

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 14, 2023

8:05 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative CJ McCormick, Chair  
Representative Kevin McCabe, Vice Chair  
Representative Tom McKay  
Representative Justin Ruffridge  
Representative Rebecca Himschoot  
Representative Donna Mears

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Josiah Patkotak

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Regulatory Commission of Alaska

Robert Doyle - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 78

"An Act establishing September 10 as Alaska Community Health Aide Appreciation Day."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 30

"An Act relating to daylight saving time; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 78

SHORT TITLE: AK COMMUNITY HEALTH AIDE APPRECIATION DAY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) MCCORMICK

02/20/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

02/20/23 (H) CRA  
03/14/23 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 30

SHORT TITLE: OBSERVE DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ALL YEAR  
SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) ORTIZ

01/19/23 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23  
01/19/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/19/23 (H) CRA, STA, L&C, FIN  
03/14/23 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

#### **WITNESS REGISTER**

ROBERT DOYLE, Appointee  
Regulatory Commission of Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as an appointee to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska.

CALLAN CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF, Staff  
Representative CJ McCormick  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** On behalf of Representative McCormick, prime sponsor, introduced HB 78 and gave a PowerPoint presentation, titled "HB 78 Establishing Alaska Community Health Aide Appreciation Day."

JESSICA HYATT, Community Relations Advocate  
Guardian Flight Alaska  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HB 78.

CAROLYN CRAIG, PA-C, Director  
Community Health Aide Program  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HB 78.

JENNY BROWN, Instructor  
Clinical Training  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HB 78.

ASELA CALHOUN, PhD, Director  
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation

Bethel, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HB 78.

REPRESENTATIVE DAN ORTIZ

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, presented HB 30.

CAROLINE HAMP, Staff

Representative Dan Ortiz

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 30, on behalf of Representative Ortiz, prime sponsor.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:05:10 AM](#)

**CHAIR CJ MCCORMICK** called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Representatives McKay, Himschoot, Mears, McCabe, and McCormick were present at the call to order. Representative Ruffridge arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### **CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNOR'S APPOINTEES** **Regulatory Commission of Alaska**

[8:06:08 AM](#)

**CHAIR MCCORMICK** announced that the first order of business would be the consideration of the governor's appointees.

[8:07:12 AM](#)

**ROBERT DOYLE**, Appointee, Regulatory Commission of Alaska, testified as an appointee to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA). He expressed his intention to accept the opportunity for community service, as he came out of retirement to do so. He thanked the committee for its consideration and welcomed any questions.

[8:07:54 AM](#)

**REPRESENTATIVE MEARS** asked for a synopsis of Mr. Doyle's background in relation to this consideration.

MR. DOYLE explained that he worked 31 years in public schools in Alaska, and for the past five years he was superintendent of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD). After retirement, he served on the Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) Board of Directors for 12 years, which included serving several years as secretary and treasurer. During the time with MSBSD, he stated that he worked on energy issues and contributed to doing whatever needed to be done to make sure things were completed in a safe, reliable, and affordable way so that more money could be spent on education.

REPRESENTATIVE MEARS expressed her appreciation for his experience on the utility board.

[8:09:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE questioned Mr. Doyle's opinion on the move toward renewable electric utilities by Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA) and MEA.

MR. DOYLE replied that during the time he served MEA's board, the solar power project in Willow was just beginning. He stated that the key is connectivity and making sure the independent power producers and the movement to renewable power could be done in a reliable way. He discussed variability, as there must be a back-up to make sure battery storage would be able to offset when there is no wind or no sun. He expressed pride in working to keep the renewable projects reliable, affordable, and safe.

[8:11:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE expressed appreciation for Mr. Doyle's commitment to sustainable energy and asked if the wind turbines in northern Matanuska-Susitna Valley or Denali would be able to compensate for the shutdown of Golden Valley Electric Association or Healy Electric.

MR. DOYLE replied that this is GVEA's plan, and Chugach Electric Association is looking at wind and solar power. For energy security purposes in the short term, there is MEA natural gas and a generator, and this would help in Chugach. He stated that the future goal is to open wind and solar power to all areas from Fairbanks to Kenai.

[8:14:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE expressed the opinion that the intertie is most likely an "extension cord" running from Homer to Fairbanks. He asked whether Mr. Doyle would support a \$1.2 billion increase in electrical lines through the RCA. He also asked about his stance on nuclear power.

