

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2023

8:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Justin Ruffridge, Co-Chair
Representative Mike Prax
Representative Tom McKay
Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Representative Andi Story

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jamie Allard, Co-Chair
Representative CJ McCormick

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Dan Saddler

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Dennis Michel - Fairbanks
Joey Crum - Wasilla
Paula Harrison - Anchorage
Bethany Marcum - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

DENNIS MICHEL, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

JOEY CRUM, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

PAULA HARRISON, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

BETHANY MARCUM, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

HERMAN MORGAN, representing self
Aniak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the confirmation hearing on the nomination of Bethany Marcum.

ALEX BAKER, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the nomination of Bethany Marcum.

MIKE GRUNST, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the nomination of Bethany Marcum.

ALEX JORGENSEN, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the nomination of Bethany Marcum.

MIKE COONS, representing self
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the nomination of Bethany Marcum.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:14 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JUSTIN RUFFRIDGE called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Representatives Prax, McKay, Himschoot, and Ruffridge were present at the call to order. Representative Story arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also present were Representatives Stutes and Saddler.

CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNOR'S APPOINTEES: UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
BOARD OF REGENTS

[8:03:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the only order of business would be the consideration of governor's appointees to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[8:04:27 AM](#)

DENNIS MICHEL, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, provided a brief background and encouraged the committee to ask questions.

[8:05:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE invited questions from the committee.

[8:05:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Mr. Michel if he owned and operated mechanical, construction, and plumbing buildings.

MR. MICHEL confirmed that he did and provided his professional background surrounding his work experience.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Mr. Michel what his vision would be for the university and what needed to be looked at.

MR. MICHEL replied that he was in the process of gathering information and needed a baseline before making decisions. He expressed his desire to be part of helping the university into a positive future, and in reaching out to different entities, he said he had a better understanding of the issues the university is facing.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Mr. Michel about the mechanical construction business and if he had projects around the state.

MR. MICHEL replied his company had worked in various locations, and most of the federal reservations with regard to military bases. He added there are ongoing projects as well.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Mr. Michel how many people are working with his company.

MR. MICHEL replied that administratively, there are 14 in the office but during construction months in the summer, staff may reach up to 60.

[8:09:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY pointed out Mr. Michel's previous comment of gaining an understanding on issues the university is facing and asked him to elaborate.

MR. MICHEL explained that he only attended one meeting, but that he had introductory meetings with the chancellor, department heads, Native organizations, students, and had asked many questions. He added that he could not focus on a particular issue and did not want to make a statement without having enough knowledge. He said in the near future he could answer many more questions.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY brought up proposed legislation that entailed adding a faculty member to the board of regents, and asked Mr. Michel if he was aware of the bill or had any thoughts on it.

MR. MICHEL said the issue was brought up at the meeting he attended, and he stated that he believed that legal council is researching it. He added there was a thought that it may not be legal to have staff on the board.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY stated that five other states have a faculty member on their boards of regents and said she would be interested to see how Alaska handled it. Additionally, she asked about his vision for the university.

MR. MICHEL replied that growing up in Fairbanks, he realized the value of a university campus through the community, as the other universities likely are in their respective locations. He said there is value and a benefit to the state for the university to

progress, and training the next generations of Alaskans is important. He stressed that he believed strongly in education to keep the state moving forward, and he hoped to be part of it and be able to apply some of his business knowledge to the board's decisions.

[8:14:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Mr. Michel why he applied to be a regent.

MR. MICHEL replied that being born and raised in Alaska, the state had been very good to him and he is very tied to it. He stated that he wanted to be part of "paying it forward" and helping out the next generations of Alaskans, and the university is a good instrument to do that, he said.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Mr. Mechel if he served on any other boards.

MR. MICHEL affirmed he did and provided a brief history.

[8:16:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked about the village corporation.

MR. MICHEL replied that his mother was born in Tanana, Alaska; therefore, he registered there and was on their board.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented that Mr. Michel's culture within the Native villages and corporations would bring something to the board of regents.

MR. MICHEL explained that growing up Native, he realized that a large portion of the state's Native people did not always have opportunities to move forward, and he stated that he felt his background would be valuable in board discussions.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX expressed his belief that Mr. Michel's type of background would bring a lot to the board of regents and university with communication and how decisions are made. He noted that Native corporations bring a lot to the community.

[8:19:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY stated he was impressed by Mr. Michel's resume, and the importance of having a broad experience such as

his would offer a positive perspective to the university. He added he thought it important to have a vibrant private sector, and that should go hand in hand with the university.

[8:20:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE questioned Mr. Michel's relationship with the university as far as hiring and if he had success finding students who would be good for his company.

