and legal counsel. She said she cannot discuss the status on that issue. She recalled her testimony indicated that the person in question is not listed in the state employee directory. She since learned that she could speak about contractors, so she offered to expand on the question Senator Reinbold asked regarding Quinlan Steiner.

1:36:44 PM

SENATOR HUGHES said she understood the constraints, but she found her response on whether she had hired an employee troubling because a hiring memo was made public. After the hearing, she learned that Ms. Cherot was seeking to hire this person. She asked if she could respond so members would have a sense of her judgment on this matter.

MS. CHEROT answered that part of the personnel act protects the confidentiality of personnel records, including the applicant process and consideration of an applicant. She related her understanding that a memo may be erroneously distributed. She has been advised that she cannot speak to that matter. She reiterated the process that she uses to assess applicants to ensure attorneys that she hires have the credentials, including assessing their qualifications, work experience, commitment to the work, and reference checks. She explained that before any attorney can work for the agency, the individual must undergo an extensive moral practice examination prior to being licensed to practice law in Alaska. Further, the Public Defender Agency trains its attorneys to assess cases objectively and how to provide advice to its clients. She reiterated that she would take action if she had concerns based on an employee's conduct in or out of the office.

SENATOR HUGHES asked about the contract for Mr. Steiner.

MS. CHEROT said Mr. Steiner is working under a short-term contract that expires in May 2020 on post-conviction relief matters for the agency. This position has been vacant since October 2019. The agency has had ongoing recruitment and retention challenges. The agency reviews every case to determine if any conflicts of interest exist. The agency's attorneys or contractors can handle post-conviction relief matters where

there is an ineffective assistance of counsel claim against a current agency attorney, which would be a conflict of interest under the professional rules of conduct or under case law. Mr. Steiner would not handle any case of that nature. Every attorney has an ethical obligation to represent the agency's clients zealously and if that were compromised, given his prior role as director, he would recuse himself. Mr. Steiner is not handling cases in which a client has a claim against an agency attorney or an agency attorney that he has previously supervised. She added that those types of cases require extensive experience, which is the background that Mr. Steiner has since he worked in the appellate division prior to being the previous director.

[1:40:44 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said she understood the difficulty in hiring and retentions but it seemed odd to enter into a contract with someone she was replacing. She asked whether she held conversations with the administration about this, if she had the ultimate hiring authority, or whether she had to obtain authority to enter a contract.

MS. CHEROT answered that the administration was aware of the agency's recruitment challenges. At the time the contract was initiated she had one applicant who was not available until August. She said there is a significant backlog of post-conviction relief claims, which is a concern for her agency and the court system. She said she does have independent hiring authority, but she did notify the administration of the need to execute a temporary contract with Mr. Steiner.

CHAIR COGHILL said he served on the Finance subcommittee for the Department of Administration and sometimes the legislature has authorized positions that the department cannot fill.

[1:42:46 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if she had communication before or after the contract was signed and if the administration had any response or concern.

MS. CHEROT answered that she was unsure of the timing, but she notified Deputy Commissioner Donley.

[1:43:31 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked if it was plausible that someone could process all the paperwork and decide not to hire the person after the paperwork was approved.

MS. CHEROT answered yes.

CHAIR COGHILL turned to public testimony on the confirmation hearing for Ms. Cherot, appointee to the public defender agency.

1:45:09 PM

CARY JOKIEL, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said she was a lifelong Alaskan who operates a small environmental company that provides services on the local, state and federal level. She said she has known Ms. Cherot for over two decades and was pleased to hear Ms. Cherot returned to Anchorage since she knew Ms. Cherot would have an immediate positive impact on the community. She said she served on the YMCA from 2011 to 2018 and when Ms. Cherot joined the board in 2016, she quickly demonstrated her commitment to the YMCA's mission to empower women and reduce racism. She was elected as board president in her second year. Ms. Cherot was diligent in efforts to hire a new chief executive officer and helped to create an enthusiastic board dynamic. She helped the board make tough decisions to help the organization remain fiscally viable. She said she finds her to be a strong, practical, and fair leader. She stated it was her honor to speak on her behalf.

