

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

April 22, 2021

3:08 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chair
Representative Matt Claman, Vice Chair
Representative Geran Tarr
Representative Andi Story
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative James Kaufman

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative David Eastman

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Commissioner, Department of Public Safety

James Cockrell - Soldotna

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 63

"An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities; renaming the Alaska Marine Transportation Advisory Board the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board; relating to the membership and duties of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 63(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 123

"An Act providing for state recognition of federally recognized tribes; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 123 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 148

"An Act relating to the Alaska Coordinate System of 2022."

- MOVED HB 148 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 63

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY OPERATIONS BOARD

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) STUTES

02/18/21	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/15/21
02/18/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21	(H)	TRA, STA
03/11/21	(H)	TRA AT 1:30 PM BARNES 124
03/11/21	(H)	Heard & Held
03/11/21	(H)	MINUTE(TRA)
03/18/21	(H)	TRA AT 1:30 PM BARNES 124
03/18/21	(H)	Moved CSHB 63(TRA) Out of Committee
03/18/21	(H)	MINUTE(TRA)
03/20/21	(H)	TRA RPT CS(TRA) NT 4DP 2NR
03/20/21	(H)	DP: DRUMMOND, HANNAN, SPOHNHOLZ, HOPKINS
03/20/21	(H)	NR: MCCABE, CRONK
03/30/21	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/30/21	(H)	Heard & Held
03/30/21	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
04/06/21	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/06/21	(H)	Heard & Held
04/06/21	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
04/15/21	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/15/21	(H)	Heard & Held
04/15/21	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
04/22/21	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 123

SHORT TITLE: STATE RECOGNITION OF TRIBES

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) ZULKOSKY

03/03/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/03/21	(H)	TRB, STA
03/30/21	(H)	TRB AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/30/21	(H)	Heard & Held
03/30/21	(H)	MINUTE(TRB)
04/01/21	(H)	TRB AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/01/21	(H)	Moved HB 123 Out of Committee
04/01/21	(H)	MINUTE(TRB)
04/05/21	(H)	TRB RPT 3DP 1NR
04/05/21	(H)	DP: FIELDS, TARR, ZULKOSKY
04/05/21	(H)	NR: CRONK

04/17/21 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/17/21 (H) Heard & Held
04/17/21 (H) MINUTE (STA)
04/22/21 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 148

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA COORDINATE SYSTEM OF 2022

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) SHAW

03/24/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/24/21 (H) STA, RES
04/17/21 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/17/21 (H) Heard & Held
04/17/21 (H) MINUTE (STA)
04/22/21 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

JAMES COCKRELL, Commissioner Designee
Department of Public Safety
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Speaking as the commissioner designee to the Department of Public Safety, provided his qualifications and answered questions.

ED MERCER, Chief of Police
Juneau Police Department
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Commissioner Designee Cockrell's appointment as commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.

DAN SPENCER
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Commissioner Designee Cockrell's appointment as commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.

JEFF STEPP, Staff
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the proposed committee substitute for HB 63.

ROB CARPENTER, Deputy Commissioner

Office of the Commissioner
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 63.

KERRY CROCKER, Staff
Representative Louise Stutes
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HB 63, answered questions on behalf of Representative Stutes, prime sponsor.

JOEL JACKSON, President
Organized Village of Kake
Kake, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 123.

DELORES LARSON
United Tribes of Bristol Bay
Koliganek, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 123.

COURTENAY CARTY, Tribal Administrator
Curyung Tribal Council
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 123.

REECE WILLIAMS, Staff
Representative Laddie Shaw
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HB 148, commented on behalf of Representative Shaw, prime sponsor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:08:17 PM](#)

CHAIR JONATHAN KREISS-TOMKINS called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:08 p.m. Representatives Tarr, Story, Claman, Vance, Kaufman, and Kreiss-Tomkins were present at the call to order.

CONFIRMATION HEARING **Department of Public Safety, Commissioner**

[3:10:05 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS announced that the first order of business would be the confirmation on the governor's appointee as commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS noted this hearing was a continuation of the one begun on 4/20/25.

