

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

January 24, 2019

3:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

SENATE JUDICIARY

Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair
Senator Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair
Senator Mike Shower
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Jesse Kiehl

SENATE STATE AFFAIRS

Senator Mike Shower, Chair
Senator John Coghill, Vice Chair
Senator Lora Reinbold
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Scott Kawasaki

MEMBERS ABSENT

SENATE JUDICIARY

All members present

SENATE STATE AFFAIRS

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION(S) :

Commissioner - Department of Corrections
Nancy Dahlstrom - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Commissioner - Department of Public Safety

Amanda Price - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

NANCY DAHLSTROM, Commissioner Designee
Department of Corrections (DOC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as nominee for commissioner of the Department of Corrections.

AMANDA PRICE, Commissioner Designee
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as nominee for commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.

RALPH SAMUELS, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of confirmation of commissioner designees Dahlstrom and Price.

MARCIA DAVIS, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designee Price.

CHRIS THOMAS, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designee Price.

JAMES COCKRELL, Col. Ret., AST, representing self
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designee Price.

GERALD GODFREY, representing self
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designees Price and Dahlstrom.

CAROLYN PORTER, representing self
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designee Price.

KRIS PITTS, representing self
Maine

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designee Price.

JEN WINKELMAN, Director
Probation Parole Pretrial
Department of Corrections
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of confirmation of commissioner designee Dahlstrom.

MARC ANTRIM, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of confirmation of commissioner designee Dahlstrom.

RANDY MCLELLAN, President
Alaska Correctional Officers Association (ACOA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designee Dahlstrom.

DEREK JOHNSON, Staff Sergeant; Board Member, Region 8
Alaska Correctional Officers Association (ACOA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designee Dahlstrom.

MIKE COONS, President
Greater Alaskan Chapter of Alaska Association of Mature Citizens
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of commissioner designee Dahlstrom and commissioner designee Price.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:05:16 PM](#)

CHAIR SHELLEY HUGHES called the joint meeting of the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee and the Senate State Affairs

Standing Committee to order at 3:05 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Shower, Kiehl, Micciche, Reinbold and Chair Hughes from the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee and Senators Reinbold, Micciche, Kawasaki and Chair Shower from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee. Senator Coghill arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):
Commissioner, Department of Corrections
Commissioner, Department of Public Safety

[3:06:41 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES announced the business of the meeting would be confirmation hearings for commissioner of the Department of Corrections (DOC) and commissioner of the Department of Public Safety (DPS).

She said she would take public testimony after hearing from the commissioner designees. She welcomed the public to submit written testimony to senate.judiciary@akleg.gov.

[3:07:41 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES asked Nancy Dahlstrom, commissioner designee for the Department of Corrections to come forward to testify.

[3:07:47 PM](#)

NANCY DAHLSTROM, Commissioner Designee, Department of Corrections (DOC) stated she has lived in Alaska for nearly 40 years, and she and her husband have four children and ten grandchildren. She said her work experience is in both the public and private sector, including that she previously represented Eagle River in the legislature, serving in the House [of Representatives] for eight years. Governor Dunleavy asked her to serve as commissioner of the Department of Corrections and she was honored to accept the position.

She provided the DOC's goal, which is to provide a safe and secure environment, reformative programs and a process of supervised community integration to achieve enhanced safety in the department. She said her vision is to accomplish this mission while maintaining safety for employees and inmates. She characterized the field of corrections as a balance between toughness and compassion. Although she does not have any experience in the field of corrections, but she brings to this job a background of educational and professional skill sets. She can identify problems and opportunities and can create a plan to address them, build a qualified team to implement and execute

decisions, she said, which makes her the right choice for the job. She said she takes the job of commissioner very seriously and is up to the challenge.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM related that during her eight weeks at DOC, she has already accomplished a few things, including suspending and amending policies she believes will help make citizens safer and help recognize victims' rights. She said she returned the Hiland Mountain Correctional Center (HMCC) to an all-women's facility by moving 37 men from HMCC to the Anchorage Correctional Complex (ACC), along with the very successful 18-month transitional living program (TLC). Ms. Dahlstrom said this will allow her to fully reinstate the TLC program to a broader group of nearly 300 women inmates at HMCC and institute other women's programs that were displaced when the facility housed both men and women. She said that change satisfies the goal of providing inmates with an opportunity to grow. She highlighted that the ACC decision was based on the proximity to the DOC's volunteer base. Not everyone has been pleased with the decision.

She reported that the DOC has a dedicated staff of nearly 1,900 employees. In addition to ensuring that the institutions run smoothly, she is committed to the programs the department offers for sex offenders and faith-based substance abuse programs designed to help inmates reenter society as law-abiding citizens. Ms. Dahlstrom thanked the committee for the opportunity to testify and said she looks forward to working with the [committee and legislature].