MR. MICHEL replied that early on when he started his construction company, the need for engineers was a priority. He stated he went through the university to hire engineers who moved through his company, and he was pleased with the quality of staff he hired through the university.

[8:22:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY mentioned the issue of the budget for the university and how important it is to work with many partners. She brought up a hypothetical scenario about there being a recommendation that went against the university, or against the best interest of his employees, and asked Mr. Michel how he would go about discussing and working through it.

MR. MICHEL said he could not speak to the current budget, but going forward he would be on a budget and audit committee. He stressed the importance of budget from his business background and that nothing remains the same; you move forward, or you fall behind. He said he is courteous, but he would be vocal about the information gathered and that he believed strongly in teamwork.

[8:26:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT commented that she would be pleased to have someone with firsthand university experience be on the board.

[8:26:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX noted that the university had many ageing buildings, and he asked Mr. Michel if the Board of Regents would focus on a specific role to play for facility maintenance.

MR. MICHEL replied yes, and that he would likely be put on the Facilities and Land Management Committee because of his

background. He expressed his strong belief that buildings must be maintained, especially in a climate like Fairbanks.

[8:28:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on the confirmation for Mr. Michel. After ascertaining no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[8:28:58 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE introduced the next nominee, Mr. Crum.

[8:29:28 AM](#)

JOEY CRUM, Appointee, Board of Regents, provided his professional background and noted his deep satisfaction and motivation when students succeed. He said he is blessed to be a lifelong Alaskan and raising his family here. He related that when he spent time on previous boards, he listened, contributed, and worked hard to be an asset. He briefly went over budget related topics and wished to bring his past lessons, vision, and support to the Board of Regents and the university system. In closing, he assured the committee there would be no conflicts of interest but that he would know how to handle it should one arise.

[8:33:54 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE invited questions from the committee.

[8:34:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Crum to elaborate on his education at Columbia Southern University (CSU) in the Master of Science Organizational Leadership in 2020.

MR. CRUM replied that he graduated from CSU's online master's program, and it was focused on exploring ways to build culture, and to demonstrate good leadership and drive towards a common goal.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Crum if he compared his experiences with online courses to those here in Alaska.

MR. CRUM replied that he had not personally had that experience, but he had employees enrolled through University of Alaska

programs online, and he observed that recently there are more options for online learning in Alaska which he hoped to soon explore.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY noted the importance of being able to compare experiences on how universities work. She referenced another bill that would add a faculty to the board of regents and asked Mr. Crum if he had any thoughts on it.

MR. CRUM replied it was a very small topic at the last meeting, and he had not formed an opinion on it due to not researching it as well as is required.

[8:38:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Mr. Crum if he is still on the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE).

MR. CRUM replied he served on ACPE but does not have exact dates, and he cycled out in 2014.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT brought up a resolution passed called "65 by 2025," and asked if he knew where the state was on that goal.

MR. CRUM confirmed he is familiar with it and noted an annual report coming out soon. He added that there are significant strides being made.

[8:40:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY offered his understanding that the university owns a lot of land in Alaska, and he opined the university should be more aggressive to develop resources so it could be less dependent on the state government. He asked Mr. Crum how he felt about the development of more resources on university land, and how his membership on the board of regents could influence this.

MR. CRUM replied that he served on a land management committee, and said he believed he could add his perspective. He pointed out the university being challenged in that it had not received the full land grant it was promised. He further explained that the land was granted to the university in part to help develop self-sufficiency and sustainability.

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY stated he thought it would help greatly if the university could become more self-sufficient.

[8:43:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Mr. Crum if he saw opportunities for the university to provide partnerships to serve the needs of industries at the certificate and technician level.

MR. CRUM affirmed that he saw significant opportunities for organizations to work together moving forward, and it is also a necessity, he said.

[8:45:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on the confirmation for Mr. Crum. After ascertaining no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[8:46:13 AM](#)

MR. CRUM thanked the committee for the opportunity to serve Alaska.

[8:46:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE introduced the next nominee, Ms. Harrison.

[8:46:46 AM](#)

PAULA HARRISON, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, provided a brief description of her history with Alaska's universities.

[8:47:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Harrison why she wants to be on the Board of Regents.

MS. HARRISON, having a background in human resources, stressed Alaska's workforce is extremely important, and the university plays a major role in workforce development.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if three of Ms. Harrison's children were graduates from the university system.

MS. HARRISON confirmed three of her daughters were, and she offered stories of her daughters and their families' professional backgrounds.

[8:51:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX noticed Ms. Harrison's extensive experience in human and labor relations and asked about success in that field.

