

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 18, 2024

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

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 236

"An Act relating to the duties of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska; establishing the University of Alaska major maintenance and modernization fund; repealing the University of Alaska building fund; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 236 OUT OF COMMITTEE

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 99(EDC)

"An Act establishing a financial literacy education program for public schools; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HCS CSSB 99(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Stephen Colligan - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Michael Robbins - Ketchikan

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 236

SHORT TITLE: UA MAJOR MAINTEN. MODERNIZATION FUND

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STAPP

01/16/24	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/24
01/16/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/24	(H)	EDC, FIN
02/07/24	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
02/07/24	(H)	Heard & Held
02/07/24	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/18/24	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: SB 99

SHORT TITLE: FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) WIELECHOWSKI

03/10/23	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/10/23	(S)	EDC
03/29/23	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/29/23	(S)	Heard & Held
03/29/23	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/05/23	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/05/23	(S)	Heard & Held
04/05/23	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/14/23	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/14/23	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
04/17/23	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/17/23	(S)	Moved CSSB 99(EDC) Out of Committee
04/17/23	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/19/23	(S)	EDC RPT CS 3DP 1AM NEW TITLE
04/19/23	(S)	DP: TOBIN, GRAY-JACKSON, KIEHL
04/19/23	(S)	AM: BJORKMAN
04/19/23	(S)	FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER EDC
04/24/23	(S)	FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
04/24/23	(S)	Heard & Held
04/24/23	(S)	MINUTE(FIN)
05/10/23	(S)	FIN RPT CS(EDC) 3DP 3NR NEW TITLE
05/10/23	(S)	DP: HOFFMAN, KIEHL, BISHOP
05/10/23	(S)	NR: OLSON, WILSON, MERRICK
05/10/23	(S)	FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
05/10/23	(S)	Moved CSSB 99(EDC) Out of Committee
05/10/23	(S)	MINUTE(FIN)

05/13/23 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)  
05/13/23 (S) VERSION: CSSB 99(EDC)  
05/15/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
05/15/23 (H) EDC, FIN  
01/24/24 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106  
01/24/24 (H) Heard & Held  
01/24/24 (H) MINUTE(EDC)  
03/18/24 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, introduced HB 236.

PAUL MENKE, Staff  
Representative Will Stapp  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 236 on behalf of Representative Stapp, prime sponsor.

RALPH SEEKINS, Chair  
Board of Regents  
University of Alaska System  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HB 236.

PAT PITNEY, President  
University of Alaska System  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HB 236.

HUNTER LOTTSFELDT, Staff  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Reintroduced CSSB 99(EDC) on behalf of Senator Wielechowski, prime sponsor.

ED MARTIN, representing self  
Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to CSSB 99(EDC).

STEPHEN COLLIGAN, Appointee  
University of Alaska Board of Regents  
Anchorage, Alaska

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

MICHAEL ROBBINS, Nominee  
Professional Teaching Practices Commission  
Ketchikan, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:01:01 AM](#)

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

#### **HB 236-UA MAJOR MAINTEN. MODERNIZATION FUND**

[8:02:28 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE** announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 236, "An Act relating to the duties of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska; establishing the University of Alaska major maintenance and modernization fund; repealing the University of Alaska building fund; and providing for an effective date."

[8:02:50 AM](#)

**REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP**, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, introduced HB 236. He provided a brief introduction and explained that his staff would give a recap of the bill and what it does.

[8:03:08 AM](#)

**PAUL MENKE**, Staff, Representative Will Stapp, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 236 on behalf of Representative Stapp, prime sponsor. He said the bill would be a fund in the budget dedicated to renovating and maintaining existing buildings in the University of Alaska System (UA).

[8:03:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE welcomed invited testifiers.

[8:04:18 AM](#)

RALPH SEEKINS, Chair, Board of Regents, University of Alaska (UA) System, gave invited testimony in support of HB 236 and briefly provided his background. He reported that the university has gone from a deferred maintenance situation to a critical maintenance situation. He said 40 percent of the buildings that the state owns are on university campuses and UA is looking to preserve and modernize those buildings without unnecessary upgrades. He thanked the committee for the consideration and offered to stay online to answer questions.

[8:08:02 AM](#)

PAT PITNEY, President, University of Alaska System, gave invited testimony in support of HB 236 and thanked Representative Stapp for introducing the bill. She explained that UA has prioritized deferred maintenance as the highest capital priority. She said UA's annual need is over \$60 million to keep up with maintenance and it is asking for only half of that. She related that UA has many mechanisms to stay accountable with the legislature and a planned approach to address deferred maintenance. There are many aged facilities including some built in the 1960s that need structural changes.

