

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 20, 2023

8:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Jamie Allard, Co-Chair
Representative Justin Ruffridge, Co-Chair
Representative Mike Prax
Representative CJ McCormick
Representative Tom McKay
Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Representative Andi Story

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Senator Robert Myers

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 69

"An Act relating to the reclassification of first class cities as second class cities; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 69 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 9

"An Act relating to the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska."

- MOVED CSHB 9(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 10

"An Act relating to costs of and charges for textbooks and other course materials required for University of Alaska courses; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 71

"An Act relating to education; and relating to a school district online checkbook."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 69

SHORT TITLE: RECLASSIFICATION OF FIRST CLASS CITIES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CRONK

02/10/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/10/23	(H)	EDC, CRA
03/01/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/01/23	(H)	Heard & Held
03/01/23	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/13/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/13/23	(H)	Heard & Held
03/13/23	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/20/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 9

SHORT TITLE: ADD FACULTY MEMBER UNIV BOARD OF REGENTS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CARRICK

01/19/23	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23
01/19/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/23	(H)	EDC, JUD
02/20/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
02/20/23	(H)	Heard & Held
02/20/23	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/08/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/08/23	(H)	Heard & Held
03/08/23	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/20/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 10

SHORT TITLE: UNIVERSITY: TEXTBOOKS/MATERIALS COST

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CARRICK

01/19/23	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23
01/19/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/23	(H)	EDC
03/20/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

MIKE CRONK

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 69.

DAVE STANCLIFF, Staff

Representative Mike Cronk
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing of HB 69, on behalf of Representative Cronk, prime sponsor.

ASHLEY CARRICK

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 9; as prime sponsor, presented HB 10.

STUART RELAY, Staff

Representative Ashley Carrick
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered information related to HB 9 on behalf of Representative Carrick, prime sponsor; provided the sectional analysis for HB 10 on behalf of Representative Carrick, prime sponsor.

KATIE SCOGGIN, President

United Students of the University of Alaska Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of HB 10.

ASHLYN BROOKS, President

The Associated Students of the University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of HB 10.

PAUL LAYER, Vice President

Academics, Students & Research
University of Alaska System
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 10.

SARA PERMAN, Government Relations Manager

University of Alaska System
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 10.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:01:13 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JUSTIN RUFFRIDGE called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Prax, McCormick, McKay, Story, Allard, and Ruffridge were present at the call to order. Representative Himschoot arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 69-RECLASSIFICATION OF FIRST CLASS CITIES

[8:02:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 69, "An Act relating to the reclassification of first class cities as second class cities; and providing for an effective date."

[8:02:55 AM](#)

MIKE CRONK, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, explained HB 69 would allow a first class city to reclassify to a second class city if the community chooses so. The purpose would be to allow the transfer of Tanana into the Yukon-Koyukuk School District.

[8:03:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on HB 69. After ascertaining there was no one who wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[8:04:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed appreciation for hearing from the superintendent "in that area," and knowing there have been thorough discussions on working around the parameters. She stated the bill is "the right thing to do."

[8:04:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX pointed out that he did not see the fiscal note from the Department of Education.

[8:05:03 AM](#)

DAVE STANCLIFF, Staff, Representative Mike Cronk, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Cronk, prime sponsor of HB 69, responded to Representative Prax, and explained the sheet from the Yukon-Koyukuk School District notes the savings that would be achieved by combining the school districts; there would be a negative fiscal impact.

[8:07:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT commented she is troubled by the lack of input and would prefer to hear from more than just the superintendent, and since this is about "absorbing one district into another," she would like to hear from the local community.

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK responded that two years ago, the community of Tanana reached out. He explained the majority of the people of Tanana feel that [combining the school districts] is the best path forward. He further explained the school boards have been working together on a contract, and the Yukon-Koyukuk School District had already been functioning as a lead the past few years.

[8:09:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked for clarification that this legislation is an option, and at the end of the day, the city gets to make the decision.

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK confirmed that is correct, the people of Tanana decide whether they want to be reclassified. If that happened, then they would have the option through the Local Boundary Commission.

MR. STANCLIFF noted there is a letter from the mayor and a resolution from the council in the committee packet.

[8:10:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if reclassification may lead to future communities having the same pathway - and if so - which communities might be next.

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK replied that the bill is specifically for Tanana.

MR. STANCLIFF expanded on the answer and explained four other communities had been identified that are under the 400 limit, and if they got into "some sort of a bind," the option would be available for those communities. He noted they would also have to work with the Local Boundary Commission, as Tanana would do.