JOHN CASHION, Attorney, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said he spent 13 years working for the Public Defender Agency and had been in private practice for eight years. He worked with Ms. Cherot in public and private practice, during which he found her to be an extremely accomplished trial attorney. He said she demonstrated a unique ability to handle complex issues and be articulate. In terms of the public defender agency, she brings her experience in criminal and civil law experience. He described her as a leader who is highly respected. During his time with the agency she worked in supervisory positions, but she was also someone everyone could count on. She conducted herself in a gracious manner, attuned to other people's points of view. He said she was an effective advocate, possessing the ability to make difficult decisions. She is an asset to the agency and the state. He offered his highest recommendation.

1:49:09 PM

JACK ROBINSON, representing self; Attorney, Ashburn & Mason P.C., Anchorage, Alaska, spoke in support of Ms. Cherot's appointment. He stated that he previously served at the Public Defender Agency, but he has worked in private practice for the past five years. He related that Ms. Cherot worked in the criminal trial unit for approximately three years, quickly taking on higher-level complex cases and mentoring new

attorneys. She brought civil litigation associate experience from California. She also worked in private practice with Mr. Cashion's firm. He commended her ability and offered his view that if she chose to return to private practice, she would be sought after. She worked in the agency's civil division, working on CINA cases. He can hardly recall anyone with the depth of leadership and practical legal experience as Ms. Cherot. Further, when the Alaska Judicial Commission released its bar poll, Ms. Cherot had an incredibly high score from prosecutors, judges and colleagues, which speaks to her temperament. He recommended her confirmation.

[1:51:46 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL, after first determining no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearing for Ms. Cherot, appointee to the public defender agency. He asked Ms. Cherot if she had closing comments.

[1:52:02 PM](#)

MS. CHEROT stated that good management means providing leadership, direction, fairness, consistency, organization, responsiveness, and commitment to the agency, which is what she has been doing for the last six months in this role. She said continued stability is important to the health of the agency going forward and to the indigent Alaskans that the agency serves. She thanked members for their time and consideration.

[1:52:34 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL thanked her for her willingness to serve.

[1:52:48 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE commented that he had hired lots of people and sometimes things do not work out. He recalled that she was asked about two specific names and her response was that members could check the employee directory for both names.

MS. CHEROT answered that was correct.

[1:53:39 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL turned to the confirmation hearing for Mr. Granger, appointee to the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar.

[1:54:31 PM](#)

WILLIAM GRANGER, Appointee, Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that he was a lifelong Alaskan seeking reappointment. He had been a member of the Board of Governors for about 14 years, appointed by several

administrations. His role had been to serve as the treasurer, handling and advising its management on financial matters. The public member serves a valuable role to provide historical and institutional knowledge and continuity. He said he would like to continue to serve in that role.

CHAIR COGHILL asked for his view on some things that have improved or need improvement.

[1:56:37 PM](#)

MR. GRANGER said some of the major changes revolve around public service and advocacy. He said the board has a robust outreach into the community and is responsible for tests, admissions, and background checks for a person to be admitted to the bar. The board also conducts disciplinary matters in conjunction with the Alaska Supreme Court and provides continuing education to members on ethics and other topics. He said he thinks it provides a valuable service to the bar and the public. He offered his view that it had improved substantially over time.

CHAIR COGHILL asked about the state's cadre of attorneys and if the state was good at weeding out bad actors.

MR. GRANGER responded that the bar was rapidly aging. He offered his view that the bar has one of the highest testing thresholds in the nation, such that a person has to achieve a certain score to be admitted to the bar or practice in another jurisdiction for a period of five years in order to obtain reciprocity. He maintained that Alaska's standards are reasonably high. The Court is responsive to recommended discipline. He said the program keeps the bar clean and honest and Alaska should be proud of it.

[1:59:44 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if the public member has an opportunity to serve on any committees.

MR. GRANGER answered that there are three public members who are all very active. He said he had never been denied an opportunity to serve on a committee.

[2:00:48 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked him to describe the committee areas that have been his focus.

MR. GRANGER replied his background was in finance, so most of his active involvement was on financial and economic management

matters for the organization, although he does participate in some of the social committees.

[2:01:31 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES referred to the Bar Association's list of committees, which she read: the Bar Rag, Alaska Rules of Professional Conduct, Continuing Legal Education, Discipline Divisions and Hearing Committee, Ethics, Fair and Impartial Courts, Fee Arbitration Panel, Historians, Law Examiners, Law Related Education, Lawyer's Assistant, Lawyer's Fund for Client Protection, Mediation Panels, Pro Bono Service, Scholarships and Tutors. She commented that none of those appear to be directly related to those matters.

