

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2022

3:34 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Mike Shower, Chair

Senator Mia Costello

Senator Roger Holland

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair

Senator Scott Kawasaki

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Alaska Police Standards Council

Michael Craig - Anchorage

David Knapp - Palmer

Jeff Brown - Utqiagvik

David Ross - Palmer

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

Alaska Public Offices Commission

Lanette Blodgett - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 157(FIN)

"An Act requiring the disclosure of the identity of certain persons, groups, and nongroup entities that expend money in support of or in opposition to an application filed for a state referendum or recall election; relating to the location of offices for the Alaska Public Offices Commission and the locations at which certain statements and reports filed with the commission are made available; relating to the duties of the Alaska Public Offices Commission; clarifying the limits on making, accepting, and reporting certain cash campaign contributions; relating to campaign finance reporting by certain groups; increasing the time the Alaska Public Offices Commission has to respond to a request for an advisory opinion; repealing a

reporting requirement for certain contributions; relating to contribution limits and recall campaigns; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 157(FIN) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 129

"An Act relating to information on judicial officers provided in election pamphlets."

- MOVED CSSB 129(JUD) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 126

"An Act relating to the duration of a regular session of the legislature; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

#### PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 157

SHORT TITLE: APOC; REPORT REFERENDA/RECALL CONTRIBUTOR

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) RASMUSSEN

03/31/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/31/21	(H)	STA, JUD
04/17/21	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/17/21	(H)	Heard & Held
04/17/21	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
04/27/21	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/27/21	(H)	Moved HB 157 Out of Committee
04/27/21	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
04/28/21	(H)	FIN REPLACES JUD REFERRAL
04/28/21	(H)	BILL REPRINTED
04/28/21	(H)	STA RPT 1DP 1NR 5AM
04/28/21	(H)	DP: KREISS-TOMKINS
04/28/21	(H)	NR: TARR
04/28/21	(H)	AM: CLAMAN, STORY, EASTMAN, KAUFMAN, VANCE
05/03/21	(H)	FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
05/03/21	(H)	Heard & Held
05/03/21	(H)	MINUTE(FIN)
05/04/21	(H)	FIN AT 9:00 AM ADAMS 519
05/04/21	(H)	Heard & Held
05/04/21	(H)	MINUTE(FIN)
05/13/21	(H)	FIN AT 9:00 AM ADAMS 519
05/13/21	(H)	Moved CSHB 157(FIN) Out of Committee

05/13/21 (H) MINUTE (FIN)  
 05/14/21 (H) FIN RPT CS (FIN) NEW TITLE 4DP 5NR  
 05/14/21 (H) DP: LEBON, JOSEPHSON, RASMUSSEN,  
 MERRICK  
 05/14/21 (H) NR: ORTIZ, CARPENTER, THOMPSON, WOOL,  
 FOSTER  
 05/19/21 (H) LIMIT ALL DEBATE TO 2 MIN EACH Y23 N16  
 E1  
 05/19/21 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
 05/19/21 (H) VERSION: CSHB 157 (FIN)  
 01/18/22 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 01/18/22 (S) STA, JUD  
 01/21/22 (S) FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER JUD  
 02/17/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 02/17/22 (S) Scheduled but Not Heard  
 03/01/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 03/01/22 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --  
 03/03/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 03/03/22 (S) Heard & Held  
 03/03/22 (S) MINUTE (STA)  
 03/24/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 129

SHORT TITLE: ELECTION PAMPHLET INFORMATION RE: JUDGES  
 SPONSOR (s): SENATOR (s) MYERS

04/21/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 04/21/21 (S) JUD, STA  
 05/05/21 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 05/05/21 (S) Heard & Held  
 05/05/21 (S) MINUTE (JUD)  
 05/12/21 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 05/12/21 (S) Scheduled but Not Heard  
 05/14/21 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 05/14/21 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --  
 01/28/22 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 01/28/22 (S) Heard & Held  
 01/28/22 (S) MINUTE (JUD)  
 01/31/22 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 01/31/22 (S) Scheduled but Not Heard  
 02/02/22 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 02/02/22 (S) Heard & Held  
 02/02/22 (S) MINUTE (JUD)  
 02/09/22 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 02/09/22 (S) Heard & Held  
 02/09/22 (S) MINUTE (JUD)  
 02/11/22 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