[8:11:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX brought up the city of Nenana going through bankruptcy, which required other agencies to "pick up the tab." He reiterated we [the legislature] need to think about this very carefully.

[8:12:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD moved to report HB 69 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note.

[8:12:56 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:12 a.m. to 8:13 a.m.

[8:13:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced there being no objection, HB 69 was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:14:08 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:14 a.m. to 8:18 a.m.

HB 9-ADD FACULTY MEMBER UNIV BOARD OF REGENTS

[8:19:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 9, "An Act relating to the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska."

[8:19:45 AM](#)

ASHLEY CARRICK, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, provided a brief introduction to HB 9 and said the bill would add a full-time tenured faculty member to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

8:20:05 AM

STUART RELAY, Staff, Representative Ashley Carrick, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Carrick, prime sponsor of HB 9, noted that there is a document [included in the committee packet] that addresses previous questions.

8:20:42 AM

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked if there were any comments or questions for the bill sponsor, and confirmed there were none.

8:20:49 AM

CO-CHAIR ALLARD announced there is a conceptual amendment.

8:21:11 AM

The committee took an at-ease from 8:21 a.m. to 8:23 a.m.

8:23:46 AM

CO-CHAIR ALLARD moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1 to HB 9, labeled 33-LS0197\A.2, Bergerud, 3/17/23, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 13:

Delete "faculty member nominees"

Insert "interested faculty members"

Page 2, line 9:

Delete "nominees"

Insert "all interested faculty members compiled by the University of Alaska and"

Page 2, lines 11 - 14:

Delete "The list must consist of the names of two faculty members selected by each of the three faculty senates of the University of Alaska, for a total of six nominees, after an election is held by each faculty senate. Elections shall be conducted under rules established by the Office of the Governor."

Page 2, lines 25 - 26:

Delete "hold elections for nominees and submit the list of nominees"

Insert "submit the list of interested faculty members"

[8:23:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY objected for the purpose of discussion.

[8:24:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD explained Conceptual Amendment 1 opens equal opportunity for all. There are individuals affiliated with campuses, and any of these individuals from any location could apply to become a faculty board member.

[8:24:54 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE invited comments or questions on Conceptual Amendment 1.

[8:25:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY addressed the bill sponsor and expressed she thought [faculty board membership] currently was open to all faculty.

[8:25:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK noted that the bill is not limited to faculty senate members from the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS); the faculty senate just makes the selections for the two nominees for the cycle.

[8:27:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD reemphasized that Conceptual Amendment 1 removes "nominee" to read "all interested parties."

[8:27:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked who is eligible to serve and whether it is anyone employed in a professor position, or tenured only.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK responded that the bill is limited to tenured faculty, and adjuncts are not eligible to be nominees. With this amendment she presumed it would open up potentially to all faculty, including adjuncts.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT questioned how many tenured professors there are in the university system.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied there are 490 tenured faculty in the University of Alaska system currently, and 162 are eligible for tenure. She noted the process of obtaining tenure typically takes about a year and it is a vigorous process.

[8:30:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT pointed out there are 652 people who could be interested, and asked what the purpose was for narrowing it down to six.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied that the value of narrowing it to six makes it a transparent process in consultation with faculty and still allows the governor the full purview to choose a nominee from that list.

[8:31:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked if the faculty senate is open to any tenured faculty members or if it is open to all faculty members regardless of tenure.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied that her understanding is if you are teaching at the University of Alaska you are allowed to participate in the faculty senate in a meaningful way. In response to a follow-up question, she explained the faculty senate can be thought of as a parallel entity to the student government. One can participate in student government meetings but in order to be student senator at one of the campuses you have to run and be elected by the student body/your peers.

[8:33:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked what is looked for in a nominee.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied a major component would be looking for people with time and energy to commit; being on the Board of Regents is a "very hefty commitment."

[8:36:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD offered closing comments and wanted to stress that the body and the public knows that removing "nominee" and inserting "interested faculty" opens it to all Alaskans.

[8:37:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY removed his objection to the motion to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1.

[8:37:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY objected. She expressed appreciation for the sentiment of the amendment maker, in making sure everyone can take part; however, she commented that it is important that peers have looked at the nominees.

[8:38:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX noted there are currently Alaskans upset by a provision in the constitution that gives a non-governmental organization preferred dominance in selecting judges. He agreed with the amendment - as it is currently written - to have things "more open."