[8:12:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked how other universities deal with deferred maintenance.

MS. PITNEY replied that most universities have a budget structure and consistent approaches to deferred maintenance, and she provided brief examples of other states. She further noted that the last time UA's deferred maintenance did not grow was in the period of 2010 to 2015 when there was a consistent \$35 million of deferred maintenance funding provided to the university.

[8:13:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX communicated that he tried to understand whether \$30 million for the maintenance and modernization fund is in addition to what UA allocated in its operating budget.

MS. PITNEY confirmed that was correct and that the \$30 million was for preventative maintenance.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX offered his belief that there is a difference between the activity of maintaining and that of modernizing. He asked whether there was a number that just focused on maintaining, such as an aforementioned ventilation system. He questioned the amount of \$35 million being enough to catch up on deferred maintenance and inquired how much would be needed annually to keep up maintenance in general.

MS. PITNEY replied that if UA were modeling to facility standards, the investment on the facility would be about \$66 million annually on top of current maintenance and operations of the facilities. The \$66 million is requested in UA's capital budget, she noted.

[8:19:49 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Representative Stapp if the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) would build more buildings as part of its modernization.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP responded that the number one project is the replacement of the centralized heating system at the UAA campus. The priorities and project list included in the bill can clearly articulate those things, he added.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Ms. Pitney if UA is looking at building more buildings with a focus on modernizing.

MS. PITNEY replied yes, there are modernization facilities that are priorities for UA, and UA is very much focused on non-state funding for those facilities. Public and private partnerships are crucial to new facility projects, she added.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked whether overall enrollment had gone up or down.

MS. PITNEY confirmed that UA was in the third semester of enrollment increases. Most encouraging, she said, is the category of first-time freshmen, which grew 16 percent last fall.

[8:24:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether UA has a published high-level maintenance strategy.

MS. PITNEY replied that UA has its preventative maintenance strategy in policy.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX expressed interest in looking into the strategy so the legislature has a better appreciation for the need for maintaining what UA has and, in addition, how decisions are made regarding a building's useful life with no point of maintaining it further.

[8:26:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how UA takes into account those Alaskans visiting campuses and deciding whether to attend in state, noting that learning environments matter when people are choosing institutions, and she questioned whether this is considered when putting together the deferred maintenance list.

MS. PITNEY replied absolutely, and that was part of the reason dorms were a priority. The view given to students on their visits is extremely important as well as program opportunities. Priorities are based on functionality and age but also a commitment to a return on investment from enrollment, she explained.

[8:28:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on HB 236. After ascertaining no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced his intention to hold HB 236 for future amendments.

[8:30:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented that in the legislative process, [legislators] should make a concerted effort to get the bill through both the House and the Senate than to get it perfect, as it is fairly important, he opined.

[8:31:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP thanked committee members for their time and remarked that deferred maintenance may not be as exciting as ribbon cuttings, but it is important long term.

[8:31:33 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:31 a.m. to 8:35 a.m.

[8:35:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX moved to report HB 236 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

[8:36:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD objected to express her concern that because the legislature failed to address the issue years ago, the numbers have "crawled."

CO-CHAIR ALLARD then removed her objection. There being no further objection, HB 236 was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:36:59 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:36 a.m. to 8:40 a.m.

**SB 99-FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS**

[8:40:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the next order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 99(EDC), "An Act establishing a financial literacy education program for public schools; and providing for an effective date."

[8:40:56 AM](#)

HUNTER LOTTSFELDT, Staff, Senator Bill Wielechowski, Alaska State Legislature, reintroduced CSSB 99(EDC) on behalf of Senator Wielechowski, prime sponsor. He explained that the bill, in fifteen steps, would create a half-credit requirement that could be split among one course or multiple courses and would seek to teach financial literacy to high school students, including principles such as how to file taxes and read the terms of a loan. He welcomed questions from committee members.

8:41:58 AM

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented that financial literacy was taught through high school in the early 1970s, and he expressed concern that the state would be telling local school districts to do something in a specific way according to a specific criteria that would be dictated to them.

MR. LOTTSELDT replied that although financial literacy is being taught in a few districts across the state, the purpose of the bill is that "these things" are not being taught and are also changing. He added that the bill is structured to try to supplement the districts that are already teaching financial literacy, and the intent is for it to be easily adoptable by school districts.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX offered his understanding that the bill would require districts to develop a curriculum but not be told which specific one they are to develop.