02/11/22 (S) Moved CSSB 129(JUD) Out of Committee  
02/11/22 (S) MINUTE(JUD)  
02/15/22 (S) JUD RPT CS 1DP 2NR 1AM NEW TITLE  
02/15/22 (S) DP: HOLLAND  
02/15/22 (S) NR: SHOWER, KIEHL  
02/15/22 (S) AM: HUGHES  
03/10/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
03/10/22 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --  
03/17/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
03/17/22 (S) Heard & Held  
03/17/22 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
03/22/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
03/22/22 (S) <Bill Hearing Rescheduled to 03/24/22>  
03/24/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 126

SHORT TITLE: REPEAL 90 DAY SESSION LIMIT

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) STEVENS

04/16/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
04/16/21 (S) STA, FIN  
04/29/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
04/29/21 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --  
05/04/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
05/04/21 (S) Heard & Held  
05/04/21 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
03/24/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JEFF BROWN, Appointee

Alaska Police Standards Council  
Department of Public Safety (DPS)  
Utgiaġvik, Alaska

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

DAVID KNAPP, Appointee

Alaska Police Standards Council  
Department of Public Safety (DPS)  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified for reappointment to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

DAVID ROSS, Appointee

Alaska Police Standards Council  
Department of Public Safety (DPS)

Department of Public Safety (DPS)  
Kenai, Alaska

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

MICHAEL CRAIG, Appointee  
Alaska Police Standards Council  
Department of Public Safety (DPS)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified for reappointment to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

LANETTE BLODGETT, Appointee  
Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC)  
Department of Administration (DOA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as an appointee to the Alaska Public Offices Commission.

CRYSTAL KOENEMAN, Staff  
Representative Sara Rasmussen  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information about HB 157 on behalf of the sponsor.

SENATOR ROBERT MYERS  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of SB 129.

SUSANNE DIPIETRO, Executive Director  
Alaska Judicial Council (AJC)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Stated that AJC has not taken a position on SB 129.

TIM LAMKIN, Staff  
Senator Gary Stevens  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Reintroduced SB 126 and provided updated data.

SENATOR GARY STEVENS (via teleconference)  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of SB 126.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:34:48 PM](#)

**CHAIR MIKE SHOWER** called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:34 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Holland, Costello, and Chair Shower.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)**  
**Alaska Police Standards Council**  
**Alaska Public Offices Commission**

[3:35:20 PM](#)

**CHAIR SHOWER** announced the consideration of Governor Appointees to Boards and Commissions.

[3:35:59 PM](#)

**JEFF BROWN**, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Utqiagvik, Alaska, stated that he started his law enforcement career over 20 years ago. He moved to Alaska in 2006 and served in various capacities until he moved into the chief of police position in Utqiagvik. His varied experience gives him a unique and well-rounded perspective of law enforcement that makes him well-suited to serve on the council. He thanked the committee for its consideration and support.

[3:36:49 PM](#)

**SENATOR HOLLAND** thanked him for his interest in serving.

**CHAIR SHOWER** asked if he had any skeletons in the closet that the committee should know about now that might come out later.

**CHIEF BROWN** replied nothing relevant would come up.

**CHAIR SHOWER** asked if he could identify key areas that need to be fixed and the solutions he would recommend.

**CHIEF BROWN** replied it's important to ensure that the council stays on top of national trends and always looks for well-thought-out processes that will work for both rural and urban areas where training is a little easier. The council looks at things such as training qualifications, continuing education, and increasing recruitment efforts, looking in particular at recruiting out of rural communities. He emphasized the

importance of thoughtful consideration when considering any new regulations or process.

CHAIR SHOWER mentioned the national trend of increased tension between communities and law enforcement and asked if he had seen any of those trends in Alaska. He also asked if he saw any solution-based community policing standards that might be relevant in Bush Alaska.