[8:40:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT made a comparison on the process she went through to sit on the legislature in having to convince people she would advocate for them. She said she likes the idea that people are vetted and selected as nominees by the faculty senate. She stated that she liked the spirit of the amendment, but does not support it.

[8:41:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD reiterated that under HB 9, the process is defined as an election to be held; it is not a selection.

[8:41:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK expressed appreciation of the bill's inclusion of as many people as possible and brought up possible residency requirements.

[8:42:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE directed a question to the bill sponsor whether it is accurate to state that the current process to become a Board of Regents member is to apply, and, if selected, go through the confirmation process.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied that currently, on the 8-year term serving regents, a conversation takes place between the Office of Boards and Commissions, the Office of the Governor, and interested individuals. Generally, she explained, the Office of Boards and Commissions will work with the interested individuals, and the governor will choose those individuals directly for the legislature to confirm.

[8:43:14 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD offered clarity that the bill, as written, would limit who the governor gets to pick instead of the governor getting to pick amongst all who would be qualified.

[8:43:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY directed her comment to the maker of the amendment, and asked what the faculty thinks about the proposed change.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD replied that she had spoken to different faculty members and Board of Regents members, and they wanted the opportunity to be open to all Alaskans from any community and not limited to just six nominees through an election process.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK expanded on Co-Chair Allard's comment that this amendment opens up to all interested faculty in a way that is more "broad," and noted that through the current process outlined in the proposed legislation, faculty from rural Alaska are able to become a faculty regent; it is not limited to the three main campuses.

[8:45:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY maintained her objection to Conceptual Amendment 1.

[8:45:16 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives McKay, Prax, Allard, and Ruffridge voted in favor of Conceptual Amendment 1. Representatives Story, Himschoot, and McCormick voted against it. Therefore, Conceptual Amendment 1 was adopted by a vote of 4-3.

[8:46:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD moved to report HB 9, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes, and to authorize Legislative Legal Services to make conforming and technical changes, as needed. There being no objection, CSHB 9(EDC) was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:46:52 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:46 a.m. to 8:51 a.m.

HB 10-UNIVERSITY: TEXTBOOKS/MATERIALS COST

[Contains discussion of SB 13.]

[8:51:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 10, "An Act relating to costs of and charges for textbooks and other course materials required for University of Alaska courses; and providing for an effective date."

[8:51:36 AM](#)

ASHLEY CARRICK, Alaska State Legislature, began presenting the second piece of legislation, HB 10, also known as the "textbook cost transparency act." She pointed out that HB 10 is the only minority to minority companion bill in the legislature currently and it is the House companion bill to SB 13. She paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

For many years, the cost of higher education has been increasing well above the rate of inflation, making a college education difficult or even unrealistic to obtain for many students and working families. As costs have increased, higher education seekers have taken out crippling loans or gone to other extraordinary means to pay for school. As students work to balance the many costs of attending college classes, including tuition, room and board, and other expenses it is beneficial that transparency exists in the costs of textbooks.

House Bill 10, the Textbook Cost Transparency Act provides important information about the costs of textbooks and course materials for classes while students are registering for classes, thus allowing them to make informed choices and financially plan for school. The goal of this bill is to provide students with as much information regarding costs as early as possible in the registration process with clearly defined definitions integrated into the University of Alaska's shared online course catalog (UAOnline). By allowing students to see which classes come at "zero-cost" or "low-cost" they will be able to make more informed financial decisions more easily.

While the faculty are the deciders of course materials and are often keen to ensure an affordable class experience for students, this bill simply lets students know the cost of their classes before completing the registration process. Please join me in supporting House Bill 10, the Textbook Cost Transparency Act and supporting University of Alaska Students.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK noted a projected effective date of July 1, 2026, which would allow the university's administration to make changes. She thanked Senator Myers, [prime sponsor of SB 13], and his staff for their diligence and for allowing her to work on the bill with them.

[8:56:02 AM](#)

STUART RELAY, Staff, Representative Ashley Carrick, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Carrick, prime sponsor, gave the sectional analysis for HB 10 [included in committee packets] which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1. (Page 1). This section establishes that this act may be known as the "Textbook Cost Transparency Act".

Section 2. (Page 1-2) Amends AS 14.40 by adding a new section outlining the information that the University of Alaska must provide in the University systems online course schedule relating to class materials and automatic fees required for the materials. This section provides statute definitions for "course

materials", "online course schedule", "zero-cost resources", and "low-cost resources".