[3:10:19 PM](#)

JAMES COCKRELL, Commissioner Designee, Department of Public Safety (DPS), thanked members for their questions during the previous hearing. He emphasized the importance of facilitating open dialogue between legislators and state [agencies], specifically DPS, as the department impacted many lives across Alaska. He welcomed further questions from the committee.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked for an assessment of the agency's morale and what needed to change.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE COCKRELL opined that morale was difficult to judge because there were law enforcement officers all throughout the state. He conveyed that a primary reason for his return was the outpour of support from the department. He noted that he had not spent any time in the field yet, but numerous emails from DPS workers expressed a sense of hope that the agency would "stay on track." He concluded that leadership had a significant role in morale and hoped that his presence and connections would generate further improvement on that issue.

[3:13:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked whether Commissioner Designee Cockrell could commit to keeping DPS jobs in Juneau unless there was a justifiable reason to move them.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE COCKRELL said he had no plans to move commissioned troopers or support staff from Juneau. He relayed that the current director of the Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC) would be retiring in July; consequently, there was an option for the position to be filled in either Juneau or Anchorage depending on the candidate pool. He noted that the preference was to keep the position in Juneau if possible.

[3:16:17 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS inquired about the appropriate ratio of troopers from the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) to the Division of Alaska State Troopers (AST) in different parts of the state and how to approach the allocation of resources. He anecdotally reported that in his district, Kake in particular, there was a simmering frustration about the difficulty of obtaining support from troopers when there were murders in the community. He recalled that there had been tragic, gratuitous murders over the last six to seven years. He acknowledged that sometimes it was beyond anyone's control due to the weather and the inability to access smaller remote communities; however, that was juxtaposed against wildlife troopers immediately showing up for minor technical violations. He explained that it was sometimes perceived as an inappropriate allocation of resources.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE COCKRELL noted that the guiding and fishing industry was a billion-dollar industry in Alaska; hence, the larger number of wildlife troopers versus state troopers. He explained that wildlife troopers were expected to investigate criminal offenses in rural communities, as they often possessed the appropriate vessels and airplanes to respond. He said he would be disappointed if any wildlife trooper acted otherwise. He believed that the department could improve upon the allocation of resources between AWT and AST, especially in the winter. However, he cautioned against disrupting the balance of resources because Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) workers would be disgruntled if wildlife protection was being neglected. He reported that there were under 100 wildlife trooper positions in Alaska; further, Alaska had fewer "game wardens" than any other state.

[3:22:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAUFMAN, referencing Commissioner Designee Cockrell's resumé, asked what lessons he learned from working in the private sector.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE COCKRELL said the biggest lesson he learned from the private sector was the importance of fostering a culture of safety. He explained that many injuries within the department were caused by tripping and falling, which should be preventable. He added that DPS should be practicing and preaching safety culture when troopers enter the academy, as opposed to a sole focus on officer safety.

[3:25:59 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE recounted her experience in a "ride along" several years ago, during which time she observed equipment failure that consumed the officer's productivity. She asked whether improvements had been made since then to provide for the troopers' basic needs and if not, what improvements would be made going forward.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE COCKRELL acknowledged that the department struggled with its specialized IT equipment. He pointed out that replacing and updating technology was expensive, noting that each car was equipped with over \$50,000 in equipment. He noted that the fleet was undergoing an upgrade from Ford Explorers to Chevrolet Tahoes, which would provide more room. However, he explained that it was hard to plan for upgrades because performing even a five-year fiscal projection for DPS was difficult.

[3:32:07 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS opened public testimony on the confirmation hearing.

[3:32:32 PM](#)

ED MERCER, Chief of Police, Juneau Police Department; Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police, stated his support for the commissioner designee's appointment. He said Commissioner Designee Cockrell had high integrity and was a good listener and critical thinker, all of which were sound leadership traits. Further, he relayed that the commissioner designee possessed the mentality of a team player, as he cared for DPS and all of Alaska's public safety needs. He anecdotally reported that Commissioner Designee Cockrell truly cared about establishing positive working relationships with law enforcement agencies and other community partners; additionally, he understood Alaska's needs and how to fulfill the mission of public safety in the state. He explained that presently, law enforcement was facing many challenges, such as recruitment, retention, budget constraints, and public trust. He believed that the commissioner designee's long tenure with DPS would serve both him and Alaska well.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY thanked Chief Mercer for his contribution to the Juneau community.

[3:35:08 PM](#)

DAN SPENCER informed committee members that he was a former administrative services director for DPS. He opined that Commissioner Designee Cockrell provided thoughtful answers and had a good understanding of the issues that the department and the state were confronted with; further, he believed the commissioner designee had a desire to continually improve policing in Alaska. Mr. Spencer said he completely endorsed him, adding that he would make a fine DPS commissioner. He urged the legislature to confirm the commissioner designee's appointment and shared a personal anecdote.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY thanked Mr. Spencer for his many years of service to Alaskans.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS added that Mr. Spencer was a great example of a Juneau-based DPS employee.

