

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 20, 2024

3:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Löki Tobin, Chair  
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair  
Senator Jesse Bjorkman  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

**University of Alaska Board of Regents**

Seth Church - Fairbanks  
Stephen Colligan - Wasilla

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

**Board of Education and Early Development**

Pamela Dupras - Anchorage  
Barbara Tyndall - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

**Professional Teaching Practices Commission**

Michael Robbins - Ketchikan

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SETH CHURCH, Appointee  
University of Alaska Board of Regents

Fairbanks, Alaska

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

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

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

PAMELA DUPRAS, Appointee  
Board of Education and Early Development  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as the governor's appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development.

BARBARA TYNDALL, Appointee  
Board of Education and Early Development  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as the governor's appointee to the Board of Education and Early Development.

MICHAEL ROBBINS, Appointee  
Professional Teaching Practices Commission  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Ketchikan, Alaska

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

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:30:58 PM](#)

**CHAIR LÖKI TOBIN** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, and Chair Tobin. Senator Bjorkman joined thereafter.

#### **CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)** **UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA BOARD OF REGENTS**

[3:33:28 PM](#)

**CHAIR TOBIN** announced the consideration of the governor's appointees Seth Church and Stephen Colligan to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[3:33:48 PM](#)

SETH CHURCH, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Fairbanks, Alaska, provided a brief overview of his personal and professional background, emphasizing his expertise in project management, particularly in deferred maintenance and new construction throughout his career. He expressed his belief in the mission of the university and its staff and leadership. He voiced support for the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) becoming an R1 research institution, the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) focusing on workforce development, and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) having a first-class marine biology program. He expressed his desire to serve on the board.

[3:36:27 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked Mr. Church about his thoughts on diversity and the role of diversity at the university. She asked how, as a regent, he would uphold and support the mission statement of the university to honor the Indigenous and diverse peoples of Alaska.

MR. CHURCH replied that the board recently voted in favor of the Troth Yeddha' project, noting that the university has received significant investment from community partners. He mentioned that UAF is fully embracing the project. He stated his agreement with the board's policy of open enrollment, which welcomes everyone, and expressed his full support for the board's mission.

[3:37:46 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked Mr. Church, as a general contractor, what he has learned about the university's deferred maintenance backlog. She also inquired if he believes the legislature adequately funds deferred maintenance.

MR. CHURCH replied that he has toured the university's three major campuses over the past several months and shared several key observations. He noted that the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) has boilers so old that parts are no longer available, and other old boilers are cannibalized to keep them running, though they are kept in excellent condition. He commended the passion of the custodians and maintenance crews but emphasized that UAA urgently needs funding for boilers and deferred maintenance. At the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), he observed a new math and science building but found one lab resembling a "third world country" with 1950s cabinetry, giving the impression that the university doesn't care about it. He expressed disappointment in that situation. Meanwhile, at the

University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), he saw a new building that was first class, delivered on budget and on time. He stated that while the state has invested in the university, the \$2 billion deferred maintenance backlog requires more attention. He clarified that this was his opinion, not necessarily that of the board.

[3:40:04 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said an issue he has had with the university for years is teacher education and training. He noted that every year, more teachers leave the state than graduate from the university. He asked what the university can do to ensure the state grows its own teachers and how to encourage more Alaskan students to enter the teaching profession.

MR. CHURCH opined that better dorms could help attract students and having approval of the \$20 million, 3-year funding plan for UAF to be a premier research university. He did not speak specifically to teacher retention but would investigate and get back to the committee.

SENATOR STEVENS asked that board members look for ways to recruit Alaskans to become teachers. He noted that teaching is a great career, especially for kids in rural Alaska, but the state is not successfully attracting them. He suggested finding ways to provide scholarships to increase the number of locally grown teachers.

[3:42:03 PM](#)

MR. CHURCH stated that his maternal grandfather came to Alaska and worked at a school outside of Anchorage for many years.

[3:42:17 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked about his vision for the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) and its role within the university system and for the state.

MR. CHURCH replied that UAS is the premier liberal arts and marine biology university in the region, describing it as a world-class and beautiful institution. He shared that a student from Massachusetts searched for the top marine biology school and found UAS. He expressed optimism about UAS's continued development under its new chancellor from Palmer and stated that he would love to learn from locals about their vision for the university.