[2:02:14 PM](#)

MR. GRANGER answered that those might be standing committees. He meets regularly with the chief financial officer, the executive director, and the board president concerning budgetary concerns and approving the budget. He said he also participates in various determinations of capital level and investment policies. Those might not manifest in standing committees that appear on the website.

SENATOR HUGHES suggested that the committee list she read might relate to the membership at large. She said it makes sense that with his banking background he is helping the board stay on track. She suggested that the Alaska Bar Association might improve the website listing by providing information on the board of governors.

MR. GRANGER agreed to do so.

[2:04:30 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL turned to the confirmation hearing for Jamie Allard, Appointee to the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights.

[2:04:47 PM](#)

JAMIE ALLARD, Appointee, Alaska State Commission for Human Rights, Office of the Governor, Eagle River, Alaska, stated that her father came to the U.S. from Chile and became a citizen in 1962. He started as a janitor and put himself through college. He eventually became a nuclear division director for General Electric in San Francisco, California. He died at the age of 33 so she was raised by a single mother. At an early age she recognized the importance of education to her future. She competed in the Junior Olympics as a track and field athlete.

After high school, she joined the U.S. Army as a transportation specialist. She learned vocational training, communication, and leadership training. She served as an Army Sergeant and later worked for the U.S. State Department in the former Soviet Union promoting democracy. As a civilian State Department employee, she had the flexibility to plan around her husband's deployment. She worked for the Department of Veteran's Affairs, Social Security Administration, and the Department of Defense. She recently resigned from the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and is in her third year of college at Norwich University working toward a degree in national security studies. She said she is a disabled veteran and she would be proud to serve on the commission.

[2:08:31 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL thanked her for her service.

[2:08:46 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL said he appreciated her service. He asked what role she sees for the commission.

MS. ALLARD responded that the commission has taken steps to save money and it has a diverse group of commissioners. She said she brings a veteran's perspective and her own experience of being discriminated against as a female.

[2:10:01 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL pointed out that veterans are not one of the classes protected by the human rights statutes. He asked if it should be a protected class.

MS. ALLARD answered that it should be at the federal level. She said her disability is covered because she is deaf, but she did not think that the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights should cover veterans.

[2:11:19 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES thanked her for her willingness to serve.

[2:11:36 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL thanked her for her willingness to serve.

MS. ALLARD responded that the commissioners are volunteers who will do their best.

[2:12:19 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL turned to the confirmation hearing for Mr. Daniel Weatherly, Appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

[2:12:43 PM](#)

DANIEL WEATHERLY, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety, Anchor Point, Alaska, stated his interest in serving is because he previously served as a trooper in several small communities in Alaska. He said he has over 2,000 hours of training and an advanced police certificate and is a certified instructor. He noted that he has attended one quarterly meeting, serving in the position for communities of 2,500 people and under. He came to Alaska with the U.S. Coast Guard in Ketchikan. He spent four years with the Ketchikan Fire Department as an emergency medical technician and firefighter. He also worked as a seasonal park ranger. He served in the Alaska State Troopers at the academy in Sitka, in Valdez, Anchorage, Kotzebue, and Homer and in several other positions after his trooper service.

[2:17:43 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL thanked him for his service.

[2:18:41 PM](#)

MR. WEATHERLY thanked the committee for the opportunity to testify.

[2:19:21 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL, after first determining that no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearings.

[2:19:41 PM](#)

SENATOR REINBOLD (via teleconference) asked to make a motion to not forward the name of Samantha Cherot.

CHAIR COGHILL advised Senator Reinbold that she could not make a motion on this matter online, but her position was noted.

[2:20:31 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

Public Defender Agency
Samantha Cherot - Anchorage

Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar

William Granger - Anchorage

Alaska State Commission for Human Rights

Jamie Allard - Eagle River

Alaska Police Standards Council

Daniel Weatherly - Anchor Point

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[2:21:29 PM](#)

At-ease.

[2:23:35 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL reconvened the meeting.

[2:23:44 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said he researched the matter related to confirmation hearings since he had at times not wanted to forward a name. He said he would like to make it clear to the public because someone circulated an email asking people to block a nominee. He explained that the committee does not have a procedure to do so. The appointments are forwarded to a joint session for consideration. He read AS 39.05.080(2)(B) that says, "the legislature shall, before the end of the regular session in which the appointments are presented, in joint session assembled, act on the appointments by confirming or declining to confirm by a majority vote of all of the members the appointments presented."