[3:37:24 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearing and welcomed additional comments from committee members.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR noted the letters of support from the North Pole Police Department and Soldotna's chief of police [included in the committee packet], which relayed that the commissioner designee was caring, hardworking, and possessed a high level of integrity. She said she was excited for his return to DPS, pending a successful confirmation vote.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS echoed the sentiment expressed by Representative Tarr. He stated his belief that confirmation hearings mattered, adding that there were consequences when the legislature failed to do its diligence. He opined that this was a positive case study of a wonderful confirmation hearing and reiterated his appreciation that Commissioner Designee Cockrell was stepping up to lead the agency.

[3:39:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN stated that the House State Affairs Standing Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends that the following name be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Commissioner Designee James Cockrell, Department of Public Safety. He said

that signing the report regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects an individual member's approval or disapproval of the appointee, and the nomination is merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

HB 63-ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY OPERATIONS BOARD

[3:40:05 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 63, "An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities; renaming the Alaska Marine Transportation Advisory Board the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board; relating to the membership and duties of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board; and providing for an effective date." [Before the committee was CSHB 63(TRA).]

[3:40:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN moved to adopt the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 63, labeled 32-LS0286\O, Fisher, 4/20/21, as the working document.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS objected for the purpose of discussion.

[3:41:19 PM](#)

JEFF STEPP, Staff, Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Alaska State Legislature, reviewed the changes proposed in the CS, ("Version O"), which replaced CSHB 63(TRA). The changes corresponded to amendments adopted by the committee during the [4/15/21] hearing on HB 63.

[3:47:17 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS removed his objection. There being no further objection, Version O was adopted as the working document. He noted that there were four outstanding amendments for the committee's consideration today, all of which had been introduced and withdrawn during the hearing on 4/15/21.

[3:48:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HB 63, Version O, labeled 32-LS0286\O.4, Fisher, 4/21/21, which read:

Page 1, line 4, following "**Board;**":
Insert "**and**"

Page 1, line 5:
Delete "**; and providing for an effective date**"

Page 6, line 25:
Delete all material.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY explained that Amendment 1 would remove the effective date of January 1, 2022, to allow the bill to take effect 90 days after being signed into law.

[3:49:16 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS removed his objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[3:49:32 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS moved to adopt Amendment 2 to HB 63, Version 0, labeled 32-LS0286\0.2, Fisher, 4/21/21, which read:

Page 2, line 23, following "system"
Insert "and a proposed strategic maintenance and vessel replacement plan"

REPRESENTATIVE STORY objected for the purpose of discussion.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS relayed that Amendment 2 would include strategic maintenance and vessel replacement as part of the comprehensive plan, as discussed in the previous hearing.

[3:50:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAUFMAN questioned whether a strategic maintenance and vessel replacement plan already existed within DOT&PF's management of assets.

[3:50:56 PM](#)

ROB CARPENTER, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, offered his understanding that the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) had planned annual vessel overhauls and long-term maintenance

requirements; however, he was unsure whether those plans existed in statute.

REPRESENTATIVE KAUFMAN clarified that had asked whether such a management plan already existed.

MR. CARPENTER confirmed that the process existed.

[3:52:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked who in the department was responsible for overseeing strategic maintenance and vessel replacement.

MR. CARPENTER answered Captain John Falvey, General Manager, AMHS. He noted that a vessel construction manager assisted the captain in that endeavor.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE questioned how a strategic maintenance and vessel replacement plan would be communicated through the deputy commissioner to the new board if the bill were to pass.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS clarified that Amendment 2 would make the strategic maintenance and vessel replacement plan a component of the comprehensive long-range plan.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked how it would be a joint effort between AMHS, the department, and the new board.

MR. CARPENTER understood that the deputy commissioner of DOT&PF would be working with the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board ("the board") on these strategic planning efforts. He added that the general manager for AMHS reported to the deputy commissioner, so communication would be ongoing. Furthermore, he envisioned that the deputy commissioner would be a liaison between the board and AMHS to ensure that communication was clear in all strategic planning efforts.

[3:54:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY removed her objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 2 was adopted.