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CHAIR HUGHES, referring to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) overview recently presented to the Senate Finance Committee. She related her understanding that each of the commissioners were asked to define the department's mission and identify their priorities. She asked Ms. Dahlstrom to provide the DOC's mission and her first few priorities and if this is a change from the prior administration.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said the DOC's mission is to keep the DOC's residents safe and provide programs for them to improve and learn. She acknowledged that some inmates will take advantage of these programs while others will not. She has been in the process of reviewing many programs and she will continue to do so.

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CHAIR HUGHES commended her for moving swiftly to remove the day pass program and amnesty box practices.

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SENATOR REINBOLD expressed concern that the former commissioner of the DOC was non-responsive and arrogantly disregarded concerns from trail users, church members, community members and even a unanimous resolution against housing male inmates at a female correctional facility. She asked the record to reflect how much the [Eagle River] community council appreciated commissioner designee Dahlstrom's responsiveness in removing the amnesty box, the day passes and transferring leases, which was unanimously supported at a well-attended community council meeting. She thanked Ms. Dahlstrom for her responsiveness to the community's concerns. She related that the HMCC is within a quarter of a mile to trails, schools and the Eagle Point residential subdivision. She asked Ms. Dahlstrom to keep the community council informed, particularly since the last commissioner failed to do so. She related her understanding that approximately 300 inmates are housed in the facility and it is important to keep the community informed.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said she was willing to commit to be open to the committee and to the legislature about things that are happening at the HMCC.

SENATOR REINBOLD clarified that she was not asking Ms. Dahlstrom to impart confidential information. However, she pointed out when five overdoses occurred in a one-week span in a facility, it pointed to an issue with contraband within the facility.

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SENATOR COGHILL joined the meeting.

[3:16:55 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE stated that he met with Ms. Dahlstrom earlier. He said he supports the repeal and replacement of some aspects of the criminal justice system. He offered his belief that one program that could be very effective is the pretrial enforcement program. He asked for her view on continuing the pretrial and whether she finds the program has value.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said the pretrial functions are important. She explained that if the governor's bill, introduced yesterday, passes in its current form it would eliminate a separate division for pretrial, but the responsibilities would

be rolled under probation and parole and the DOC would still have oversight.

SENATOR MICCICHE asked for her vision and plans for prison industries since the industries can help prepare inmates for life after incarceration. He asked whether she had any plans to reevaluate the potential of prison industries.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said she believes in the value of good hard work. She agreed that prison industries are beneficial, and she is currently in the process of reviewing the function. She recalled the Lemon Creek Correctional Center (LCCC) in Juneau previously housed a laundry. The work is beneficial for many reasons, she said.

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SENATOR KAWASAKI said Senate Bill (SB) 32 would repeal and replace Senate Bill 91, which would increase sentencing ranges and probation lengths. He said that SB 33 would also eliminate the credit for electronic monitoring in pretrial status. He anticipated these changes would mean longer stays for inmates in the correctional system. He recalled that in the past several years the legislature appropriated \$10 million in supplemental appropriations for the DOC. He asked Ms. Dahlstrom if she anticipated the department would need additional funds or supplemental appropriations [under the governor's bills.]

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM anticipated the DOC would need extra beds if [SB 32] passed in its current form. She further stated that the DOC would evaluate the current inmate population, acknowledging that everything is on the table as far as housing.

SENATOR KAWASAKI referred to an article he attributed to the Alaska Journal of Commerce that the state might pursue a private prison model for an out-of-state contract, like one the state previously had to house Alaska inmates in Colorado or Arizona. He asked whether that proposal was under consideration given that the prison population is "maxed out." He offered his belief that the state would either need to bring new facilities online or find other beds. He asked whether that was still part of the mix.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM answered yes, that proposal is still on the table.

SENATOR KAWASAKI recalled a report several years ago by the administration that identified the total ratio of correctional officers to inmates. He recalled that the figure was deemed roughly half of what was necessary. He asked how she plans to reconcile that report or how she would handle what he characterized as an unsafe setting within the correctional system.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM answered that recruitment and retention is important in many aspects of public safety. She said she was certainly reviewing this and would be interested in reading the article Senator Kawasaki referenced. She acknowledged that she does not have all the answers today.

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SENATOR REINBOLD said she had worked for years on a trail project in her community that once consisted of 200 volunteers. She recalled that a previous commissioner had allowed the female inmates to assist in the project. She characterized them as the best volunteers she had during the five years she was involved. She asked Ms. Dahlstrom to continue to support the program. She offered her belief that the program was previously well run, despite some hindrances that led to lock-downs any time the women were moved. She briefly discussed the process of using inmates. She asked for her vision in terms of workforce reentry programs for inmates. She offered her belief it was important for male and female inmates to be busy, to feel productive and to help become prepared for reentry to their communities.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said she believes hard work and volunteerism is good for everyone and she will be reviewing whether to continue these programs since they can provide many benefits.