MS. HARRISON replied that the purpose of human resources is to serve employees. She said managing the paperwork while employees make the money is key, and making sure employees are well taken care of.

[8:52:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY pointed out Ms. Harrison's time as an adjunct professor and asked her to share what she learned about working in the university system.

MS. HARRISON replied that she had also served for seven years as labor relations coordinator at the university, and if there were issues or concerns, her job was to resolve those issues.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about the experience and how it would help her as a Board of Regents member.

MS. HARRISON said that she loved working at the university and having learned about the way the university worked. She stressed her support for the University of Alaska System and Pat Pitney, its president.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Ms. Harrison to share what she had learned.

MS. HARRISON replied it is a big system, and she said she had positive experiences working with the different universities and different departments. She added she is proud of what the university had done for her children.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Ms. Harrison if she had any comments on HB 9, which would add a faculty member to the board of regents.

MS. HARRISON said that from her perspective, it is a conflict of interest. She said the university has faculty governments which

provide the opportunity to have their voices heard through the faculty senate.

[8:57:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked if Ms. Harrison saw things that should not be done within the universities, or other things that should be focused on.

MS. HARRISON stated that one of her concerns was the deferred maintenance, and the importance of having the infrastructure.

[8:58:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY observed that Ms. Harrison spent time in the many school districts throughout the state, and she offered her belief that the university should have more linkage with the K12 system and asked Ms. Harrison her thoughts.

MS. HARRISON said that she had witnessed excellent partnerships between K12 and the university and gave brief examples. She offered her understanding that there was a lot of collaboration happening.

[9:01:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX reflected on problems with accreditation at the Anchorage campus, if what went wrong had been identified, and how it could be prevented going forward.

MS. HARRISON replied that there was a lot of turnover in the area, and she further explained she did not know exactly what went wrong being she wasn't there. She expressed her disappointment, but reiterated she did not know the ins and outs of what the problems were.

[9:03:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked Ms. Harrison what she thought areas of growth within the university should be.

MS. HARRISON replied students, and the importance of research at University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), which she opined should be a university of choice for researchers.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked if there were currently any degree programs or programs being added to help in the growth.

MS. HARRISON stated she did not know but would like to see more PhD programs which is currently a limited area.

[9:05:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on the confirmation for Ms. Harrison. After ascertaining no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[9:06:41 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE introduced the final nominee, Ms. Marcum.

[9:07:06 AM](#)

BETHANY MARCUM, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, provided her background and educational experiences both nationally and abroad. She said her experiences are what allowed her to be here today, and she is passionate about making sure others can receive educational opportunities.

[9:09:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX brought attention to Ms. Marcum's prior position as a senior business systems analyst and asked how the experience would fit in on the board of regents.

MS. MARCUM replied that the nature of the position was project management and some information technology (I.T.), and she opined it directly relates because she had to talk to the users to find out their needs and ensure the methods were the best for the products. She said it correlated to the role on the Board of Regents because there must be the same type of relationship - having the best results for the end users, which would be the university staff.

[9:11:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Marcum why she wished to serve as a regent.

MS. MARCUM replied that it went back to her personal experience at university and how it changed her life. She wanted to ensure all people have access to further education in Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT reflected on 2019 when there was a 40 percent cut to the university proposed by the governor, which led to many struggles within the university, and she noted that Ms. Marcum was on record for supporting it. She asked Ms. Marcum what her vision currently is, and how she would respond to the 2019 decision to come out publicly in support of the cuts.

MS. MARCUM explained she did not speak of direct cuts to the university's budget but spoke to general budget reductions. She noted she was not a policy maker or a decider of where cuts should be made. She said she could relay what amounts to strive for, but she does not have the background to make those decisions that legislators should make.

[9:15:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT brought up Ms. Marcum's position on the Alaska Policy Forum and paraphrased the seven principles of the forum [Seven Principles of Sound Public Policy]. She noted the university is a large public system and belongs to all, and inherently has a large budget, she said. She asked Ms. Marcum how she would reconcile her job with the forum and its guiding principles as a board of regents member, being that the university is a publicly funded institution.

MS. MARCUM replied the university belongs to Alaskans, and she stated she cared about preserving that and making the university the best it could be. As an institutional fiduciary, it would be her responsibility as a regent to ensure the university had a sustainable future.

[9:18:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT noted the bylaws of the Board of Regents and focused on collective bargaining agreements. She brought up Ms. Marcum's presence with other entities where she handed out flyers against collective bargaining and asked her if there would be a conflict with the board's bylaws and her activities in her present position.