[3:40:42 PM](#)

CHIEF BROWN replied that he encourages community engagement in the nine communities he is responsible for in the North Slope Borough. Officers get to know the people better than in more urban areas because there is no trooper presence and little opportunity to work anyplace other than where you live. He said the rotational staff is also more engaged with the communities, and with such an open flow of communication it is possible to solve some of the issues that are a problem in some Lower 48 communities that have been in the spotlight. When an entire community has just one law enforcement officer, the officers rely on the volunteer fire department and other known community members to serve as backup on calls. He said his department isn't faced with the overuse of force complaints that are common in some communities across the nation. He opined that the North Slope Borough Police Department specifically and Alaska in general does a better job in training law enforcement officers to serve in rural communities and that's helpful too. To ensure that continues, training must keep evolving.

[3:43:47 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER opened public testimony on the appointment of Chief Jeff Brown to the Alaska Police Standards Council; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[3:44:13 PM](#)

DAVID KNAPP, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Palmer, Alaska, stated that he grew up in Skagway, currently works as a staff sergeant for the Department of Corrections, and resides in Palmer. If reconfirmed, he said this will be his second term. He has worked for DOC for 17 years and for the past five years he has been assigned to prisoner transportation. His duties are focused on identifying gangs and gang members in DOC facilities and passing information along to help frontline staff conduct drug suppression activities.

MR. KNAPP said he enjoyed his first term on the board and would like to continue the work to maintain high standards for training for correctional, probation, and police officers. He also wants to ensure that all officers who come before the council are treated fairly. When he's asked about the national response to law enforcement, he is pleased to relay that most Alaskans support the police. He offered his perspective that APSC has solid regulations and policies in place and any changes should build on those to make them better. Changes should not be based on what is occurring nationally.

[3:46:59 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER asked if he had any skeletons in the closet that the committee should know about now that might come out later.

MR. KNAPP answered no.

CHAIR SHOWER asked if he had identified problem areas that he would like to work on through his service on the council.

MR. KNAPP replied it's not a problem now, but he wants to ensure that the standards for law enforcement officers are maintained even though recruitment is sometimes difficult.

[3:48:00 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO said she's an advocate of having police officers in schools, particularly in high school. She asked if it is the school board or the police department that makes the decisions about whether or not to have a law enforcement presence in Alaska high schools.

MR. KNAPP replied that is out of his purview since he is a correctional officer.

[3:48:56 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER opened public testimony on the appointment of David Knapp to the Alaska Police Standards Council; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[3:49:35 PM](#)

DAVID ROSS, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Kenai, Alaska, stated that he has been with the Kenai Police Department for almost 21 years. He has served in a wide range of position and has been police chief for the past six years. He was appointed to serve in one of the four police chief positions on the council. He views this role as an opportunity to continue to address the need for a

professional and well-trained law enforcement workforce in Alaska.

Responding the Chair's questions to the previous appointees, he said he has no skeletons in the closet that might arise later. Areas he would like to focus on are to continue careful hiring practices to ensure the right people enter the profession; ensure certification and decertification processes that keep the right people in the profession; and maintain ongoing training to keep the workforce well-trained and capable.

CHAIR SHOWER asked if he had seen or was concerned that the national trend of increased tension between communities and law enforcement was here or headed to Alaska and if he had any ideas for mitigation.

CHIEF ROSS replied the department is looking at those national trends and it has provided an opportunity to talk about the training that law enforcement officers should receive so officers avoid getting into trouble. He said the Kenai Police Department enjoys community support and he was not interested in initiating large changes based on what is happening elsewhere.

CHAIR SHOWER commented on the dip netting craziness that occurs near Kenai in July.

[3:53:09 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER opened public testimony on the appointment of Chief David Ross to the Alaska Police Standards Council; finding none, he closed public testimony.

CHAIR SHOWER asked Senator Costello if she had questions for Chief Ross.

SENATOR COSTELLO shared that she supports having a local police presence in high schools to foster good relationships, and asked who makes the decisions for that to come about.