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SENATOR COGHILL acknowledged proposals to change [criminal] statutes [will be considered before the legislature.] He asked Ms. Dahlstrom whether she intends to follow the current law as it stands until the criminal laws change. He said that a significant number of inmates will likely be released. He emphasized the need for the department to have a planning process to reduce recidivism and maintain safety for the public. Although it may not be the focus of the administration, post-incarceration planning will fall into Ms. Dahlstrom's realm and he asked for her view. During his work on [Senate Bill 91] on prison reform, he tried to keep the corrections function within the DOC to keep people safe. He said that post-incarceration

planning was something he tried to address. Currently, the planning process begins 90 days prior to an inmate's release, although he was unsure if the changes [in Senate Bill 91] were fully implemented. Notwithstanding proposed changes, he asked her to use a new set of eyes identify things she thinks could be done better in terms of post-incarceration planning.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM agreed to follow the law as it currently stands. In further response to Senator Coghill, Ms. Dahlstrom briefly described her post-incarceration planning, noting the department would fail its inmates if it released them without any planning. She said she intends to have thorough planning in place for inmates to provide them with the best possible outcome. Many community organizations, including faith-based organizations, can assist the department and help inmates as they [transition into society].

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CHAIR HUGHES said this dovetails nicely into her concerns. She related that at the governor's press conference yesterday [January 23, 2019], the attorney general [designee] advised that the overall crime rate between 2013-17 increased by 25 percent but given that Senate Bill 91 passed in July 2016, the bulk of that upward trend was unrelated to that bill. She understood that some states have reduced recidivism by up to 40 percent based on [prison programs]. The DOC's 2017 and 2018 recidivism reports identified Alaska's recidivism rate at 67 percent and look at what other states are doing. She asked if she was committed to reduce the recidivism rate, especially noting Senator Coghill has predicted many inmates will be released. She suggested Ms. Dahlstrom review other states' programs and innovative programs, such as the successful TLC program. She reported the TLC program has a 28-percent recidivism rate, which reduces to 14 percent those inmates who participate in a faith-based recovery home. She suggested that the TLC program would be an excellent program for HMCC women, recalling her own experience as a contractor. She explained that inmates who participated in this faith-based program were kept busy with meetings, religious studies and other activities. She contrasted that with the idleness of inmates not in the program. She acknowledged the constitution limits what can be required but emphasized her desire for more structure in the state's correctional facilities. She asked Ms. Dahlstrom whether she was committed to address recidivism. She said that undoing some portions of Senate Bill 91 would not affect the recidivism trend since it had been climbing prior to passage of the bill.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM responded that she was 100 percent committed to address recidivism. She expressed a willingness to discuss productive ways to address recidivism.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked for further clarification on whether the administration was considering turning down a \$1 million federal re-entry grant.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM replied that she turned down the grant since it was a one-year one-time grant of \$1 million and she did not believe the state could sustain the expenditures going forward. She offered a willingness to review the grant if facts changed. In response to whether there would be an opportunity to reapply for the grant, Ms. Dahlstrom answered that the federal grant she declined was a one-time federal grant.

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SENATOR KIEHL recalled that Ms. Dahlstrom was serving in the governor's office when the issue of safety for the [Alaska] National Guard arose. He related his understanding that since her appointment Ms. Dahlstrom decided to have troopers conduct internal investigations rather than having the DOC conduct internal reviews. He asked Ms. Dahlstrom how the DOC will keep correctional officers and inmates safe.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said she disbanded the Professional Conduct Unit (PCU) to eliminate duplicate service. The state does not have funding, nor did she think it was a wise use of funds, since the AST is statutorily required to investigate criminal activity. She added that the DOC has human resources personnel able to handle any internal issue and refer any criminal aspects to the AST.

[3:35:24 PM](#)

At-ease.

[3:36:22 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER, acknowledging contentious budget issues will arise, asked whether she anticipated an increase to the DOC's budget or if it is currently sufficient to accomplish DOC's responsibilities.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said she heard Governor Dunleavy's intent to increase funds for public safety. Ms. Dahlstrom indicated that she is tasked with evaluating DOC's

expenditures to determine if the spending is a wise use of state funds.

CHAIR SHOWER asked Ms. Dahlstrom to expand on how to save money with the caveat that increased funding will be necessary to implement any additional programs.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said she has been evaluating the cost of adding new beds if [the governor's] bills introduced yesterday were to pass since the legislation would increase [the number of inmates]. She anticipated [the governor's bills] could also increase mental health costs, so she has been evaluating all programs to determine which ones can be consolidated or what function could be performed by community or other organizations.