This section also directs that the universities' online course schedule must include search functions to identify courses with only zero-cost materials required.

Section 3. (Page 2) establishes an effective date for the bill of July 1st, 2026

[8:58:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced the committee would now hear invited testimony on HB 10.

[8:58:41 AM](#)

KATIE SCOGGIN, President, United Students of the University of Alaska Anchorage, gave invited testimony in support of HB 10. She began by explaining the need for affordability of higher education is true for every high school student [after being admitted to a university] and gave examples of cost comparisons she experienced personally. Because of the additional cost of course materials not being made available prior to registration, it is hard to budget accordingly. She noted some students must borrow money to cover the costs of materials due to not having an idea beforehand and this is a story she has heard multiple times. She stressed that it is crucial and necessary that the online course schedule identifies required course materials in the description. She urged the committee to support HB 10.

[9:03:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE invited questions from the committee.

[9:03:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY expressed surprise that a state law must be passed "to do this." He asked if required textbooks would be on Amazon for the purpose of a cost reference.

MS. SCOGGIN responded yes, while students may likely find the materials on Amazon, the issue would be not knowing which version of the textbook would need to be purchased, and the likelihood of it not correlating with the rest of the course materials.

[9:05:18 AM](#)

ASHLYN BROOKS, President, The Associated Students of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, gave invited testimony in support of HB 10 and acknowledged the frustration of signing up for an already expensive course only to find out weeks later that sometimes several hundreds of dollars more are required to buy textbooks and course materials. She noted it is a severe problem for many of the lower income students on campus and they may have to take out last minute loans to cover the costs. She echoed Ms. Scoggin's testimony on the inability to budget accordingly due to not knowing the costs beforehand.

[9:06:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT, regarding reference materials from Sara Perman, [Government Relations Manager, University of Alaska], pointed out a letter [included in the committee packet], which included materials regarding no-cost/low-cost transparency efforts. Representative Himschoot read a line, as follows: "It is important to note that each of our universities, UAA, UAF, UAS, are subject to federal regulations that require us to provide accurate and timely information about the cost of books or required materials." She asked whether the bill drills down deeper, and how it improves things beyond the federal regulations.

MR. RELAY responded that he cannot speak specifically about federal regulations, but the bill provides an in-state statute that must disclose whether materials are low-cost or no-cost options for a course when it is available online.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK added that the bill expands on the efforts the university is currently undergoing to enact more measures.

[9:08:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY observed that HB 10 does not state anything about the step of educating students about the span of the cost of textbooks, and on page 1, line 10 it states, "required course materials." She asked where on the website she could find the costs of materials.

MR. RELAY replied that the bill does not provide the exact cost because it would be a burden to the faculty to find exact,

current prices. He explained the university has online search functions that state a course has low-cost materials. He gave a brief explanation of what currently constitutes as low cost.

[9:10:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Representative Carrick if she knew how the university currently lets students or local school districts know what the costs of textbooks are.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied that one of the documents given from the university system [in the committee packet] outlines how each of the campuses has worked to advertise low and no cost materials. She stated what struck her is that there is not uniformity across the system right now; students do not know the cost of materials until close to the start date of the course or not until the first day of class.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked what the deadline is for a faculty member to have their materials posted for the upcoming semester.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK noted some classes do not require any materials, but a few weeks before semester begins faculty will produce a syllabus and create a course platform to share with students.

[9:15:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Representative Carrick if she had checked with any of the representatives from UAA on how much manpower this would take.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied the university would take on some of the administrative legwork to make this happen, and that is part of why the effective date is pushed out to 2026. In terms of how many hours it would take, she explained the university may better speak to that. She offered her understanding that the university could absorb taking on the administrative work of putting this together with current staffing, which is why, up to this point, there has not been a fiscal note received from the university.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD questioned if there had been any conversation with any representatives from UAA.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied that her staff have spoken with the university administration, which has relayed it would be an extra administrative burden to put this together.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked if there had been any conversation with the Board of Regents about implementing this; she stated concern on making a state law allowing the university to "do something simply" or continue what they are doing now.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied she had not spoken with regent members but noted the value in having uniformity across the system. She gave examples of students finding out about textbook costs and having to drop classes; working families struggle to afford higher education in general, and left to the universities' own devices, they may implement a uniform system, but it may take a very long time. Putting it in state law would ensure that the process is working with the university administration by giving them time to implement it, while also making sure it happens.

[9:17:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD reiterated she has a problem with it being state law instead of allowing UAA to make these decisions and go through their chain of command.