MR. DOYLE explained that all sources of power need to be looked at and to have everyone come to the table and gather all the facts. The rate payers do not expect anything less, and he expressed support for the development of a good "backbone." He stated that there should be a redundant system, so if there is a problem with one power line there is a backup.

[8:17:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE questioned some of the current issues for RCA.

MR. DOYLE replied that the open dockets cannot be discussed. Other than that, one of the big concerns is energy security throughout the state. He stated that the focus needs to be on the rural cooperatives, to make sure they are operating efficiently. Other major concerns are school closures during power outages, senior citizens being without lights, and washeterias not working. He stressed again that energy security is foremost on his mind.

[8:19:44 AM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK stated the House Community and Regional Affairs committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointee and recommends that the following name be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Robert Doyle, Regulatory Commission of Alaska. 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.

[8:20:40 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:20 a.m. to 8:23 a.m.

**HB 78-AK COMMUNITY HEALTH AIDE APPRECIATION DAY**

[8:23:28 AM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 78, "An Act establishing September 10 as Alaska Community Health Aide Appreciation Day."

[8:23:42 AM](#)

CALLAN CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF, Staff, Representative CJ McCormick, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative McCormick, prime sponsor, introduced HB 78 and gave a PowerPoint presentation, titled "HB 78 Establishing Alaska Community Health Aide Appreciation Day" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She provided her background and personal connection to the health aide community. She explained that the Community Health Aide Program is unique to the state and was established out of necessity, and its role is very complex. Community health aides are often on call at all hours and are critical for the doctors and nurses traveling to rural villages. In the 1950s, during the tuberculosis epidemic, the profession began out of necessity to ensure medication and medical care was received in rural communities. She pointed out that September 10 commemorates the first Planning and Advisory Committee meeting for Health Aide Programs in Alaska. She reiterated that community health aides are the "trust" for rural Alaska in the medical care system, and she thanked the committee for its time.

[8:29:30 AM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF, in response to Representative McCabe, stated that the Community Health Aide Program (CHAP) training is fairly extensive, consisting of weeks of training at one of four hubs: Anchorage, Bethel, Nome, or Fairbanks. In response to a follow-up question, she explained that the wages for aides depend on each community, and sometimes they will not receive pay for all the time they are on call.

[8:31:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MEARS expressed privilege to have worked for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium early in her career. She stated that she was able to experience firsthand the facilities and the care provided to communities. She expressed support for HB 78.

[8:32:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE asked for a description of what a day looks like for a health aide.

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF spoke of her personal knowledge through her mother's work as a health aide. She explained the close work with the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO), stating that the aide and VPSO were the primary responsibility for all crises. She stated that aides not only provide medical attention but are also part of the law and order in a community. Health aides are sometimes required to go house to house if a village does not have a clinic. This entails helping the elderly and responding to trauma.

[8:34:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT questioned whether health aides are mandatory reporters.

CHAIR MCCORMICK deferred to invited testimony.

[8:35:47 AM](#)

JESSICA HYATT, Community Relations Advocate, Guardian Flight Alaska, gave invited testimony in support of HB 78, on behalf of CHAP. She explained that Guardian Flight Alaska works shoulder to shoulder with CHAP on a daily basis. She explained Alaska pioneered the CHAP program, and the work of the aides is tireless and around the clock. She reiterated that September 10 is a significant date, and it should be recognized.

[8:39:23 AM](#)

CAROLYN CRAIG, PA-C, Director, Community Health Aide Program, gave invited testimony in support of HB 78 and provided her background. She described the CHAP program as unique, amazing, and proven effective at providing culturally competent and quality healthcare for remote and underserved areas throughout Alaska. She noted that 15 weeks is the total training an aide must complete, and this is broken down into four sessions. In 2015, a distance learning program for basic training had been started, and this has allowed students to complete portions of their training at home, minimizing their time away. The program has also gained both national and international attention. She explained that health aides deal with many hardships, which remain unheard, and it is a "24/7" job. She thanked the committee and offered to answer any questions.

[8:45:22 AM](#)

JENNY BROWN, Instructor, Clinical Training, Tanana Chiefs Conference, provided a brief background, and explained her time working with many rural and under-resourced medical providers, compared to other parts of the state. She stated that the group which gains the most respect are the community health aides. She explained that the situations vary greatly from region to region, and they provide essential medical care to the villages without any advanced degrees. She encouraged the committee to establish an annual Community Health Aide Recognition Day that will remind Alaskans to acknowledge these health care providers.