[3:55:09 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS moved to adopt Amendment 3 to HB 63, Version 0, labeled 32-LS0286\0.7, Fisher, 4/22/21, which read:

Page 3, line 26:
Delete "three-year"
Insert "six-year [THREE-YEAR]"

Page 6, line 11:
Delete "one-year"
Insert "two-year"

Page 6, line 14:
Delete "one-year"
Insert "two-year"

Page 6, line 16:
Delete "two-year"
Insert "four-year"

Page 6, line 18:
Delete "three-year"
Insert "six-year"

REPRESENTATIVE STORY objected for the purpose of discussion.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS explained that the constitutional ability to inhibit the governor's appointees from serving at the pleasure of the governor was nonexistent for advisory boards; therefore, Amendment 3 would implement a six-year term for the board members [appointed by the governor].

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE sought to clarify whether the board members appointed by the governor and presiding officers would require confirmation by the legislature.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS deferred the question to Mr. Crocker.

[3:58:07 PM](#)

KERRY CROCKER, Staff, Representative Louise Stutes, on behalf of Representative Stutes, prime sponsor of HB 63, explained that the proposed legislation utilized existing statutory language for the Marine Transportation Advisory Board (MTAB), which did not require its members to be confirmed by the legislature.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR understood that legislative confirmation would require inserting the language "subject to confirmation by the legislature."

[3:58:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY removed her objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 3 was adopted.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS explained that the following amendment, Amendment 4, provided that AMHS's performance measures should be communicated to the public and the media in an easily available manner.

[4:00:11 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS moved to adopt Amendment 4 to HB 63, Version 0, labeled 32-LS0286\0.6, Fisher, 4/22/21, which read:

Page 2, line 8, following "AS 19.65.110":

Insert "i":

(9) report, in a manner that is easily available to the public and the media, including on the department's Internet website, on the progress of the Alaska marine highway system in meeting the performance goals established by the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board under AS 19.65.180(i);"

Page 5, following line 15:

Insert a new subsection to read:

"(i) The board shall identify performance measures and set corresponding annual performance goals for the Alaska marine highway system. These goals may include fare box recovery, on-time performance, and percentage of administrative overhead. In this subsection, "fare box recovery" means the fraction of the Alaska marine highway system's operating expenses that are met by the fares paid by passengers."

REPRESENTATIVE TARR objected for the purpose of discussion.

[4:00:28 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR sought to confirm that the board would identify performance measures, which would be prepared and reported on an annual basis.

[4:01:24 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:01 p.m. to 4:05 p.m.

[4:05:40 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS explained that during the at-ease, he had taken the opportunity to assess the intersection of Amendment 4 and Version 0 and consider Representative Tarr's question.

[4:06:12 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAUFMAN suggested utilizing the intent section of the CS.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS conveyed that per Amendment 4, AMHS would report to the public on its execution of the performance measures that were identified in the short-term and long-term plans. He indicated that the goal was to establish accountability to the public and the media in terms of how AMHS was functioning. He further noted that the performance measures would be identified by the board.

[4:07:29 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS moved to adopt a Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 4, which would delete lines 8-15 and change the statutory citation on line 6 from AS 19.65.180(i) to AS 19.65.011. There being no objection, the Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 4 was adopted.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR removed her objection to Amendment 4, as amended. There being no further objection, Amendment 4, as amended, was adopted.

[4:09:16 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS invited additional comments from committee members on HB 63, Version 0, as amended.

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN thanked the chair for his extensive work with the bill sponsor and members of the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY thanked the committee for its work on the current version of HB 63. She believed the legislation would help with oversight and awareness and ensure that AMHS was well-functioning.

[4:10:19 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS expressed his appreciation for all the conversations, work, and contributions from the committee on this piece of legislation. Additionally, he stated his appreciation for the leadership at DOT&PF. He opined that the bill spoke to coastal Alaska's desire for more involvement, oversight, direction, and a sense of equity for the future of AMHS. He said he was excited that the bill was moving forward and expressed his hope that it would be a stepping stone toward further exploration of a public corporation model.

[4:11:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN moved to report CSHB 63, Version 32-LS0286\O, Fisher, 4/20/21, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 63(STA) was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[4:11:51 PM](#)

MR. CROCKER thanked the committee members on behalf of the bill sponsor, Representative Stutes, for all their time and effort.

HB 123-STATE RECOGNITION OF TRIBES

[4:12:10 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 123, "An Act providing for state recognition of federally recognized tribes; and providing for an effective date."