CHAIR SHOWER related that the DOC has a prisoner transport function but the Department of Public Safety (DPS) has been providing many of these services. He asked if she has considered the cost of prisoner transport.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM related that one option under consideration is to use video conferencing for court appearances, which could also increase public safety since it would avoid having inmates on the street and save money for DPS. She advised that she is still evaluating the whole picture.

CHAIR SHOWER said the Palmer Correctional [Center] (PCC) is essentially in "dry storage," yet the DOC has the potential need for additional beds. He asked whether she has been considering reopening the PCC depending on what happens with the criminal justice reform.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM answered yes, noting she has asked for projected costs to bring the PCC out of mothball status.

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SENATOR REINBOLD asked to comment on several issues. First, she noted that she previously evaluated the DOC's internal investigative unit and found that continual investigations were occurring. This was duplicate effort between the DOC's human resources and AST. She said she was glad to learn the PCU was eliminated. Since she serves on the DOC Senate Finance Subcommittee, she was glad to hear Senator Shower raise the issue of the "million-mile club," noting AST provides prisoner transport services for the DOC, which was expensive to provide. She thanked Ms. Dahlstrom for evaluating the costs of doing so.

She has heard concerns about the costs of increased beds; however, she noted many costs for DOC's correctional facilities are fixed costs. She asked Ms. Dahlstrom to look for efficiencies such as video conferencing and prisoner transports. She asked for further clarification on any cost savings, noting that not only are prison costs a factor but that tens of millions of dollars of theft impact the private sector and those costs should also be considered.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM said she was absolutely committed to spending the public's money wisely, that she takes spending seriously and wanted to assure members she would make the wisest choices possible to keep the public safe.

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SENATOR MICCICHE recalled that the United States (U.S.) is number one in the world for proportion of population incarcerated and Alaska is number one in the U.S. He briefly described the state's departments working in silos, which does not seem realistic. He related the cycle of incarceration, noting that DOC houses incarcerated inmates, DPS arrests them, the Alaska Court System prosecutes them, and the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) provides services for many families of inmates. He asked Ms. Dahlstrom whether she saw the potential for a collective and comprehensive prevention program to keep people from entering the system. He remarked that he would like to put DOC out of business one day, but it does not seem very realistic right now.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM answered yes, that she was pleased when the governor directed the DPS, DOC, and Department of Law (DOL) to work together as a team. She said DHSS has also been involved in discussions. She committed to collaborate with other departments.

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CHAIR HUGHES said with passage of criminal law changes that the prior administration was responsible for writing regulations and submitting them to the legislature. Instead, guidelines were compiled, and programs were begun, she said. She asked Ms. Dahlstrom for a commitment for a timely regulatory process including public process.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE DAHLSTROM committed to do so.

CHAIR HUGHES was unsure whether the governor's bills would pass the legislature. She asked Ms. Dahlstrom to consider how to make

Alaska safer even if none of the crime bills passed. She suggested that many things could be done at the correctional facilities. She pointed out Alaska has had a pattern of inmates leaving in worse shape than when they entered and committing worse crimes when they were released. She offered her belief that Ms. Dahlstrom has an opportunity to do things differently that could make Alaska's communities safer.

3:45:21 PM

At ease.

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CHAIR HUGHES reconvened the meeting.

CHAIR HUGHES stated that public testimony would be taken at the end of the confirmation hearings. She advised that in the event the committee did not have time to take all the public testimony, people could submit written testimony as part of the record.

3:46:25 PM

AMANDA PRICE, Commissioner Designee, Department of Public Safety (DPS), thanked her staff for their work. She stated her goal today was to share her background and qualifications for serving as commissioner of DPS. She has known Governor Dunleavy for some time and is aligned with and supportive of his goals for the department, she said. She was raised in Alaska, has lived in Alaska for 40 years, has three children. Her husband, who is a retired police officer, and children live in Anchorage. Twenty years ago, she operated a non-profit organization, [Muscular Dystrophy Association, Inc. - Alaska Chapter] with substantial responsibility and authority which has shaped her life, work ethic, and expectations for the work ethics of others. During that time, she spent time in rural communities, operated medical equipment, and never just wanted to receive a paycheck, but wanted to serve and benefit of Alaska. She worked for several non-profit organizations and those experiences gave her an intensive knowledge of strategic planning, organizational management and gave her fiscally conservative and fiscally responsible views. She also had opportunities to work on policy issues and engage with the legislature. She offered her belief these experiences provided her with a well-rounded set of management skills.