[8:47:53 AM](#)

ASELA CALHOUN, PhD, Director, Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation, provided a brief background and expressed appreciation for the CHAP program and for the work of health aides. She described her personal connections with many health aide workers and recognized the tremendous amount of quality work they do. She gave an overview of communities served, and a brief breakdown of which ones also have a clinic. She reiterated that the program has become a model that is imitated nationwide, and she stated it is fitting that community health aides be recognized as the pillars of health care in remote Alaska and honored with a day of recognition.

[8:52:48 AM](#)

DR. CALHOUN continued and gave examples of survey outcomes, noting that the program is widely described as "a very personal and deeply held tradition for the community." She also noted that being an aide is generational; children become aides because their parents were aides, and so on. It is a pattern that has been repeated multiple times. In closing, she offered her support to dedicating a day in recognition to community health aides. In response to the question from REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT concerning whether health aides are mandatory reporters, she replied that they are required like any other health professional.

[8:56:50 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:56 a.m. to 8:58 a.m.

[8:58:27 AM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK announced that HB 78 was held over.

[8:58:53 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:58 a.m. to 9:02 a.m.

**HB 30-OBSERVE DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ALL YEAR**

[9:02:57 AM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 30, "An Act relating to daylight saving time; and providing for an effective date."

[9:03:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DAN ORTIZ, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 30. He began by explaining that if enacted, HB 30 would establish Daylight Saving Time (DST) as the official year-round time for Alaska. It is currently observed between the second Sunday in March and the first Sunday of November. He explained the benefits of staying in DST, which include increased physical activity, a decrease in robberies, an increase in economic spending, and a decrease in fatal car crashes. He stated that included in the committee packet are supporting documents and public support. He referred to the sponsor statement [copy included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 30 establishes Daylight Saving Time (DST) as the official time for the State of Alaska year-round, subject to the authorization of federal law.

DST is observed between the second Sunday of March and the first Sunday of November. Adoption of this legislation is the first step. To fully implement the change to full-time DST, action by the United States Congress is required. Congress will need to amend federal law to allow states to observe DST throughout the calendar year.

Nationally, the initiative to change to full-time DST is gaining traction. As of March 2022, 18 states have enacted DST legislation. In 2022 alone, 28 states are considering DST legislation. On the west coast, California voters authorized the change pending legislation and in 2019, both Washington and Oregon passed legislation similar to HB30. Our Canadian neighbors have also taken steps to move to full-time

DST. British Columbia passed legislation to implement full-time DST contingent on the U.S. west coast also implementing it. Yukon began full-time DST on March 8, 2020.

Because of our close economic and geographic ties to the U.S. and Canadian west coasts, Alaska can avoid being 'left in the dark' by passing HB30.

[9:07:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ acknowledged that a permanent move to DST could create some concern, particularly in the western part of the state, as it already has a late sunrise. He noted that support has been received from Anchorage and Southeast Alaska. He thanked the committee and welcomed any questions.

[9:08:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE referenced electronic devices which automatically change for DST. He questioned whether they can be reprogrammed.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ expressed uncertainty but would follow up to the committee.

CHAIR MCCORMICK expressed the understanding that the devices can be reset with an Internet connection.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ agreed with Chair McCormick. He continued to explain HB 30 is not about a preference between standard time versus DST, rather he expressed concern if [Pacific Standard Time] changes. He expressed the opinion that this would put Alaska out of synch.

[9:11:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE referenced support for the Sunshine Protection Act in the U.S. Congress. He questioned whether there would be a companion resolution from the Alaska State Legislature to encourage the U.S. Congress to pass this.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ expressed interest in the possibility.

[9:12:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MEARS reflected on time changes over the years. She acknowledged the vastness of the state and expressed concern about how the time change would affect the western part of the state.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE, in reference to Representative Mears's comments, questioned returning to some sort of split in the time zone for the western part of the state.

CAROLINE HAMP, Staff, Representative Dan Ortiz, Alaska State Legislature, replied that it is ultimately a federal decision for a state to have multiple time zones.

[9:17:14 AM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK questioned the original purpose of DST and asked if it was to benefit farmers.

MS. HAMP replied that originally DST was a measure to help with light and the ability to do day-to-day tasks without burning candles or using electricity. The time change, she stated, was never supported by farmers and is not to this day.

CHAIR MCCORMICK asked if energy consumption increases during DST.

MS. HAMP referred to a study which shows very little difference in energy cost and consumption. She offered to follow up with a copy of the study to the committee.

[9:19:22 AM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK announced that HB 30 was held over.

[9:19:44 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:19 a.m. to 9:21 a.m.

[9:21:29 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:22 a.m.