

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 19, 2020

3:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Joshua Revak, Chair
Senator John Coghill, Vice Chair
Senator Mia Costello, via teleconference
Senator David Wilson
Senator Scott Kawasaki

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 210

"An Act relating to special request specialty organization registration plates."

- MOVED CSSB 210 (STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 180

"An Act relating to the establishment and maintenance of an Internet website providing information on state government financial transactions and specifying the information to be made available on the website."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 210

SHORT TITLE: LICENSE PLATES: SPECIALTY ORGANIZATIONS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) COSTELLO

02/21/20	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/21/20	(S)	STA, FIN
03/12/20	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/12/20	(S)	Heard & Held
03/12/20	(S)	MINUTE (STA)
03/19/20	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 180

SHORT TITLE: STATE GOV'T FINANCES: WEBSITE

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) WIELECHOWSKI

02/07/20 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/07/20 (S) STA, FIN
03/19/20 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

BETTY TANGEMAN, Staff
Senator Joshua Revak
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the changes in the committee substitute for SB 210, version M.

TOM WRIGHT, Staff
Senator Mia Costello
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on SB 210 on behalf of the sponsor.

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 180.

NATE GRAHAM, Staff
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered a PowerPoint to introduce SB 180.

JAMIN LIEBER, representing self
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 180.

JIM SYKES, representing self
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 180.

JOE GELDHOF, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 180.

TOMOTHY HALE, representing self
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 180.

WILL MULDOON, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 180.

VERI DI SUVERO, Executive Director
Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 180.

RYAN MCKEE, State Director
Americans for Prosperity
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 180.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:31:31 PM](#)

CHAIR JOSHUA REVAK called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Coghill, Wilson, Kawasaki, Costello (via teleconference), and Chair Revak.

SB 210-LICENSE PLATES: SPECIALTY ORGANIZATIONS

[3:32:43 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 210, "An Act relating to special request specialty organization registration plates."

He stated that this is the second hearing on the bill and public testimony is closed. He noted the committee substitute for the committee to consider.

[3:33:02 PM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL moved to adopt the committee substitute (CS) for SB 210, work order 31-LS1564\M, as the working document.

[3:33:15 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK objected for an explanation of the changes.

[3:33:23 PM](#)

BETTY TANGEMAN, Staff, Senator Joshua Revak, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, on behalf of the committee, explained that the changes in version M of SB 210 start on page 1, lines 11-14, which read:

If the department denies an application to create a specialty organization registration plate under this section, the department shall notify the commissioner of the denial. The commissioner may reverse the decision of the department and require issuance of the requested plate.

She said the sponsor wanted an option for those not found eligible for a specialty plate to appeal their denials to the commissioner.

CHAIR REVAK added that it was possible the language in the bill would not cover some organizations, such as a military honor not currently envisioned. This language will allow the commissioner discretion to intervene in the process.

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CHAIR REVAK removed his objection and version M was adopted.

[3:35:18 PM](#)

TOM WRIGHT, Staff, Senator Mia Costello, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said the sponsor does not have any problem with the change in the committee substitute for SB 210, version M.

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SENATOR COSTELLO expressed appreciation that the committee was hearing the bill and stated support for adding the option for organizations to work directly with the department.

CHAIR REVAK solicited the will of the committee.

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SENATOR COGHILL moved to report the committee substitute (CS) for SB 210, version M, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note.

CHAIR REVAK found no objection and CSSB 210(STA) was reported from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee.

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At ease

SB 180-STATE GOV'T FINANCES: WEBSITE

3:38:18 PM

CHAIR REVAK reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 180, "An Act relating to the establishment and maintenance of an Internet website providing information on state government financial transactions and specifying the information to be made available on the website."

3:38:37 PM

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, introduced SB 180 paraphrasing the following sponsor statement:

The state of Alaska spends billions of dollars each year on everything from office supplies, professional services, and capital improvement projects. Public accountability helps ensure that state funds are spent wisely. All 50 states operate websites that make information on state expenditures and revenues accessible to the public. However, compared to other states Alaska's site is ranked as one of the worst in the nation at making the data accessible to the public.