MS. MARCUM explained her position that unions are an important part of American society and individuals should have a choice to be part of a collective bargaining agreement or not. She stated she would stand up for individuals either way and provided an example of the outcomes of Janus [the constitutional right of public employees to decline union membership dues but still keep

their jobs and benefits]. She said she felt it should be an informed choice.

[9:21:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Marcum if she would call the Alaska Policy Forum non-partisan.

MS. MARCUM replied that she would, and mentioned her support for the policies contained in the Alaska Reads Act as an example. She said if the policy is good for Alaska, then the party is irrelevant.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Marcum, as executive director of the forum, how the institution is funded and if it is a 501(c)(3).

MS. MARCUM verified it is funded by private donations and does not receive government money or grants. In response to a follow-up question, she affirmed the forum is a 501(c)(3).

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if it is public knowledge who the forum's funders are.

MS. MARCUM replied 501(c)(3)s, like churches, do not disclose donors.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Marcum if she could confirm she is a supporter of public education and what her vision of public education in Alaska is pre-K through university level.

MS. MARCUM replied that she supported public education 100 percent, and her vision is that it should be the best it can be. She provided her background in receiving public education, and she personally recognized the value of it. She offered her belief that private education providers help to increase the competition and hold public schools accountable, as well.

[9:26:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Ms. Marcum what role she saw the university performing in terms of Alaska's overall society and economy.

MS. MARCUM replied she sees it two-fold, and focused on the goal of the university being a premier university for academic research for the things that make Alaska special. She mentioned

the importance of the role of a community presence from the larger campuses to the more rural and the programs that bring each unique community together.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Ms. Marcum what she saw as strengths in the university currently and if any new directions would be worth exploring.

MS. MARCUM replied that the workforce is one. She noted she had only been a regent for six weeks, and she commented that the university's playing a role with the pipeline had been very impressive, as well as the number of different programs and certificates the university provides. In response to a follow-up question, she noted that her organization had focused on K through 12 policy and had not been involved in higher education policy.

[9:31:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed her surprise regarding Ms. Marcum wanting to be on the Board of Regents. She mentioned the negativity that the Alaska Policy Forum had towards the education system. She referred to the information used by the forum related to the gross domestic product (GDP) and how data points and comparisons are made and presented. She asked Ms. Marcum about how she picked her data points while looking at an organization.

[9:34:59 AM](#)

MS. MARCUM replied that she was not involved in creating the data for the presentation, but she watched it, and she related that for the slides, they [the forum] used numbers and data from yearly reports going back to the year a first report is available. She added they could go further back but the readily available information only goes back so far.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY clarified that she was speaking of the gross national product (GNP) and comparing the cost of what Alaska spends on education. She further stated that her concern is that Ms. Marcum's view is too narrow, and she is not getting information from other sources to help have a broad opinion.

[9:37:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE summarized Representative Story's question and asked Ms. Marcum if her role at the Alaska Policy Forum and

the data that generates was the only data sets that she looks at when making decisions.

MS. MARCUM replied the forum had not done data crunching related to the university. She stated that she would not use forum data for anything related to her position as a regent. She added there was only one publication created by the University of Texas and the forum took the subset of that, which was the Alaska piece, and published it.

[9:39:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Ms. Marcum when she looked at other sources when making decisions.

MS. MARCUM replied she is always open to more sources, and regarding the presentation her staff put together, she noted that there were multiple data sources used for the education data. She added that she would look for the data that the university administration would point her to, as well, regarding higher education.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY mentioned the U.S. Census and the way it adjusts things with Alaska in mind. She added that the Alaska Policy Forum kept quoting the Census in reference to Alaska averages, and her concern was regarding the value that the forum looked at in terms of Alaska's own universities. As a regent member, she said, you must trust in your university and use some of those data sources.

MS. MARCUM replied that she would absolutely study any data source.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Ms. Marcum for her comments about her service on the Alaska Redistricting Board and a conflict with the Open Meetings Act.

MS. MARCUM replied she had not participated in any conflicts of the Open Meetings Act.

[9:43:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY stated he thought Ms. Marcum was extremely qualified to serve on the Board of Regents, and pointed out her diverse resume and qualities that he opined would be an asset to the board. He said higher education is about challenging the status quo, not a monopoly of one ideology, and the board should

have a variety of viewpoints. He added there must be hard discussions moving forward on how the state is being funded and how all the education systems are being funded. He stated that he endorsed Ms. Marcum's nomination as a regent.

[9:46:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT brought up the context of data and provided an example. She offered her belief that there was a miscommunication about what the forum was postulating, and what was actually practiced. She asked Ms. Marcum to tell the committee about the five goals the Board of Regents has set for the university.