[9:17:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX reflected on the conversation stating that students select courses based on cost of curriculum; he thought courses should be selected based on the need for the degree being pursued, or the reputation of the instructor.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK responded there are a lot of factors that go into decision making for which course a student takes. She gave an example wherein if there are four sections of the same course and if one had a low-cost option, that may factor into the decision. She also noted there are people online from the university system available to answer questions.

[9:21:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX observed that there was a zero fiscal note, but "within the text" there are going to be costs; he asked what it might cost the university, and why that wasn't stated in the fiscal note.

[9:22:29 AM](#)

PAUL LAYER, Vice President, Academics, Students & Research, University of Alaska System, explained that as many committee members are aware, the university was allocated funding last year to improve the Student Information System (SIS) and UAA online is a piece of that. As SIS is being upgraded, the spirit in the letter of requirements in this legislation will be part of that new system brought online to improve the student experience. He pointed out that in the committee packet, there are three different approaches from the three universities regarding low-cost/zero-cost or textbook transparency. Regarding the fiscal note, it will be a cost, but it will be incorporated into the improved SIS.

[9:24:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented on not knowing the cost of textbooks until the day of, the day before, and in some cases, the day after a class begins. A good practice is to let a customer know what the cost is before they commit to the sale. He stated he is puzzled about the university not implementing this practice on its own; why would this need the legislature to put into law to do something that makes "perfectly good business sense."

MR. LAYER replied that there are some exceptions to why textbook costs are not known until later for certain courses, but the university is moving to the point where the cost is known at the time of registration, and flags for zero-cost/low-cost are available as well.

[9:26:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX noted his hesitation to have the legislature dictate something that is "common sense." First, he questioned whether the university needs this legislation, and second, he asked if the legislature could be giving the university a responsibility that it can't meet.

MR. LAYER replied that to implement this will require effort, and he stated that he does not have the exact cost. He agreed that it is the right thing to do, something to work towards, and as the SIS is implemented it would be a part of the student interface. He expressed the university would work very hard within its scope, and in a timely manner.

[9:30:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Mr. Layer if he had spoken to [University of Alaska System] President Pitney on her opinion on this matter, or the Board of Regents. She expressed concern that UA would be in a position for a lawsuit.

MR. LAYER confirmed he had spoken to President Pitney but not the board members yet. He noted he had not "touched base" with President Pitney on the actual bill at this time, but she is aware of improving student experience and the issue is high on her mind.

[9:32:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY gave an example of when the university may not be able to comply, which would be when a textbook may suddenly become unavailable [out of print] and an alternative must be found immediately to take its place; the book may end up costing much more than what was originally posted.

[9:34:25 AM](#)

SARA PERMAN, Government Relations Manager, University of Alaska System, pointed out Representative McKay's example of non-compliance being accurate. She noted in internal conversations there are challenges recognized, and she gave an example of fall semester: the course schedule is required to be uploaded to the UA system by April, but faculty is not selected yet.

[9:36:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD reiterated her concern about making a state law and asked if Ms. Perman had any other opinion as to why the university does not have the resources and time if they thought it was the right thing to do.

MS. PERMAN responded this is an active measure to "get there faster."

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked how the university would address a potential lawsuit.

MS. PERMAN replied she is not legal counsel for the university, but she acknowledged that is a concern.

[9:39:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if there is support from the faculty senate.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied the faculty senate had not taken a position on this legislation, and again, it does pose a burden administratively. She stated that the goal is not to create an inflexible situation, but to give students clearer expectations when they register. If there are legal challenges with this legislation then the university would encounter them as they work to implement "something similar regardless," she said.

[9:43:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK further commented on why the legislature should weigh in, in reference to defining something as a low-cost resource, that the perception of that is different from that of the administration to that of students.

[9:44:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if there are any other university systems doing this.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied there are 5 university systems in other states which have adopted similar legislation.

[9:45:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Ms. Perman about getting an estimate of costs.

MS. PERMAN replied that she could pull numbers that can be provided at a later date. She gave examples of previous contractor costs.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented on pulling numbers having an interference with their contracting and bidding process, and if so, the university should wait.

MS. PERMAN agreed that is appropriate.

[9:48:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE gave personal examples of how some of his previous students did not have an idea what the textbook was

going to be, as well as the cost, until the class began. He commented that the bigger issue may be just that.

MS. PERMAN replied that it could be because it is a multiple step process.

[9:51:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced HB 10 was held over.

[9:51:49 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:52 a.m.