The intent of the Alaska Online Checkbook Act is to create a free, searchable website that provides Alaskans with easy access to detailed and comprehensive information on state spending. This will encourage better understanding of state operations and, ultimately, help ensure that funding is directed to the state's most important needs. The state currently posts some financial information in a downloadable spreadsheet, but this spreadsheet is very cumbersome, must be downloaded, is difficult to search and understand. It does not provide any "big picture" context about state expenditures vs. revenues nor is it codified in law. The ability to see how Alaska's government uses public funding is fundamental to transparency and bolsters public confidence in government and promotes fiscal responsibility.

SB 180 will give Alaskans easy access to detailed information on state expenditures and revenue, empowering them to become fiscal watchdogs. It will lead to greater government accountability and a public

better able to assist in making difficult government decisions.

I hope that you will join me in taking reasonable steps to ensure that Alaskans have access to our state's financial information.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI advised that the state currently has an EXCEL spreadsheet that can be downloaded with this information. However, it is slow to download and operate and it is not easily searchable. He referred to letters in members' packets from the Frontier Group and United States Public Interest Research Group and noted that Alaska has received an "F" in five of six years from several of these groups and is ranked 49th out of 50 states in terms of access provided to the public. He offered his view that it will only take a few hours to put the information together for a better process.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI related that he sponsored similar legislation in 2007 or 2008, but the bill did not make it through the process. One of the things mentioned at the time was that the government is already providing the information, so a bill was unnecessary. However, Alaska is not providing adequate public access. He commented on the unusual circumstance that a bill of his received support from Americans for Prosperity. It shows that SB 180 appeals to people who have a wide range of political philosophies. He characterized it as a good government bill.

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NATE GRAHAM, Staff, Senator Bill Wielechowski, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, delivered a PowerPoint presentation on SB 180, starting with slide 2.

- In 2018 Alaska received a failing grade from the U.S PIRG Education Fund for providing online access to government spending data.
- Alaska has no statutory requirements to maintain an online checkbook.

MR. GRAHAM stated that the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S.PIRG) has ranked Alaska 49 of 50 for its online transparency. In 2010, U.S. PIRG began tracking online transparency of state government spending information. Alaska received a "D" or an "F" for each year. Early on Alaska received Ds simply because the technology did not exist for states to

offer online transparent information. The technology now exists, and some states provide excellent information.

MR. GRAHAM reviewed slide 3 relating to the Alaska Online Checkbook Act:

- Require The State To Provide Monthly And Annual Financial Information To The Public.
- Consolidate State Financial Information.
- Provide Detailed Information On State Expenditures And Revenue. (Date, Vendor, Department, Expense Type)
- Increase State Spending Transparency.

SB 180 will not require the state to provide any new information since the Department of Revenue (DOR) and the Office of Management and Budget already produce this information. It would just compile the data in one area. As many people know, the state has an online checkbook that was initiated by Governor Palin.

MR. GRAHAM pointed out the differences between the current online checkbook and the proposal in SB 180 shown on slide 4:

Checkbook Online

- No Mandatory Reporting Requirements.
- Data Must Be Downloaded (PDF Or EXCEL).
- No Online Search Option.
- Does Not Include Revenue Reports.
- Does Not Allow Year To Year Spending Comparison.
- Does Not Include Spending For The University Of Alaska Or Public Corporations.

Online Checkbook Act

- Monthly & Annual Reporting Requirements.
- All Data Is Online; You Choose What To Download.
- Searchable Data By Agency, Vendor, Year, Etc.
- Includes Revenue & Expenditures
- You Can Compare State Spending By Fiscal Year.
- Includes Revenue & Expenses Of University Of Alaska & Public Corporations (Including APFC).

He said data currently must be downloaded via Microsoft Excel before it can be viewed, but it is cumbersome. For example, in 2019 the download consisted of about 75,000 transactions on each

sheet. This process makes it difficult to search for specific information.

MR. GRAHAM related that under SB 180 it would be easy to search for information. It would be like searching an Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC) report for the information via the Internet after downloading the specific data. He reiterated that the current online checkbook does not have an online search option, it does not include revenue, and it does not easily allow comparing state spending from year to year.