He explained that the action on confirmations occurs on the floor in joint session, not in committee.

CHAIR COGHILL acknowledged that there was some disagreement, but the committee brought forth the issues.

SJR 13-CONST. AM: PROHIBIT ABORTION/FUNDING

[2:25:00 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL announced the consideration of SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13, Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to abortion.

[CHAIR COGHILL opened public testimony on SJR 13.]

[2:26:32 PM](#)

MARGARET MCDONAGH, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said she is a lifelong Alaskan who believes SJR 13 violates the right to privacy guaranteed in the Constitution of the State of Alaska. She views someone's health care decisions, including reproductive health care, as private decisions. She urged members not to move SJR 13 from committee.

[2:27:18 PM](#)

MATT DUNCAN, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, spoke in opposition to SJR 13. He offered his view that charities care for the unwanted children of the world. He suggested that people will testify that they want abortion banned, yet they do not want to care for the people who are not wanted. He referred to a book, The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell, to substantiate his belief that legalized abortion leads to less crime. He offered his belief that a woman's right to make her own decisions is her right.

[2:29:55 PM](#)

CHERYL LOVEGREEN, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that SJR 13 would amend the Constitution of the State of Alaska and remove Alaskans' right to privacy and the right to safe and legal abortions. It would force women and teenage girls to endure pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. She pointed out that Alaska has high rates of sexual assault. She cited a recent poll that indicates that nearly 8 of 10 Alaskans are opposed to the legislature banning abortion. She urged members to vote it down.

[2:31:05 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES clarified that this resolution does not ban abortion or remove a woman's rights or force someone who has been raped to seek an illegal abortion. Instead, SJR 13 would allow the legislature and Alaskans through an initiative process to decide if there are any parameters regarding abortion that the state would like to set, just as other states have done. She asked testifiers to read SJR 13. She reiterated that it would allow the legislature to set the policy rather than the judiciary.

[2:32:34 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL explained that the sponsor was correct on the direct effect of SJR 13, but it would permit those restrictions and many more.

CHAIR COGHILL acknowledged that would be part of the committee discussion with the cloud of the Alaska Supreme Court's decisions impacting the issue.

[2:33:05 PM](#)

SAVANNA SCHOESSLER, representing self, Soldotna, Alaska, expressed her frustration of not being able to testify at an earlier hearing. She said she is a lifelong Alaskan who opposes SJR 13. She disagreed with the sponsor's earlier comments because it leaves woman's health care decisions in the government's realm instead of with women. This includes forced births, which does not have a place in civilized society. She is opposed to government intervention and to changing the Constitution of the State of Alaska. She offered her view that a member is being paid by an anti-abortion organization.

[2:35:36 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked the Chair to prohibit accusations during public testimony, which is unfair, unjustified, and should not occur. He welcomed hearing opinions during public testimony, but he was not willing to be personally maligned.

CHAIR COGHILL cautioned testifiers against making personal accusations and to limit their comments to the resolution. He acknowledged that this issue elicits strong opinions.

[2:36:32 PM](#)

HAYDEN NEVILL, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, stated that he understands the language in SJR 13. He said he loves Alaska because he values its natural beauty, but he also values Alaskans' right to privacy and the right for individuals to make their own decisions. In fact, the right to privacy is so valued that it is included in the Constitution of the State of Alaska. He offered his belief that the courts have correctly interpreted that the right to privacy includes the right to access abortion. A woman's decision surrounding abortion is intensely personal but is none of his business or the business of lawmakers, he said. He urged members not to undermine Alaskans' right to privacy because of one issue.

[2:38:24 PM](#)

TERRISA BUKOVINAC, Founder, Pro-Life San Francisco, San Francisco, Alaska, spoke in support of SJR 13. She said she is a feminist, and an activist in several arenas. This organization is dedicated to resisting the influence of abortion in her community. She said SJR 13 is crucial to achieve equal representation for all Alaskans. She said that as a fulltime

activist she has worked on similar legislation that does not criminalize abortion but keeps the door open to regulation. She indicated she has heard people's beliefs that resolutions of this type will be used to ban abortion. She agreed that some people do, just as some want to ban all birth control. She informed members that hundreds of research projects rely on fetal tissue that is provided by 18-24 weeks old fetuses. It concerns her because fetuses over 22 weeks have a very high rate of survival and because of the methods used for late term abortions. She cited a poll that showed that 72 percent of Democrats want abortion more restricted and regulated.