MR. LOTTSELDT agreed that was a fair statement.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether there should be a provision or state level review and approval of the program.

MR. LOTTSELDT responded that he was not sure regarding a state level review, but the specific course and materials would be up to the district.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether there was an estimate of the cost to the school districts and expectations of how much may be received from the legislature.

MR. LOTTSELDT replied there is not an estimate on the cost to the school districts and added that one of the advantages of financial literacy is that it is a "grassroots type of movement," in that there is a lot of free online curriculum. He stated he could not provide an exact number and reiterated that the bill is structured to make it as easy for school districts to adopt as possible.

8:48:04 AM

REPRESENTATIVE STORY drew attention to page 1, line 8 of the bill, and offered her understanding that the approval for the curriculum must come from the Department of Education and Early

Development (DEED), which would take administrative time to find out how each district meets the requirements of the bill. She further pointed out the words on line 13, "maximum extent practicable", and acknowledged that the bill sponsor wanted to keep flexibility while still meeting the intent of the bill.

MR. LOTTSFELDT confirmed that is correct.

[8:49:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on CSSB 99(EDC).

[8:49:48 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:49 a.m. to 8:50 a.m.

[8:50:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE clarified that an individual can testify only one time.

[8:51:29 AM](#)

ED MARTIN, representing self, stated that he did not remember whether he had a personal finance course in high school, but when he graduated he received a bank savings account from his parents and got a job. He said he encouraged legislation if it is necessary to direct school districts to teach something relevant and added that some big steps for children are student loans. Regarding the fiscal note, he emphasized that he did not see justification in state funds going towards "this" whatsoever. He opined that the legislature should worry about the education fund, which was vetoed, and added that "this seems like double dipping" and must be stopped.

[8:54:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE, after ascertaining that no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony on CSSB 99(EDC). He noted that there were three amendments to CSSB 99(EDC).

[8:54:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD stated she would not be moving Amendment 1.

[8:54:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT moved to adopt Amendment 2 to CSSB 99(EDC), labeled 33-LS0498\R.4, Bergerud, 1/31/24, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 8, following "department.":

Insert "The department shall curate and make available to school districts a list of open educational resources that are approved by the department that in combination address the topics listed in (1) - (14) of this subsection. The list shall include open educational resources that address the topic listed in (15) of this subsection if those resources are available. The department shall update this list at least every five years."

Page 2, line 21:

Delete all material and insert:

"(b) In this section,

(1) "open educational resource" means learning, teaching, or research material in any format that resides in the public domain or is under copyright and has been released under an open license that permits access at no cost as well as reuse, repurpose, adaptation, and redistribution by others;

(2) "school district" has the meaning given in AS 14.30.350."

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE objected.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT explained that Amendment 2 tasks the department with providing open educational resource materials. She referenced a letter from DEED that stated it would not provide undue burden on them and would allow the department to vet open educational resource materials to meet the standards in the bill.

[8:56:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK asked Representative Himschoot whether the Amendment 2 could inadvertently force the hand of districts and create parameters for the type of curriculum districts might want to provide independently, thus disempowering them.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT replied that most districts provide academic freedom to educators and, if pressed for time, they would have a bank of resources.

[8:57:30 AM](#)

MR. LOTTSELDT stated that he supported Amendment 2.

[8:57:55 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE removed his objection to the motion to adopt Amendment 2. There being no further objection, Amendment 2 was adopted.

[8:58:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY moved to adopt Amendment 3 to CSSB 99(EDC), labeled 33-LS0498\R.5, Bergerud, 2/1/24, which read as follows:

Page 2, following line 20:

Insert a new subsection to read:

"(b) Notwithstanding (a) of this section, a school may issue a secondary school diploma to a student who has not completed the program described in (a) of this section if the student transferred into the school district from another school district, state, or country after completing grade 10."

Reletter the following subsection accordingly.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE objected.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY explained that Amendment 3 would support transfer students.

[8:59:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated that he opposed the amendment and questioned the issuance of a diploma if it did not have something behind it that explains what it means.

[9:00:28 AM](#)

MR. LOTTSELDT added that the amendment was drafted in a similar way to the Alaska Studies exemption amendment. The intent is to make sure students are being taught financial literacy to the best of educators' abilities but there are circumstances of students transferring from other districts or states.