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MR. GRAHAM reviewed the reporting requirements for revenues and expenditures on slides 5 and 6:

Reporting Requirements

Revenues

- Receipts Or Deposits.
- Proceeds From Taxes.
- Agency Earnings (Sales, Services, Licenses Or Permits).
- Other Revenues From State Money Or Property (Interest, Lease, Gifts, Donations).

Expenditures

- The names and locations of any persons to whom payment was made.
- The amounts of the expenditures disbursed.
- The type of transaction, by account code, including the purpose of the expenditure.

He highlighted that expenditures will also contain the code and the code description.

MR. GRAHAM reviewed the reporting requirements for account balances on slide 7:

Account Balances

- Statutory Budget Reserve (SBR).
- Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR).
- Permanent Fund Earnings Reserve Account (ERA).

MR. GRAHAM said there will be a monthly reporting of account balances for the SBR, CBR, and ERA. This information is available, but it is not provided in a consolidated report.

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MR. GRAHAM reviewed two screen shot examples of Alaska's current online checkbook on slide 8. The information is broken down by fiscal year, such that clicking on one of the fiscal years will bring up an option to download the information in a PDF format, Excel document, or CSV document.

MR. GRAHAM reviewed a screen shot of Alaska's current format for the online checkbook on slide 9:

- In FY 2016 There Were 78,156 Individual Reports In The "Online Checkbook".
- You Must Use Search Functions Within Excel To Find Vendors.
- Cannot Easily Track Spending By Year.

He said the files contain tens of thousands of transactions. For example, a person would need to use a search function within the Excel document to see any of the information.

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MR. GRAHAM reviewed slides 10-15, which showed snapshots of the online dashboard for Ohio by department and expense type.

He reported that Ohio is ranked as the best transparency website in the nation. The screen shot of Ohio's dashboard allows the public to search by year, agency, and expense type. This allows the public to see how much has been spent each year, including the category and amount of the expenditures.

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CHAIR REVAK asked how much effort it would take to establish something similar and how it would be maintained. He noted that the sponsor anticipated a zero fiscal note.

MR. GRAHAM responded that once the data is in a single location, it is easy to put together a dashboard.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI showed an example and opined that it would be easy for someone in the state to do. He did not anticipate that maintaining the online checkbook would take much time.

SENATOR WILSON said he agrees but was skeptical about the cost.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI said Mr. Graham created an online searchable website in a day. He opined that people with more experience would easily be able to do this.

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MR. GRAHAM said he took all the online checkbook dates, combined all the Excel spreadsheets for the last five years and did it in a day. He indicated that he does not have a technology background, so it would be easier for someone with that background to develop an online checkbook.

MR. GRAHAM reviewed slide 16, Additional Benefits:

- Mississippi reported that every information request fulfilled by its transparency website rather than by a state employee saves the state between \$750 and \$1,000 in staff time.
- South Carolina open records requests initially dropped by two-thirds after the creation of its transparency website, reducing staff time and saving an estimated tens of thousands of dollars.
- The Texas Comptroller used its transparency website to evaluate spending. By monitoring contracts more closely and sourcing services from new vendors when the potential for cost-cutting was identified, the state saved more than \$163 million.

He said states reported additional benefits in having the information easily accessible. For example, vendors in Ohio reported using ohiocheckbook.com as a business analytics tool to determine when they could offer product to a state agency at a better value. An elected official used the site to compare the prices for road salt to ensure the county was obtaining a competitive rate. Mississippi reported it saved from \$750 to \$1,000 per information request because the information was readily available. Texas was able to save \$163 million by having information online to more closely monitor contracts and identify cost-cutting measures.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI added that making information available online will reduce staff time to compile information to fulfill public records requests.

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SENATOR KAWASAKI asked how other state agencies, including state corporations such as the Alaska Railroad Corporation and the Alaska Aerospace Development Corporation, would be affected.

MR. GRAHAM replied all publicly owned corporations would be included in SB 180. All the information from public corporations is already public information but it is not listed in the current Alaska checkbook. The University of Alaska expenses are not currently listed but would be under this bill.

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked if the public entities that are not providing information for the current Alaska checkbook would have to come up with the numbers.