She reviewed her work experience, including serving as executive director of Standing Together Against Rape (STAR). She felt that working with law enforcement agencies and a multi-disciplinary

group gave her a broad view and sense of the services and gaps in the system. She also served in Governor Walker's administration for two years as a senior advisor on issues of violent crime prevention and intervention, with a focus on domestic violence and sexual assault. She reviewed cases in which concerns were raised that forensic evidence had not been moved to the [Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory (CrimeLab)], which led to an audit of sexual assault kits in possession of law enforcement agencies. She characterized this as one gap but noted that other challenges exist, and she hopes for improvements. She listed her memberships, including serving on the Council of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA), the National Criminal Justice Association and other service provider agencies.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE said that crime is often discussed as statistics, but the human cost and impact of rising crime on Alaskans should not be overlooked. She has been touched by violent crime, assault victims, and incarcerated family members. She related a personal scenario to illustrate how people make erroneous assumptions about others. She related that she has forged relationships with retired law enforcement through her work experiences that has helped her understand the elements of public safety. She related her top priorities fall within the statutory mission of DPS, which is to protect life and property and the constitutional authority identifies the need to protect the public. Any DPS functions that fall outside those protections will be evaluated. She committed to work with all departments to break down silos, noting she has already been working with commissioner designee Dahlstrom, DHSS commissioner designee Crum and attorney general designee [Clarkson].

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE identified one underutilized and underperforming DPS division is the Division of Fire and Life Safety, which is tasked with many functions, including statewide jurisdiction for plan review and fire code enforcement. In 2017, Alaska experienced a 167 percent increase in fire fatalities and a significant increase in injuries to firefighters. She intends to provide the division with adequate resources to conduct plan reviews and provide training for firefighters statewide, she said.

She said the Council of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) was a primary funder of the agency that she previously ran. She reviewed the CDVSA activities, including that it funds 24 emergency shelter programs, provides critical outreach

programs, and intervenes in and works to reduce crimes of sexual assault. She commended the multi-disciplinary response team approach the CDVSA uses to help ensure prosecution of cases. She would like to see the same approach used throughout Alaska. She highlighted the critical work the Division of Statewide Services provides; it houses the Criminal Records and Identification Bureau that oversees sex offender registration. The division also oversees concealed carry firearms permitting, information services, the fingerprint ID system, the Public Safety Information Network, emergency dispatch centers, and 911 services. The CrimeLab provides all forensic services for law enforcement agencies and expert testimony in criminal cases. The Alaska Police Standards Council evaluates misconduct by certified police officers in the state and makes determinations on revoking their certifications.

4:00:02 PM

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE said she views herself as an unconventional appointee since governors generally appoint career law enforcement personnel. She acknowledged her tremendous respect for the AST, but troopers are not trained at the training academy to achieve management skills, including budget, personnel, administrative, or legislative functions.

4:01:10 PM

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE said the role of the commissioner is to provide policy and oversight management and work with the legislature to ensure the governor's goals and initiatives are met and to provide adequate resources for the department to perform the DPS's critical mission. She highlighted the collective experience her staff present at today's meeting has, such that she has faith in them to run every law enforcement mission necessary. She pointed out one responsibility to law enforcement personnel is to provide training and retention. The department plans to hold an upcoming academy to train troopers, which will be the largest training academy since 2003. She commended the recruitment unit. She noted that the department has a retention work group, comprised of sworn and non-sworn personnel, who will report to her on March 8, 2019 with recommendations to address issues that were raised in the employee engagement survey; however, the group will not make any recommendations related to salary or benefits. She stated her desire to improve morale and support law enforcement.

4:03:00 PM

CHAIR HUGHES thanked Ms. Price for her testimony and asked invited members to ask questions. In response to Senator

Reinbold, she indicated members could ask additional questions after public testimony if time permits.

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SENATOR MICCICHE commended Ms. Price's testimony and said he did not currently have any questions.

4:04:06 PM

SENATOR KAWASAKI thanked Ms. Price for her thorough testimony. He referred to an article in the [Mat-Su Valley] Frontiersman that indicated she might be the only DPS commissioner without law enforcement experience although her background [intersected with law enforcement.] He asked how she intended to inspire the "rank and file" law enforcement personnel who are more accustomed to a more regimented style of leadership

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE responded that she contemplated this issue prior to accepting the position because she wants her presence to be supportive and not detrimental to the department. She was grateful that she has not experienced any pushback thus far, in part, because she asked law enforcement personnel and staff what they needed, and she has worked to implement suggestions. She lamented that the department has not had support for training or funding for commanders to visit posts. She immediately has mandated that commanders visit their posts to better understand the issues the detachments' troopers face. She has also implemented mandates for training and in-service days, which she later learned are key to retaining law enforcement. She did not think commissioners needed to have law enforcement experience, but rather that troopers needed their leaders to believe in them.