CHIEF ROSS replied it probably varies by location. In Kenai the police department, local schools, and the city worked cooperatively to provide a school resource officer who teaches at the elementary, middle, and high schools. The school district supports this and the police department has built good relationships with administrators and students.

CHAIR SHOWER said he's a fan of the program.

[3:55:32 PM](#)

MICHAEL CRAIG, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that he had worked for the Trans Alaska Pipeline Company since 1983 in a range of positions. In his current capacity as Employee Concerns Coordinator, he investigates code of conduct violations for employees, management, and contractors as well as media assessments and code of conduct training. He described this work as a good fit for the council. He fills a large community public position on the council. He has served since 2017 and has enjoyed the service.

[3:58:05 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER asked if he had any skeletons in the closet that the committee should know about now that might come out later, and if he had identified problem areas that he would like to work on through his service on the council.

MR. CRAIG replied he was not aware of any skeletons in the closet. Regarding work on the council, he said he had enjoyed the time and was treated with respect. He is serving as a public member and believes it is beneficial to the council to have representation from people such as himself who have never been in law enforcement. Another observation is that the council would benefit if it were to have more racial diversity. He said he is also very interested in the training that is offered at the academy. His understanding is that APSC is able to see the topics but not the content of the training, which is intriguing. He said it seems that firearms training is heavily weighted, but he isn't seeing much training that might help officers talk to people of different cultures and races in order to mitigate the need to use weapons of deadly force. He further posited that while there is alignment between law enforcement, corrections, and Village Public Safety Officers, there are differences that APSC might look at correcting. For example, corrections has a course to train officers how to engage with people without having to draw a weapon.

CHAIR SHOWER said he likes to hear opposing viewpoints and areas to improve.

MR. CRAIG restated that his experience on the council has been very good. Anytime he has had an opposing viewpoint it has been considered respectfully and he has never felt pressured to go along with what's being said. It is because of that openness and respect for differing opinions that he wants to continue on the Alaska Police Standards Council.

CHAIR SHOWER restated that he appreciated the comments.

[4:03:58 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER opened public testimony on the appointment of Michael Craig to the Alaska Police Standards Council; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[4:04:20 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER turned to the appointment of Lanette Blodgett to the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC).

[4:04:26 PM](#)

LANETTE BLODGETT, Appointee, Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC), Department of Administration (DOA), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that she was appointed to a seat that is restricted to a Democrat. She is honored that both the party and governor support this appointment. It is an opportunity to serve Alaska by applying her paralegal administrative agency and disciplinary committee experiences to the APOC process. She said she feels she can contribute by fact-checking and in investigations. She looks forward to committing her time to APOC. It should be very interesting with the recent court decisions.

[4:06:51 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER asked if she had any skeletons in the closet that the committee should know about now that might come out later.

MS. BLODGETT replied she could think of nothing that would come up.

CHAIR SHOWER asked if she had identified any areas that might be a problem for APOC or that she would like to improve.

MS. BLODGETT replied she would need to spend more time with the commission to be able to answer, but she likes what she's seen and looks forward to the work. It seems to be evolving.

[4:09:03 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND asked if this would be her first term.

MS. BLODGETT answered yes.

SENATOR HOLLAND thanked her for her interest in serving.

[4:09:43 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER opened public testimony on the appointment of Lanette Blodgett to the Alaska Public Offices Commission; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[4:10:08 PM](#)

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

Alaska Police Standards Council

Michael Craig - Anchorage

David Knapp - Palmer

Jeff Brown - Utqiagvik

David Ross - Kenai

Alaska Public Offices Commission

Lanette Blodgett - Anchorage

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

[4:10:53 PM](#)

At ease

**HB 157-APOC; REPORT REFERENDA/RECALL CONTRIBUTOR**

[4:11:45 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 157(FIN) "An Act requiring the disclosure of the identity of certain persons, groups, and nongroup entities that expend money in support of or in opposition to an application filed for a state referendum or recall election; relating to the location of offices for the Alaska Public Offices Commission and the locations at which certain statements and reports filed with the commission are made available; relating to the duties of the Alaska Public Offices Commission; clarifying the limits on making, accepting, and reporting certain cash campaign contributions; relating to campaign finance reporting by certain groups; increasing the time the Alaska Public Offices Commission has to respond to a request for an advisory opinion; repealing a reporting requirement for certain contributions; relating to contribution

limits and recall campaigns; and providing for an effective date."