MR. GRAHAM answered that they are all required to follow basic accounting guidelines, so they already have the information. He acknowledged that they may need to change their procedures some to provide the information to the Department of Administration for posting to the proposed online website.

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MR. GRAHAM presented the following sectional analysis for SB 180: [Original punctuation provided.]

Section 1 Names the act "the Alaska Online Checkbook Act."

Section 2 Adopts legislative findings and intent:

Subsection (a) establishes that this bill is intended to allow people identify and discover state revenue and expenditures.

Subsection (b) requires that this act be interpreted in favor of disclosure and transparency.

Subsection (c) finds that state revenue and expenditures must be accounted for and easily accessible to the public in order to maintain a fair and open government.

Subsection (d) adopts intent that the state should strive to create a user-friendly website that gives the public access to the state's financial information in a centralized location.

MR. GRAHAM related that Section 2 includes guidelines for departments on the type of information that should be included in the online checkbook.

Section 3 Requires that the Department of Administration to make the financial transactions of the state and the annual audit available electronically for use in the public finance internet website.

Section 4 Creates a new AS 37.05.215.

AS 37.05.215 (a) - Requires the Department of Administration to develop operate and maintain a searchable, free to the public, website that provides financial information available from the central accounting system or the annual financial report.

AS 37.05.215 (a) (1)-(3) - Requires the following information and transactions to be posted on the online check book website and monthly state income including:

- Receipts or deposits by a state agency into a fund or account established within the state treasury.
- Proceeds from taxes received, categorized by source type, including compulsory contributions imposed by the state for the purpose of financing services.
- Agency earnings including amounts collected for sales or services, licenses or permits issued, or otherwise received by an agency. s
- Revenue received for the use of state money or property including interest and lease payments gifts, donations and federal receipts and other revenue. Expenditures including:
 - The names and locations of any persons to whom payment was made.
 - The amounts of the expenditures disbursed.
 - The type of transaction, by account code, including the purpose of the expenditure.
 - Other information specified by the department.
 - The balance of the following state accounts:
 - Statutory Budget Reserve.

- Constitutional Budget Reserve.
- Permanent Fund Earnings Reserve Account.

AS 37.05.215 (a) (4)-(7) - Requires the following information be posted on the online check book website and updated monthly: The amount deposited into the Permanent Fund from all mineral lease rentals, royalties, royalty sale proceeds, federal mineral revenue sharing payments, and bonuses received by the state. State revenue and expenditures, summarized by: General fund revenue sources categorized by function, department, and account. Total general fund income compared to expenditures. Total assets compared to liabilities at the end of the fiscal year. For the preceding 10 years, by fiscal year the following:

- The number of state employees by department.
- The number of independent contractors engaged by the state by department.
- The total long-term debt owed by the state.
- Total general fund expenditures.
- All general fund payroll by department. AS

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AS 37.05.215(b) - Describes the reporting requirements for the previous subsection.

AS 37.05.215 (c) (1) - Requires that the website have reference materials to assist the public in understanding the financial provided on the website.

AS 37.05.215 (c) (2) - Requires the website to have a feature that allows users to search for information on the website by keyword and recipient.

AS 37.05.215 (c) (3) - Requires the site to have a link to the website of the Legislative Audit Division. The site must also include electronic copies of information related to state service procurement contracts, including compensation and contract length and of information related to independent contractors engaged by the state, by state agency, including compensation and contract length.

AS 37.05.215 (d) - Requires the Department of Revenue and other state agencies that use the central accounting system to provide information to the

Department of Administration that is necessary to comply with this act.

AS 37.05.215 (e) - Clarifies that this bill will not require the disclosure of information that is confidential under state or federal law and requires that aggregated information be disclosed if it can properly protect confidentiality.

AS 37.05.215 (f) Defines "expenditure," "searchable Internet website," and "state agency."

Section 5 Requires the website to be operating on or before October 1, 2021.

Section 6 Requires information from the previous fiscal year be on the website by October 1, 2022 and requires site to be updated.

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SENATOR KAWASAKI asked for examples of confidential disclosures referenced in Section 4.

MR. GRAHAM answered that confidential information would not be made public, so oil company taxes would be aggregated and not contain detail by field or amount. Medicaid payments and student scholarships would also be aggregated. He added that state settlements in the Department of Law would also be held confidential.