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked for clarification on her resume on the dates of her experience at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) from March 2015 to March 2017.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE confirmed that the dates were correct. In response to a further question on her experience, Ms. Price agreed there was an error in the dates she served as deputy campaign manager for Mike Dunleavy for Governor and when she served as senior advisor to Governor Walker, which showed a three-month overlap. Ms. Price recalled she began working for the Dunleavy campaign in December 2017. She offered to update her resume.

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked why she left Governor Walker's office in 2017.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE said that she had high hopes that public safety would be a high priority for Governor Walker, and she worked hard but found that what she was trying to accomplish for Alaska was not being furthered. She said her hopes were dashed and she felt it no longer suited her to serve in that capacity.

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CHAIR SHOWER commented that his conversations with [Alaska State Troopers (troopers)] raised his concern about morale within the department. One common complaint was that as law enforcement personnel they were not making an impact. They often were arresting the same individual multiple times sometimes on the same day. He suggested this might be due to recent changes in the criminal laws and some of the responsibility falls on the legislature to give law enforcement appropriate tools. He thanked Ms. Price for her actions to improve morale. He further asked Ms. Price to identify her top three challenges for the department.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE highlighted that the single, biggest challenge she faces is the lack of troopers and she characterized the insufficient number of troopers as the "top three challenges" she faces. She explained that it takes a significant amount of time to recruit, train, and field train troopers, noting the department is committed to not lower its standards for troopers. She said that communities either do not have enough troopers to feel safe or they have none. She acknowledged that troopers want to perform their jobs, including responding to all 911 calls. In fact, not having enough law enforcement to respond to calls compounds the trauma that troopers experience. She expressed concern about eroding public trust when the public places emergency calls and those calls are not answered.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE acknowledged she has held conversations with local law enforcement and some legislators about the need for additional troopers and to have consistent recruitment, retention, and to reduce separations. She expressed concern about the lack of a sustainable strategic plan, which she said is an important aspect for transparency. She highlighted that a strategic plan also informs the legislature and the public where troopers will be assigned and the type of public safety response the public can expect.

[4:12:41 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL said he appreciated Ms. Price's work on trooper retention. He hoped she would broaden the retention issue to include benefits for them. He stated he has held many conversations with law enforcement personnel who expressed concerns about benefits, noting they advised him that it does not make economic sense for them to remain in Alaska. He said he has also spoken with Ms. Price on the issue of staff longevity. He was pleased to hear her mention local law enforcement but expressed concern about previous administrations shifting costs to local government with police powers, for training costs or trooper deployment decisions. He asked for clarification on her vision on the relationship and any overlap between local police departments and troopers in Alaska.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE said she could not provide a comprehensive response now; it will require additional conversations. She said she excluded defined benefits because she wanted to address areas under her control, but she does support defined benefits for troopers. She offered her belief that the state does not have enough resources to provide adequate public safety services to the public without collaborating with local police. In terms of cost sharing, the state has decided it cannot continue to absorb costs, for example, police academy training costs. She offered her belief that this is a policy call. She said her response will be to reach out and collaborate with some of the more challenged areas, such as Haines, to improve the public safety response and find solutions that will work for the AST and wildlife troopers. She questioned whether the ultimate solution for Haines would work in other areas, such as the Mat-Su Borough since the solution would not likely be a "one size fits all" solution.

[4:15:47 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES said she was glad to hear Ms. Price wants to restore the public trust in terms of emergency responses. She related her understanding that in the past few years some people did not bother to call 911 for help because troopers did not respond. She pointed out some members of the administration and law enforcement in the audience.

[4:16:50 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES opened public testimony for the confirmation hearing for commissioner designee Nancy Dahlstrom, Department of Corrections and commissioner designee Amanda Price, Department of Public Safety.

[4:17:04 PM](#)

At ease.

[4:17:17 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES reconvened the meeting.

[4:17:42 PM](#)

RALPH SAMUELS, representing self, testified in support of Ms. Dahlstrom, stating he has known her for nearly two decades, and they served together in the legislature for several years. He found her to be very qualified, hardworking, and a critical thinker who has public and private sector experience. He said he also worked with Ms. Price during her time with former Governor Walker's administration and her tenure with non-profit organizations for victims. He offered his support for both commissioner designees and offered his belief that Ms. Dahlstrom and Ms. Price will perform well for Alaska.

[4:18:55 PM](#)

MARCIA DAVIS, representing self, said she served previously as deputy chief-of-staff for former Governor Walker and in that capacity worked with Ms. Price for two years. She found Ms. Price to be very talented and qualified. Ms. Price would be her first choice for commissioner if she were selecting one. She spoke to Ms. Price's determination, her ability to identify and work and implement goals and collaborate with others. She has observed her write and obtain federal grants and give others credit when the federal grants were awarded. She said Ms. Price has proven herself with the rank and file.