He asked the sponsor's staff if she had any final comments.

[4:12:09 PM](#)

CRYSTAL KOENEMAN, Staff, Representative Sara Rasmussen, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, summarized that HB 157 provides language intended to help the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC) run more smoothly and streamline the reporting process for certain contributions and expenditures.

CHAIR SHOWER found no questions or comments and solicited a motion.

[4:12:41 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND moved to report HB 157, work order 32-LS0669\B, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[4:13:03 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER found no objection and CSHB 157(FIN) moved from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee.

[4:13:16 PM](#)

At ease

**SB 129-ELECTION PAMPHLET INFORMATION RE: JUDGES**

[4:15:10 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 129 "An Act relating to information on judicial officers provided in election pamphlets."

[4:15:34 PM](#)

SENATOR ROBERT MYERS, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 129, summarized that the bill will take information that is already being collected, primarily by the Judicial Council, and place it in the pamphlets that the Division of Elections prints before every election to educate voters.

[4:16:20 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND asked if any groups had objected to the bill.

SENATOR MEYER replied there had been no crystalized effort either for or against the bill.

CHAIR SHOWER recalled that the court wasn't particularly supportive of the bill.

SENATOR MYERS said both the Court System and Judicial Council were leery initially, but over the past 18 months he'd modified the bill to mollify many of the concerns. He expressed optimism that the bill would actually help the court over the long term.

[4:18:34 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO asked whether the Judicial Council had an opinion on the bill.

[4:18:39 PM](#)

SUSANNE DIPIETRO, Executive Director, Alaska Judicial Council (AJC), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that AJC had not taken a position on SB 129.

[4:19:05 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER opened public testimony on SB 129; finding none, he closed public testimony.

SENATOR MYERS thanked the committee.

[4:19:30 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND moved to report CSSB 129, 32-LS0751\N, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

CHAIR SHOWER found no objection and CSSB 129(JUD) was reported from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee.

[4:19:59 PM](#)

At ease

**SB 126-REPEAL 90 DAY SESSION LIMIT**

[4:20:58 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 126 "An Act relating to the duration of a regular session of the legislature; and providing for an effective date."

[4:21:32 PM](#)

At ease

[4:24:06 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER reconvened the meeting.

[4:24:24 PM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, reminded the committee that the bill was first heard last year and that presentation was on BASIS and in the bill packets. He directed attention to the sheet of new data in the packets that showed the following:

**Total Session Days**

- Overall historical average from 1970-2021: 134 days
- Average under the constitutional 120-day session from 1986-2007: 131 days
- Average under a statutory 90-day session from 2008-2021 137

**Special Session Days**

- Overall historical average from 1970-2021: 15.1 days
- Average under the constitutional 120-day session from 1986-2007: 10.2 days
- Average under a statutory 90-day session from 2008-2021 21.1 days

MR. LAMKIN stated that the data above demonstrates that the 120-day session hits the sweet spot to do the legislature's critical work of passing the budget. He highlighted that with the additional federal money coming in, it is particularly burdensome to make such critical budgeting decisions in 30 fewer days. He pointed out that the executive branch works year-round with that information and the legislature only works with it for 90 days. He maintained that when the people's branch of government was limited to 90 days, it was a direct shift of power to the executive branch.

He offered to answer questions or go through the presentation the committee heard last year.

[4:28:21 PM](#)

At ease

[4:29:19 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER reconvened the meeting. He asked how many days, on average, the legislature meets during regular sessions.

MR. LAMKIN directed attention to page 13 that illustrated that with few exceptions, the legislature met for 120 days during regular sessions.

CHAIR SHOWER asked if the average number of days in session was 120, regardless of whether the statute said 90 or 120 days.