[2:42:00 PM](#)

KATHY TAYLOR YOKEL, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, spoke against SJR 13 and in support of the right to privacy. She pointed out that that birth control is not 100 percent effective and then related her family's experiences related to abortions and to the medical risk of pregnancy.

CHAIR COGHILL held public testimony open and encouraged the public to submit written testimony to senate.judiciary@akleg.gov.

[2:44:31 PM](#)

MOIRA PYHALA, representing self, Soldotna, Alaska, said she is a lifelong Alaskan. She remarked that Alaska has the highest incidence of sexual assault in the nation. She stated that she was a victim of sexual assault as a 15-year old, which fortunately did not result in a pregnancy. She offered her view that she would not have graduated from college if she had become pregnant. She did not believe SJR 13 would end abortion, but that it would end safe and legal abortions. She said she considers health care to include abortion. She urged Senator Micciche to help provide access to health care rather than to undermine health care decisions that women in his district make and urged the legislature to address important issues, including the high incidence of sexual assault in Alaska.

CHAIR COGHILL reminded members to stay focused on SJR 13.

[2:47:37 PM](#)

DIANA REDWOOD, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, spoke in opposition to amending the Constitution of the State of Alaska through SJR 13. She said this resolution seems to weaken the privacy protections and reproductive health in the state. She referred to SJR 13, which states it is to protect human life, but access to family planning, including abortion, is also an

economic issue. When abortions are limited, it increases women's chances to experience poverty, unemployment, and dependence on public assistance programs. She urged members not to pass SJR 13 from committee.

[2:49:11 PM](#)

CHRISTINE ROBBINS, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, spoke in support to SJR 13. She said this will put power back to the people and restore balance in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. She offered her view that less than one percent of abortions are medically necessary. She offered her view that supporting abortion is a violation of conscience for most Alaskans and Americans. She stated that she works in various ministries and many people do want the unwanted. She objected to public funding of abortion. She did not consider abortions as health care. She offered her view that the issue is not about privacy but about having abortion paid for by someone else.

[2:51:11 PM](#)

ANDY RICE, representing self, North Pole, Alaska, spoke in support of SJR 13, to place the matter on the ballot. She offered her view that each life matters. She spoke in opposition to having tax dollars spent on abortions and opined that all the lives that have been lost is a travesty to society.

[2:52:29 PM](#)

At ease.

[2:53:24 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL reconvened the meeting.

[2:53:30 PM](#)

ROBYN STEVENS, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, said she has been lucky to have consistent access to birth control, medically accurate sex education, and healthy relations. Many women are not lucky. She said she understands what SJR 13 does. It has been upheld over and over that people have the right to self-determination and cannot be forced to donate blood to another person, yet she would be denied bodily autonomy. She said the defining feature of slavery was to take away people's rights. She offered her view that forced pregnancy is being executed by the most barbaric factions in the modern world and listed as a human rights violation by the United Nations. The U.S. has the highest risk of maternal mortality in the developed world. She suggested that the focus should be to provide the best chance

for every wanted child instead of forcing vulnerable women into potentially life-threatening situations.

[2:55:40 PM](#)

DANIEL DAUGHERTY, Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks; President, Arctic Students for Life, Fairbanks, Alaska, spoke in support of SJR 13. He said he has not heard people define abortion in today's testimony, but it is the ending of a human life. He found it disturbing that people ignore that definition, but instead talk about taking away women's rights. This resolution would allow legislature to regulate the ending of a human life.

[2:58:29 PM](#)

PRINCE NWANKUDU, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, spoke in support of SJR 13. He said the issue at stake is a human life. He said protecting the child in the womb is a moral obligation to ensure medical abortion is regulated. He did not view the resolution as banning abortion, but to make sure that people do not have an abortion as a right, which is contradictory to federal laws. He said many pro-life people are champions of adoptions. He urged members to let Alaskans decide this issue via a ballot initiative.

[3:00:33 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL encouraged people to submit written testimony to senate.judiciary@akleg.gov. He said public testimony will be held open.

SJR 13 was held in committee.

[3:01:40 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Coghill adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 3:01 p.m.