[4:12:48 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS opened public testimony on HB 123.

[4:13:12 PM](#)

JOEL JACKSON, President, Organized Village of Kake, stated his support for HB 123. He asserted that tribes had not been recognized by the State of Alaska. He opined that the state recognized tribes only when it wanted to work with them; further, he said the state had asked tribes to relinquish part of their sovereignty. He believed that was unacceptable. He reported that there were 229 tribes in Alaska that provided services to all their tribal citizens using millions of dollars from the federal government. Those services would otherwise be

paid for by the state, he pointed out. He believed it was time for the state to recognize and work with tribes without asking them to relinquish any sovereignty.

[4:15:17 PM](#)

DELORES LARSON, United Tribes of Bristol Bay (UTBB), expressed support for HB 123, as it would take an overdue step toward the state's formal recognition of Alaska's tribal nation. She believed that the tribes' inherent sovereignty should be recognized by the state because it would allow both governments to work together to better serve its shared citizens. She opined that the many challenges in public safety, healthcare, education, and housing, would be better addressed through cooperative work between governments. She maintained that a continued and intentional effort not to formally recognize the 229 federally recognized tribal governments would be a tremendous disservice to all citizens of Alaska. She urged the committee to support HB 123.

[4:17:50 PM](#)

COURTENAY CARTY, Tribal Administrator, Curyung Tribal Council, relayed that Curyung Tribal Council was the federally recognized tribe of Dillingham and the largest tribe in Bristol Bay. The majority of its tribal government services were provided through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) compact with the Bristol Bay Native Association. Additionally, she reported that the Curyung Tribal Council regularly worked with the state and the City of Dillingham on the justice system, education, transportation, infrastructure, and natural resource management. Further, the council operated an active tribal court to protect its children. She explained that Curyung Tribal Council partnered with the local school district to incorporate cultural components into the classrooms. This year alone, \$311,000 was provided to the district for educational needs related to COVID-19. She conveyed that the council upheld its traditional role in the management of land, water, fish, and wildlife by working with ADF&G and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to actively participate in research and the regulatory processes that governed natural resources. She concluded that all tribes deserved to be heard and recognized as equal governments by the state. She expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to provide input and said she was grateful that HB 123 was being heard in committee.

[4:22:03 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS, after ascertaining there was no one else that wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 123.

[4:22:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR thanked the testifiers for sharing in the significance of this legislation. She recalled her experience on the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs and believed that although recognition existed federally, there was pain associated with this ongoing issue that the state had not addressed. She said she was honored to have the opportunity to right that wrong.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE said her experience on the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs was educational, as there were less than 3 percent of Alaska Natives living in her district. She explained that she gained a broader understanding of the need for recognition and the tension that existed between the state and tribal governments. She believed that the proposed legislation would be a brave step; however, she admitted that it was still uncomfortable for her. She recounted how a tribal member helped her understand that tribes were inherently sovereign; further, she said [formal recognition] would only improve the existing relationship between the state and Tribal governments. She expressed her hope that the proposed legislation would provide an opportunity to move forward and "lay aside" the pain from the past. In closing, she expressed her support for the passage of HB 123.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY thanked the bill sponsor for bringing forward a bill that would formally recognize tribal sovereignty. She said she had the privilege of raising her family on Áak'w Kwáan land and believed that sovereign recognition would be a step in the long journey of healing and restoration. She expressed her hoped that the bill would be supported.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS stated his appreciation for the work by the bill sponsor and the previous legislature on this issue, as it was long overdue. He believed it was in incredibly important statement of respect and partnership by the State of Alaska to the tribes. He shared a personal anecdote about the government-to-government relationship in the community of Sitka.

[4:27:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN moved to report HB 123 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 123 was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

HB 148-ALASKA COORDINATE SYSTEM OF 2022

[4:28:23 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 148, "An Act relating to the Alaska Coordinate System of 2022."

[4:28:39 PM](#)

REECE WILLIAMS, Staff, Representative Laddie Shaw, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Shaw, prime sponsor, thanked the committee for hearing HB 148, as well as Laura Ogan from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for her assistance.

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS opened public testimony on HB 148. After ascertaining that no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[4:29:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN moved to report HB 148 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 148 was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[4:29:37 PM](#)

CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS provided closing remarks and reviewed the upcoming schedule.

[4:32:00 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:32 p.m.