[4:31:04 PM](#)

SENATOR GARY STEVENS, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 126, via teleconference, stated that the 90-day session has been tested long enough to see that it doesn't work very well. He reminded the committee that the initiative that established a 90-day session was spearheaded by legislators who wanted shorter sessions for personal reasons. It passed by a thin margin, it hasn't been successful, and circumstances in the legislature are different now than they were then. The legislature is responsible for the largest budget in the state and the largest permanent fund per capita in the world. He said it is very important for the legislature to meet for the time it needs to get the job done. It takes more than 90 days to be an effective policy-making body and to keep from being dominated by the executive branch. The constitution says 121 days and that's the right approach.

[4:34:14 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER asked his thoughts on the fact that this would be overriding the will of the people.

SENATOR STEVENS said the legislature has tried it since the public passed the initiative in 2006 and it hasn't worked. The public has lost out because their funnel to know what is happening throughout the state is gone most of the year. The legislature needs to be in the capitol minding the public's interest for the 121 days called for in the constitution.

CHAIR SHOWER asked how other states do this work in less time.

[4:36:56 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS restated that the legislature tried it and only once had been able to get the work done in 90 days. He questioned whether other states would be able to handle what they typically do and the federal money that will be coming in in a shortened time.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked if the conflict between the constitution and the statute has resulted in higher costs when the

Legislative Affairs Agency has planned on a 90-day session and the legislature is unable to meet that deadline.

SENATOR STEVENS replied it is without question more costly when the legislature meets for a longer time.

SENATOR COSTELLO clarified that her question was whether it costs more for Legislative Affairs to wind the session down when it plans for one date and the legislature extends beyond that time. For example, the Marine Highway System plans to move legislators' cars after 90 days and when the legislature extends beyond that date, they must quickly switch the schedule to accommodate a different exit date.

SENATOR STEVENS said Legislative Council has had to establish exit plans for both the 90- and 120-day sessions and he would suggest the committee consult the council to look at that record.

[4:40:07 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND commented that it seems ironic to impose a 90-day limit and chronically run past that, and also have more special sessions. He asked if anything in particular had been identified to account for that.

SENATOR STEVENS said more legislation is being introduced and each piece is typically referred to three committees in each body, which takes time.

SENATOR HOLLAND offered his belief that 121 days was the sweet spot.

CHAIR SHOWER argued that resolving the permanent fund dividend (PFD) issue would alleviate much of the problem associated with extended and special sessions.

He asked the sponsor if he had additional comments.

SENATOR STEVENS thanked the committee for hearing the bill.

CHAIR SHOWER asked Mr. Lamkin if he would like to respond to any of the questions or supplement the sponsor's responses.

[4:42:50 PM](#)

MR. LAMKIN followed up on the sponsor's comments, pointing out that the platform the proponents of the 90-day session used was

misleading. The proponents argued that a 90-day session policy would:

- reduce the cost of state government
- align with the policy in other states
- encourage more people to run for office

MR. LAMKIN said every argument that was used had since proven not to be the case. Speaking to Senator Holland's and Senator Costello's questions, he pointed out that the promised cost savings had not been realized. In fact, short notice changes for things like ferry schedules add to the costs. Costs for special session and interim meetings have also gone up.

[4:44:51 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER offered his belief that opening the door six or seven years ago to not follow the formula for the statutory dividend had caused chaos. He asked Mr. Lamkin to comment now or follow up with data that shows the largest cost spikes since the formula had not been followed.

MR. LAMKIN responded that the 90-day session took effect in 2007 and the legislature had met that deadline just twice. He highlighted that Senator Stevens was Senate President those two years. He said it's fair to say that the PFD debate contributed to special sessions, but he wouldn't say that was the entire reason.

CHAIR SHOWER agreed the PFD was just a contributor, not the sole reason for special sessions.

MR. LAMKIN offered his belief that if the status quo is maintained, issues will continue to come up that will keep the legislature beyond 90 days.

[4:47:45 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER held SB 126 in committee.

[4:48:14 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Shower adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 4:48 p.m.