[4:21:13 PM](#)

CHRIS THOMAS, representing self, related he had extensive experience investigating sexual assaults, met Ms. Price when she was executive director of STAR and considers her a friend. He said Ms. Price is intelligent, industrious, committed, understands the complexities of investigations, makes good decisions and will always do the right thing. He said he has been in law enforcement for 15 years and would willingly work for her. He urged members to confirm Ms. Price.

[4:22:21 PM](#)

JAMES COCKRELL, Col. Retired, AST; representing self, said he is a retired AST Colonel with approximately 30 years of service with the DPS. He spoke in support of the confirmation of Ms. Price. He said he worked on public safety issues with Ms. Price when she was a senior policy advisor for former Governor Walker, more specifically, on issues in rural Alaska. He said she worked to garner a \$1.2 million federal grant for sexual assault kits

or rape kits. Prior to her appointment, he often spoke with her and is confident that she will provide the passion, direction, and energy to perform the job. In closing he said Ms. Price engages with law enforcement personnel in ways not previously done and he would be proud to work for her.

4:24:23 PM

GERALD GODFREY, representing self, said that he served in the cabinet alongside Ms. Price and found her to possess considerable capabilities. He also served as chair of the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB) and characterized his experience with Ms. Price as having considerable professional overlap. He related other family members' service in the AST, including that his brother and brother-in-law served as troopers and his father was a career trooper, former AST director, and former DPS commissioner. He offered his belief that he understands the demands and skills needed to serve as commissioner. He characterized Ms. Price as intelligent, energetic, and capable. He said that public safety and law enforcement was not the focus of the previous administration, which saddened him, but he believes it will be the focus of the current administration. He did not think that law enforcement experience was essential to serve as the DPS commissioner and commended Governor Dunleavy's choice of Ms. Price and the governor's willingness to challenge conventional practice.

He further testified in support of Ms. Dahlstrom as commissioner of the DOC, stating he has known her for more than 20 years and finds her to be capable and committed. He worked closely with Ms. Dahlstrom on crime issues while he served on the VCCB. In closing, he said she was a strong appointee as commissioner.

4:27:28 PM

CAROLYN PORTER, representing self, stated that she worked with Ms. Price on a campaign and found her to be dedicated, intelligent, tireless, with an ability to work with diverse people. She said she believes Ms. Price has the highest respect for law enforcement and is dedicated to help restore public safety in Alaska. In closing, she strongly urged the committee to confirm Ms. Price.

4:28:38 PM

KRIS PITTS, representing self, stated her support for Ms. Price. She said that the governor has characterized crime in Alaska as out of control, citing the high incidence of rape and sexual assault. She offered her belief that Ms. Price has a deep personal commitment to serve the people of Alaska and she is

highly qualified to serve. She related a personal scenario to emphasize her support for Ms. Price. She said given Ms. Price's background and experience, she could think of no other candidate who could lead the department in the role of commissioner.

4:31:52 PM

JEN WINKELMAN, Director, Probation Parole Pretrial, Department of Corrections (DOC), said that she has worked for the DOC for 18 years. She spoke in support of Ms. Dahlstrom, stating she admires her demonstrated strong leadership, grace, and compassion in the short time she has served as commissioner [designee], which are critical skills needed in the department. She offered her belief that Ms. Dahlstrom cares about the staff and for those in custody. She said staff morale has already improved, that Ms. Dahlstrom collaborates with staff and recognizes individual staff strengths. In closing, she asked members to support Ms. Dahlstrom's confirmation.

4:34:15 PM

MARC ANTRIM, representing self, said he is currently employed as a petroleum security contractor on the North Slope. He previously served as commissioner of the DOC, during former Governor Murkowski's administration, and worked with Ms. Dahlstrom on criminal justice issues. He said she is fair, tough, open minded, interested in staff, clients, public safety and the public. He said that changes in one part of the criminal justice system affect other parts of the system. He spoke to the rigors and stress for those working in the criminal justice system. He commended the team Ms. Dahlstrom has selected and her policy changes as commissioner designee. He acknowledged the monumental budgetary challenges Alaska currently faces. He offered his belief that Ms. Dahlstrom has the experience, leadership, skills, and commitment to make Alaska a better and safer place. In closing, he urged members to move on her confirmation.