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SENATOR COGHILL asked how state procurements such as contracts for sand and gravel or legal services would be reported. He expressed concern that people would have access and opportunities to review confidential bids.

MR. GRAHAM offered his belief that the current process would not change. The bidding process is kept confidential, but once awarded, the contract becomes public. He displayed an example of Ohio's online information by expense type. The public information for the Department of Transportation includes the cost of trucks. He said it does not identify it as a bid, but he imagined the state received a fleet discount. This means that competitors could see the amount the state paid for the vehicles.

SENATOR COGHILL said that was his expectation but the spending leading up to the bid may be available and he wonders how that would work.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI responded that it was not the intent to change the current confidential bidding process. He offered to check with the department to ensure the language in SB 180 clarifies that the bids would be kept confidential.

SENATOR COGHILL said he did not want the state's procurement process hampered. He also asked if he anticipates that the aggregated information would be similar to how it is reported now. He cited Denali Kid Care information as an example.

MR. GRAHAM answered yes. For example, resident and nonresident tuition for the University of Alaska would be reported as a whole so individual tuition would not be identifiable.

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SENATOR COGHILL commented that a third of the revenue the state receives is from the federal government and the public is probably interested in how departments like Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) and the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) manage that money.

MR. GRAHAM offered to follow up as to whether there is a breakdown between federal and state dollars. He recalled that Ohio identifies the fund source for purchases so the trucks purchased would indicate highway maintenance funds, but he did not know if it shows whether the money came from the state or federal government. Sometimes the account codes provide that information, he said.

SENATOR COGHILL opined that showing aggregate federal monies for child support, child in need of aid (CINA), Medicaid, or DOT&PF, could provide important context. Also, there is considerable military spending in Alaska that the state never sees.

MR. GRAHAM responded that the state's online checkbook would only include the money the state touches so money spent on a military base would not be included.

SENATOR COGHILL said his point was that people might have a different view of the size of government if they realized how much funding is federal money.

CHAIR REVAK asked if other states list federal pass-through dollars in their online checkbooks.

MR. GRAHAM replied he was not positive, but he believed that in Alaska it was possible to see that more money was expensed each year than what the state budgets for unrestricted general funds (UGF).

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI added that to the extent that the state accounting practices have a code for federal pass-through funds, it could be reported online. He said it's a policy call, but he was inclined to think that information should be available.

SENATOR COGHILL commented that it would be interesting to see state dollars enumerated in gold and federal money in green. He said he liked the idea of the bill and was thinking about showing the information in the best light.

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SENATOR COGHILL asked how fee-for-service items would be categorized as opposed to income from the delivery of a service. He cited DMV, tuition at the university, and permitting for mines as examples.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI replied it comes down to how an expenditure is defined. The goal of SB 180 is to produce a searchable website for expenditures. The definition of expenditure on page 5, lines 17-22 reads:

(1) "expenditure" means a payment from the state treasury that is greater than \$1,000 and that is made as a grant, subgrant, contract, subcontract, loan, lease, cooperative agreement, purchase order, task order, delivery order, or other form of financial transaction; "expenditure" does not include the transfer of money between state agencies, individual payments to state employees or retirees, or payment of state or federal assistance to an individual;

He said that this language is broad, but it also tries to protect individuals' confidentiality. He pointed out that for privacy protection, it excludes fund transfers between state agencies and individual payments made to state employees or federal assistance to individuals. However, he said that he was

open to expanding or tweaking that definition if there is a will of the committee to do so.

CHAIR REVAK said it is a good thought because for pass-through monies it could easily appear that expenditures far exceed revenues.

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SENATOR COSTELLO said she supports the concept because Alaskans crave more transparency in government. She suggested that the committee could work out some of the finer details to make a great bill.

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CHAIR REVAK opened public testimony on SB 180.

[4:16:15 PM](#)

JAMIN LIEBER, representing self, Wasilla, Alaska, spoke in support of SB 180. He said he thought that the presenters did a good job highlighting the pros of a new online checkbook. He offered his view that people want transparency, and this bill seems to be a slam dunk.

