

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS

March 20, 2023

3:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative CJ McCormick, Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Jamie Allard
Representative Maxine Dibert

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Josiah Patkotak
Representative Jennie Armstrong

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 26

"An Act renaming the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council as the Council for Alaska Native Languages; and relating to the Council for Alaska Native Languages."

- MOVED CSHB 26 (TRB) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PRESENTATION: Alaska Legal Services Corporation Community Justice Workers Program

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 26

SHORT TITLE: COUNCIL FOR ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STORY

01/19/23	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23
01/19/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/23	(H)	EDC, FIN
02/10/23	(H)	TRB REPLACES EDC REFERRAL
02/10/23	(H)	BILL REPRINTED
03/08/23	(H)	TRB AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
03/08/23	(H)	Heard & Held
03/08/23	(H)	MINUTE (TRB)
03/13/23	(H)	TRB AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

03/13/23 (H) Heard & Held
03/13/23 (H) MINUTE (TRB)
03/20/23 (H) TRB AT 3:30 PM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 26.

MIRANDA WORL, Staff
Representative Andi Story
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor, offered explanation for amending HB 26 to include formerly excluded languages to Alaska's official languages list.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:32:10 PM](#)

CHAIR CJ MCCORMICK called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. Representatives Carpenter, Dibert, Allard, Vance, and McCormick were present at the call to order.

HB 26-COUNCIL FOR ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

[3:32:58 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 26, "An Act renaming the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council as the Council for Alaska Native Languages; and relating to the Council for Alaska Native Languages."

[3:33:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 26. Having previously been before the committee to present HB 26, she offered a refresher of the key issues addressed by the proposed legislation. She said she is the legislative liaison to the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council, which has expressed the desire for a name change to the Council for Alaska Native

Languages because the council does not merely preserve languages, it revitalizes them. In addition to that goal, HB 26 would add two voting members to expand council membership from five to seven. Having additional members on council would serve to further awareness of Alaska's Native languages throughout the state.

[3:35:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER asked who appoints the council members.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY answered they are appointed by the governor. In response to a follow-up question, she offered her understanding that there would be no breakdown as to which languages were represented by which council members.

[3:36:28 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 3:36 p.m.

[3:36:32 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK invited amendments to HB 26.

[3:38:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HB 26, labeled 33-LS0266\A.1, Bergerud, 3/16/23, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 1, following "Act":

Insert "**relating to the official languages of the State of Alaska;**"

Page 1, following line 4:

Insert a new bill section to read:

"* **Section 1.** AS 44.12.310(a) is amended to read:

(a) The English, Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Cup'ig, Alutiiq, Unanga/Cx, Dena'ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, [TANANA,] Upper Tanana, Sahcheeg xut'een xneege' (Middle Tanana), Benhti Kokhwt'ana Kenaga' (Lower Tanana), Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Wetá (Ts'etsa'ut), Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages are the official languages of the State of Alaska."

Page 1, line 5:

Delete "**Section 1**"
Insert "**Sec. 2**"

Renumber the following bill sections accordingly.

Page 2, line 9:
Delete "sec. 2"
Insert "sec. 3"

Page 2, line 11:
Delete "sec. 2"
Insert "sec. 3"

[3:38:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT objected for the purpose of discussion.

[3:38:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD spoke to Amendment 1. She explained it would add formerly omitted Alaska languages to the list of Alaska's official languages so that all Alaska Native languages are recognized.

[3:39:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY explained that X'unei Lance Twitchell had brought this matter to her attention. She introduced her staff to offer further details regarding the need for Amendment 1.

[3:40:08 PM](#)

MIRANDA WORL, Staff, Representative Andi Story, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor of HB 26, noting that further explanation from the council could be found in the committee packet, explained that the original map of 20 Alaska Native languages was created in 1974, and Wetal [Ts'etsa'ut] was not included because it was no longer spoken; however, it is important for it to be included. She said Cup'ig is included in the Central Yup'ik language on the map, but it is important that it be considered a language on its own. Finally, the Tanana language currently listed encompasses two distinct languages - [Benhti Kokhwt'ana Kenaga'] Lower Tanana and [Sahcheeg xut'een xneege'] Middle Tanana - which should be recognized individually.

[3:41:51 PM](#)

MS. WORL, in response to a question from Representative Carpenter, cited AS 44.12.310 as listing Alaska's official languages, and said English is among them.

[3:43:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT removed her objection to the motion to adopt Amendment 1. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[3:43:28 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK, after ascertaining there were no other amendments to be offered, entertained a motion.

[3:43:47 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT moved to report HB 26, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 26(TRB) was reported out of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs.

[3:44:20 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:44 p.m. to 3:48 p.m.

[3:49:07 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK briefly stated other business.

[3:49:18 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 3:49 p.m.