MS. MARCUM replied that she was in favor of the goals but does not have them memorized. She reiterated her support for the workforce and pipeline, and being able to ensure Alaska has the employees that the state needs to be able to fill jobs and provide academic research.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked what the graduation rate for the university is.

MS. MARCUM replied that the six-year graduation rate was cited, and according to her recollection it was in the sixtieth percentile.

[9:51:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Marcum to describe the Alaska Native Success Initiative.

MS. MARCUM first followed up on previous discussion and stated that graduating should not be the only goal for attending university, and just attending classes can be a game-changer, she said. In reference to the Alaska Native Success Initiative, she said she learned about it in orientation and that the program is to provide the opportunity for higher education and certificates to Native Alaska communities.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT recited parts of the Board of Regents' Statement of Expectations and asked Ms. Marcum if she had a response to any of the expectations.

MS. MARCUM said that during orientation the expectations were talked through, and she also received them in writing. She added that she took her role as a regent seriously.

[9:55:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on the confirmation for Ms. Marcum.

[9:57:21 AM](#)

HERMAN MORGAN, representing self, testified during the confirmation hearing on Bethany Marcum. He said that "schools are failing us out here," and there are some villages that sue the state for not providing proper education. He said the Board of Regents needs to be asked some questions. He offered his belief that the reason students must attend six years of college is because students in rural Alaska are not being educated and have to take extra courses at university. He said rural areas are the lowest ranking in the state in grades, but this is not heard, and yet "you ask for all this money." He said all board members should be asking Ms. Marcum these questions, as well as what role she would play in "all this failing education."

[10:00:40 AM](#)

ALEX BAKER, representing self, testified in opposition to the nomination of Bethany Marcum and offered his belief that her record as a member of the Alaska Redistricting Board needed more scrutiny from the committee. He urged the committee to go back and read examples of her actions and conduct on other boards, and he opined she is not fit to serve on the Board of Regents. He also described her actions as partisan.

[10:02:29 AM](#)

MIKE GRUNST, representing self, testified in opposition to the nomination of Bethany Marcum to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He said her role on the Alaska Policy Forum, an organization funded by outside interests, showed that she would work in opposition to the best interests of the citizens in the state and at the university. He noted that she advocated for budget cuts to the university system, and under her leadership, private vouchers for religious schools were advocated for. He offered his belief that the education system of Alaska should be a system, and primary education should (indisc.) into either the university or vocational education. He said Alaska had \$80 billion in the bank and could solve every problem it faces but needs the intestinal fortitude to do so.

[10:06:20 AM](#)

ALEX JORGENSEN, representing self, testified in opposition to the nomination of Bethany Marcum. He reflected on 2019 when he learned of the governor's cut to university, which felt like a "gut punch" that someone would want to devastate the only public university system that gave him so much. He stated he would not support Ms. Marcum as a fiduciary responsible for supporting the university.

[10:07:56 AM](#)

MIKE COONS, representing self, testified in support of Bethany Marcum's nomination, and stated he also supported the governor's proposed university cuts in 2019. He affirmed he supported conservative organizations with conservative values. He reflected on the seven principles of the Alaska Policy Forum and said the policies are all solid and go back to the nation's founding, and he observed that Ms. Marcum had a long history of supporting those views. As regent, he opined, Ms. Marcum would support conservative values within the university fiscally and socially. He reiterated his full support of Ms. Marcum to the Board of Regents.

[10:12:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE closed public testimony on the confirmation for Ms. Marcum.

[10:12:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT read a quote on an Alaska Superior Court decision regarding the Redistricting Board.

[10:12:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY interposed a point of order and stated he did not see what Representative Himschoot's comment had to do with Ms. Marcum's qualifications.

[10:13:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE noted that Representative McKay could leave if he wished to do so.

[10:13:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT continued reciting the quotes from the Alaska Superior Court.

[10:14:47 AM](#)

MS. MARCUM said she appreciated the questions and understood they were part of the process. She explained she had done her best to ensure that there was a cohesive process for redistricting with the military.

[10:16:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT clarified that her question was more about the Open Meetings Act as regent.

[10:16:12 AM](#)

MS. MARCUM reiterated that she did not violate the Open Meetings Act. In closing, she said she has nothing to hide and no special agenda, her obligation is to the university. She said that when the board is voting or deliberating, she would be part of the process and act as one with the board.

[10:18:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE stated that the House Education Standing Committee has received the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends that the following names be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Dennis Michel, Joey Crum, Paula Harrison, and Bathany Marcum, University of Alaska Board of Regents. 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 appointees, and the nomination is merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[10:18:53 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 10:18 a.m. to 10:20 a.m.

[10:21:10 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:21 a.m.