[9:01:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT remarked that it felt unfair for a student to come into the state from somewhere else and be told they cannot graduate because they did not meet the requirement. She opined that the exemption would be made only for a small handful of students, and she expressed her support for Amendment 3.

[9:03:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD sought more clarification on where the exception stops and provided a scenario of a student of a military family transferring to a school in Alaska.

MR. LOTTSFELDT clarified that it would be up to the school districts. He said the exemption is for that one requirement to get the diploma. Currently, he said, 22 other states have financial literacy as a requirement, and it is a "50/50 shot" that a student has not gotten the instruction prior.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD restated that her concern was the verbiage "after grade 10" and that she knew many high schoolers and found it difficult to believe that if they still have their eleventh and twelfth year "they can't finish."

[9:05:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed gratitude for the elaboration on how the amendment is modeled after the Alaska Studies requirement.

[9:05:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE removed his objection.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX objected.

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

[9:06:48 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:06 a.m. to 9:07 a.m.

[9:07:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD moved to report CSSB 99(EDC), as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HCS CSSB 99(EDC) was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee.

[9:07:55 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:07 a.m. to 9:11 a.m.

**CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNOR'S NOMINEES**

[9:11:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the final order of business would be the confirmation hearings on the governor's appointees for various boards and commissions.

**University of Alaska Board of Regents**

[9:11:44 AM](#)

STEPHEN COLLIGAN, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, as nominee for the University of Alaska Board of Regents, provided his personal and professional background, including his extensive background in software development, Internet technology, and a digital mapping business in various areas in the world. He noted that through the university, workforce development continued to be addressed and continued to improve in local communities and have job readiness in different areas of expertise. Regarding areas of research, he expressed his excitement that there are many opportunities unique to Alaska both in rural studies and other Arctic nations and stressed the importance of this uniqueness and global readiness. He proffered that "learning how to learn" and adapting to situations is key for students and teachers alike. He welcomed questions from the committee.

[9:17:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Mr. Colligan why he wanted to be a regent.

MR. COLLIGAN responded that he was excited about the current board members and also acknowledged the challenges ahead. Some of the challenges were addressed by President Pitney earlier, notably deferred maintenance, he said. He added that in the areas of workforce development, there is an obligation to bolster the ability to educate a workforce and make the

University of Alaska System an asset to all Alaskans. He reflected on being a student in the early 1980s and was now taken aback by "how much we've come" in the last 40 years when it comes to rural education and preparation for rural jobs.

[9:20:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK asked Mr. Colligan who he wanted to represent as a member on the Board of Regents, aside from answering "all Alaskans."

MR. COLLIGAN said the Board of Regents represents the entire university system and not all communities and campuses have the same economic drivers, but that his intent is to create opportunities based on each community and its needs. He gave examples of regions and what their focus could be based on the resources available in each community.

[9:23:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Mr. Colligan whether he had given thought to what sort of process the Board of Regents should follow to prioritize between "this and that," such as general prioritization.

MR. COLLIGAN replied that is not easy to do statewide, depending on the need from each campus, but the problem has to do with deferred maintenance, he explained. He added that there are opportunities with private partnerships to address this and provide resources, to deepen value to the communities, and UA would not have to go to the legislature "for a handout."

[9:25:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Colligan as a regent how he made sure faculty members are heard when they comment they would like more opportunities to speak with the Board of Regents.

MR. COLLIGAN explained that he had been careful not to "step out of his lane" and to not micromanage. Getting input and having people to be able to talk to is very important and, so far, he stated, he had not experienced any barriers in getting information. He said he admitted his focus remains on his wheelhouse of expertise: mapping, engineering, research, and unmanned systems.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Colligan about his approach to addressing students' voices.

MR. COLLIGAN confirmed there is a student representative on the Board of Regents, which he opined is a great thing, and he welcomed any opportunity to get feedback from students. He added that personally he is open to taking information that needs to reach the regents.

[9:28:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE referred to Mr. Colligan's resume and noted his dedication to unmanned aircraft systems and recognized that the university seemed to be engaged in research and development of these systems. He asked what the role of the university system is to produce some options for drone and unmanned aircraft delivery particularly to rural Alaska.

MR. COLLIGAN clarified that the term "drones" was very broad. He provided his experience with the systems and that in his geomatics business, they are used as a tool to collect data, not as couriers. He opined that this technology should start being taught in high school and continue in college. He emphasized that in the large uses of drones, safety is complicated, but their use can be beneficial to Alaska, and he added that the university is focused on partnering with the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) in grants that have to do with communications and operations of the vehicles.