4:38:49 PM

RANDY MCLELLAN, President, Alaska Correctional Officers Association, (ACOA), briefly stated his personal and work history, including that he moved to Alaska in 1995, lives in Wasilla, has worked for the DOC for 22 years, and is currently serving in his fifth term as president of the association. He thanked Ms. Dahlstrom for recent policy changes she implemented, including eliminating the day pass and amnesty programs and the professional conduct unit. He expressed concern about department morale, noting it was at "rock bottom" but said it has already

improved under Ms. Dahlstrom's strong leadership. In closing, he advocated for her confirmation.

[4:41:13 PM](#)

DEREK JOHNSON, Staff Sergeant; Board Member, Region 8, Alaska Correctional Officers Association, (ACOA), said he has worked at the Lemon Creek Correctional Facility for nearly 10 years. He agreed with Mr. McLellan's views on department morale and the improvements under her, that correctional staff has great confidence in the deputy commissioners Ms. Dahlstrom has selected. In closing he offered his belief that Ms. Dahlstrom will have a positive effect at the DOC.

[4:42:35 PM](#)

MIKE COONS, President, Greater Alaskan Chapter of Alaska Association of Mature Citizens (AMAC), said he does not know either commissioner designee, but after listening to the testimony found that both commissioners think "outside of the box." Although neither designee has worked within the fields of their respective departments, they each can analyze the criminal justice system and make sound decisions. He said the criminal justice system is a broken system and he supported the governor's emphasis on public safety, which will shift and put criminals behind bars.

[4:45:10 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES, after first determining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearing for commissioner designee Dahlstrom, Department of Corrections (DOC) and commissioner designee Price, Department of Public Safety (DPS). She welcomed written testimony submitted to the committee.

[4:45:19 PM](#)

SENATOR REINBOLD highlighted her legislative committee membership, including that she currently serves on the Senate Judiciary and Senate State Affairs Committees and as Chair, Senate Labor and Commerce Committee. She emphasized the importance of government's role in keeping the public safe and her belief that the state is failing its mission to do so. This could be attributed to any number of things including the recession, [the opioid epidemic], or passage of [criminal justice system bills] by the legislature, she said. She described the increased crime in communities and how it has adversely affected her community and Alaskans. She emphasized her support for Ms. Price and commended her initiative, noting that she did not support the previous DOC commissioner because

the appointee did not have a plan to combat the high incidence of rapists not incarcerated.

SENATOR REINBOLD thanked Ms. Price for her work on [sexual assault] kits and urged her to keep victims at the forefront, use every dollar wisely, minimize overtime, and provide oversight for the crime lab. She asked Ms. Price to be unconventional in her leadership role, such as shifting [top-heavy] administration or wildlife troopers when needed. She said that in signing the committee report [today] it would represent her commitment to both commissioner designees. She reiterated the importance of public safety. She considered both appointees as dynamic individuals and thanked them for stepping up to serve.

[4:49:59 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked to put on the record that the [academy] training costs were passed on to municipalities at his request because essentially the state was providing law enforcement training for free since local government subsequently [hired] troopers. At the same time, high-end retention studies showed that compensation might need to be adjusted for troopers. He stated that the legislature relies on data during its decision-making processes. He emphasized his support for public safety, law enforcement and corrections. He highlighted Alaska's crime epidemic that adversely affects Alaskans, who do not feel safe, and that increased crime creates additional risks for public safety and correctional officers. He said the state needs to stop working in "silos." During his conversations with [DPS] management, past management, and troopers he has only heard support for Ms. Price. He has heard support for Ms. Dahlstrom, as well. He offered his support for the confirmation of both commissioner designees. He offered his belief that the state must look at issues very differently than it has in the past.

[4:52:00 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWERS referred to the VPSO [Village Public Safety Officer] program and stated that after holding discussions with tribal leaders he senses that the state could probably do a better job of using more local enforcement in local areas and improve the program. He acknowledged that it is more difficult to bring troopers from Palmer or Mat-Su into a [rural] community, due to trust and other issues. He asked whether she would review the VPSO program to make it more effective and create a more engaging presence in the local communities to complement but not compete with the AST.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE PRICE said she would be hard pressed to find someone who would say the VPSO program was effective and successful since it does not drive down crime or engage communities, and costs over \$14 million for 45 officers. She said she will evaluate the program and will make changes, but she was uncertain what changes would be made.

[4:53:48 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES gave the e-mail address for submitting written testimony: senate.judiciary@akleg.gov.

[4:54:08 PM](#)

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

Commissioner, Department of Corrections
Nancy Dahlstrom - Anchorage

Commissioner, Department of Public Safety
Amanda Price - Anchorage

This does not reflect an intent by any of the members to vote for or against the confirmation of the individuals during any further sessions.

CHAIR HUGHES stated the committee announcements.

[4:55:20 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committees, Chair Hughes adjourned the joint meeting of the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee and Senate State Affairs Committee at 4:55 p.m.