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JIM SYKES, representing self, Palmer, Alaska, spoke in support of SB 180. He shared that he worked on transparency and reliable information when he was on the Mat-Su Borough Assembly and he firmly believes that providing the information to the public in a user-friendly manner is essential. It would give the business community insight and save money on public records requests. This is especially important since the public lacks confidence in government and information can be distorted. He said the Ohio online site has components of what the borough tried to accomplish. He offered his view that it is important to provide graphical interface and fine detail. He referred to language on pages 3-4 of the bill, which he particularly likes since it provides a look-back of one year. He characterized SB 180 as a good concept that is broadly supported.

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JOE GELDHOF, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, spoke in support of SB 180. He said the State of Alaska is not a business, but the type of information this calls for is what all smart businesses have at their fingertips. The updated online checkbook will allow citizens to view revenue and expenditures and to work with the legislature and bureaucrats to ensure that citizens are getting good value for the money being spent. He

described it as a cross partisan measure that will be used by the administration and the Office of Management and Budget. Citizens will have confidence to know where money is being spent and vendors can use it to gauge their effectiveness. The states that have high credibility, which range from some Southern states to Ohio, are the ones that have good administration. He urged members to move the bill forward and suggested that the legislature work with those who will implement it to ensure that the points Senator Coghill raised today are incorporated.

[4:21:43 PM](#)

TOMOTHY HALE, representing self, Palmer, Alaska, spoke in support of SB 180. He related that he has found the current online checkbook difficult to use. For example, he was unable to see how much money was being spent at the Knik River Public Use Area. He said SB 180 is a great idea.

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WILL MULDOON, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, spoke in support of SB 180 because it is a good idea for the state for the reasons the testifiers mentioned. He said he is very familiar with this data set as he maintains the state's data as a hobbyist. He noted that the data system switched a bit in 2015. Since then the system consists of about 55 reports, totaling 4,550 pages and 3.6 million cells of data. This amount of information is too large for a spreadsheet. He offered his view that a dashboard or searchable database is the way to go. He reported that the federal pass-through money is included now. He recalled the figure was "\$8 billion of the \$21.469 billion in all from July 1, 2015 to 2019." He said it is a complex and difficult system to discern, so any efforts to minimize those impacts are greatly appreciated.

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VERI DI SUVERO, Executive Director, Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that AkPIRG is a nonprofit consumer advocacy and public interest group. AkPIRG works on a variety of good governance issues and this fits squarely with the key components that AkPIRG believes are necessary for transparency in government. The online checkbook will encourage better understanding of state operations and help reduce waste. The U.S.PIRG in its 2019 portal grading system gave Alaska an F but she is hopeful that by 2022 the state will receive a better grade. During the global pandemic and fluctuating oil prices, it is critical to understand the state's allocation of funding to help decision makers and prevent mix-ups which result in increased government spending to untangle

mistakes. She said seeing how the government is using funding is one of the fundamentals of transparency. It bolsters confidence in government and promotes responsibility. She said AkPIRG believes that if the state maintained a better website, it would save the state and AKPIRG time and money.

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RYAN MCKEE, State Director, Americans for Prosperity, Wasilla, Alaska, spoke in favor of SB 180. He said government transparency is more crucial than ever due to limited revenue and tight budgets. It could help give Alaskans a better understanding of where expenditures are made and eliminate transmission of false information. He encouraged members to vote the bill out of committee as soon as possible.

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SENATOR COGHILL asked if the administration has commented on SB 180.

MR. GRAHAM answered that the administration sent an email indicating they were tracking the bill. The comments were not specific other than that work was underway on a new financial system.

SENATOR COGHILL asked the sponsor if he had talked with the administration about the computer systems that have been brought online the last few years or how to fit a dashboard to the website.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI said no but he could reach out. He related that his experience in the past is that administrations would prefer to do this without legislation. But the downside to that is that some administrations might not keep up with the needs of society.

SENATOR COGHILL opined that the timing might be right this time.

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CHAIR REVAK closed public testimony on SB 180. He expressed support for the bill and stated the committee would work on a few of the issues raised today.

[SB 180 was held in committee.]

[4:33:03 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee,
Chair Revak adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing
Committee meeting at 4:33 p.m.