[9:32:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK, in a sequel to Representative Story's question, asked Mr. Colligan how well he felt the needs of both faculty and students are represented on the Board of Regents.

MR. COLLIGAN replied that in his short tenure and attending a couple meetings, the board is given information through the process from faculty, and in executive sessions it discusses contracts and negotiations. In his personal and professional life, he said, it is important to have a good, solid, and trained workforce, and he was unaware of any discrepancies between any students and professional staff. If there were any, he stressed, he would want to know.

[9:34:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE thanked Mr. Colligan.

[9:34:46 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:34 a.m. to 9:35 a.m.

**Professional Teaching Practices Commission**

[9:35:23 AM](#)

MICHAEL ROBBINS, Nominee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, as nominee for the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), provided his background in over three decades dedicated to education. He said he served in various schools and his experiences provided him with a diverse and comprehensive understanding of the educational landscape. He said his journey in Alaska started in the Lower Kuskokwim region where he had the opportunity to witness the transformational power of education, and he embraced the challenges of working in the region. He offered his firm belief that every decision made in education should be ultimately to serve the best interests of the students, as well as to create an environment where every student feels valued and supported. He thanked the committee and said he looked forward to working collaboratively with his team and the legislature towards a shared vision of education.

[9:37:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY noted Mr. Robbins' student-centered experiences and asked how this informed his role as superintendent. She further noted the importance of ethics and asked how his experience shaped his view toward it.

MR. ROBBINS replied that the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program had the most leverage and impact on student achievement and learning he had seen, making a difference for students who "fall through the cracks."

[9:41:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Robbins for examples of addressing ethics issues with teaching staff.

MR. ROBBINS answered that he takes in all the information, facts, all sides of the story, and follows the process. He added that he had to address the issue numerous times and, each time a decision is made regarding an educator, they must be held to a high standard and procedures followed.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY observed that through the Association of Alaska School Board's (AASB) policy, it is important that educators present information neutrally. She asked Mr. Robbins whether he had had to deal with a big ethics correction.

MR. ROBBINS replied that one must present those topics in a neutral way to make a judgement on them. He further elaborated on Title 9 training.

[9:44:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX related that when he read the statutes and standards, he perceived it as being directed more towards ethical behavior. He added that "there may be a difference in teaching techniques." He asked Mr. Robbins to expound on the role of the PTPC.

MR. ROBBINS replied he had been to only one meeting and may not have a full scope of exactly what the whole commission does, but that in his past experience, ethics must be a mission to uphold.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX thanked Mr. Robbins for stepping forward and "giving this a go" and opined it would be a great contribution.

[9:46:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK commented on Toksook Bay and asked whether Mr. Robbins coached a championship team there.

MR. ROBBINS clarified that he was the principal and added that he was proud of the rise in the graduation rate.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK asked Mr. Robbins to speak to the gravity of upholding ethics in village communities, as the situations can be different.

MR. ROBBINS expounded on Professional Boundaries training that he stressed had a profound impact on his philosophy. He said that in any Western Alaska village or any village, there must be a trust between the village, the community, and the school principal. He explained that many times principles are from "the Outside" and building trust with the community is essential to creating an atmosphere where students can achieve. He correlated that in a village environment, when a student graduates, everyone in the community graduates.

[9:51:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT offered her background and experience as a PTPC commissioner and the importance of maintaining an apolitical body. She asked Mr. Robbins to comment on liberal versus conservative ethics.

MR. ROBBINS explained that during an ongoing investigation one must be neutral when it comes to listening to the facts of the case. He said every different case is nuanced; there are perspectives and people involved and the decision must be based on the particular case. Professional lives are based upon what is heard and the results of that; therefore, there must be a fair and equitable process.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT commented that there would be more teachers than administrators on the PTPC and opined there may be no other more important body serving families.

[9:53:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE thanked Mr. Robbins for his willingness to serve. He referred to the strategic plan to improve graduation rates and asked for "a couple bullet points" on the plan.

MR. ROBBINS stressed his attempt to create a graduation plan for every student that entails making sure students come to school on time and get the credits they need and provides student advocates. He also noted the availability of summer school programs and credit recovery programs. If a student does not have a caring adult, he said, one must be developed to help them reach their particular goals. He provided examples of mentors for students who offer support and help students achieve success.

[9:57:47 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: Stephen Colligan, University of Alaska Board of Regents; and Michael Robbins, Professional Teaching Practices Commission. 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.

9:59:10 AM

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.m.