[3:44:35 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN said she listened to Mr. Church's confirmation appointment and appreciated his comments about including educator and student voices. However, she wanted to focus on questions regarding diversity of thought, perception, and perspective. After reviewing his resume and personal background, she asked how he would ensure that all of Alaska's universities maintain rigorous liberal arts programs, particularly in light of the growing understanding of justice, history, oppression, critical race theory, and tribal critical race theory. She asked how he plans to ensure that student voices and perspectives, as well as diverse theories, are included and elevated in academic curricula, and how he would incorporate these perspectives into his own body of knowledge and background.

MR. CHURCH replied that it starts with having an open mind, something he personally strives to maintain. He stated that both the board and the university aim to be inviting. He then asked if, from her perspective, there are ways the board and university can improve in this regard.

CHAIR TOBIN replied that she is currently a student at UAF and is impressed with her professors, particularly their ability to challenge her worldview and perspectives. She expressed a desire to protect those professors so they can continue fostering such academic growth. She emphasized the importance of appointing individuals to the Board of Regents who will not use their position to silence educators or create barriers that prevent students from pursuing rigorous academic exploration and truth.

MR. CHURCH thanked her for her comment.

[3:47:35 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN thanked him for his willingness to serve and announced the next appointee.

[3:48:08 PM](#)

STEPHEN COLLIGAN, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Wasilla, Alaska, gave a brief overview of his personal and career history, mentioning his frequent visits to rural Alaska, where he engages in STEM education and outreach. He shared that one of the questions he asks students and teachers is, "What is the most important thing your teacher teaches you?" The answers vary, but he believes teachers teach students how to learn. He emphasized that lifelong learning is essential, and a person does not need a PhD to pass along skills, mentor, or inspire confidence in others. In the fields of teaching and engineering, he highlighted the importance of staying current

with new certifications, technologies, and evolving fields such as artificial intelligence (AI). He pointed out that machine learning has been used in surveying and mapping for years, but managing the "soft" side of AI, like social media and identifying deep fakes, is also a critical skill. He opined that the university would play a key role in both using and teaching the responsibilities of technology use and misuse.

[3:53:34 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN joined the meeting.

[3:53:35 PM](#)

MR. COLLIGAN reflected on his own time at UAF 40 years ago and noted the positive changes in student support. He expressed his excitement about the PhD program in language studies and growth in engineering and unmanned systems. He advocated for the university to develop strong capabilities in specific areas and to specialize, given limited resources. He recommended partnering with the Department of Defense who is a client of the university. He emphasized that each university campus has a different focus on workforce development.

[3:58:10 PM](#)

MR. COLLIGAN highlighted UAS's unique opportunity to have outstanding programs in mariculture and marine biology. Regarding teacher recruitment, he acknowledged there is no simple solution but suggested that professionals could obtain teaching certificates. On the issue of deferred maintenance, he remarked that the university, like many organizations, faces this challenge. He commended university leadership for creating a modest plan to address aging infrastructure and noted that sometimes rebuilding is more cost-effective than repair. He recommended pursuing achievable goals with maintainable systems rather than asking for overly ambitious projects. Finally, he mentioned that the university should not be in the apartment rental business but should explore public-private partnerships to build resources without making large financial requests to the legislature. He suggested that long-term public/private partnerships could help attract students to the University of Alaska system and excite people about its potential across all campuses.

[4:01:59 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked for his thoughts on diversity and how he, as a regent, would uphold the university's mission to honor the indigenous and diverse peoples of Alaska.

MR. COLLIGAN stated that there are three key areas of focus: First, the university is and should remain an asset to the Alaska community. He emphasized that not every campus is the same and expressed hope that each would be driven by the workforce development and economic needs of its respective community. He opined that education provides a foundational opportunity for personal improvement, whether one pursues a four-year degree, a trade, or a professional career. He highlighted the potential of the Troth Yeddha' campus to help individuals from rural Alaska succeed, not only by offering language and teaching certificates but also by building confidence and leadership skills for governing boards and community leadership across the state. He stressed that while everyone should be treated equally, each campus has unique focuses and workforce development needs.

[4:04:52 PM](#)

MR. COLLIGAN expressed excitement about learning how different university locations provide value and integrate into their communities, whether by improving teacher training through short courses or other efforts. Regarding diversity, he noted that at least 25 percent of UAF students are from rural Alaska Native communities, and there are systems in place for students to assemble, express concerns, and have them addressed. He stated his openness to listening and hearing concerns, without getting caught up in unnecessary drama, micromanaging, or overstepping his bounds as a leader. He emphasized that while the university has diversity programs in place, fostering a long-term culture of treating people equally, fairly, and with enthusiasm for learning is key to improving opportunities for Alaskans.

[4:07:17 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS noted that universities are unique structures, with faculty playing a significant role in governance through the faculty senate, which directs the university and works closely with the Board of Regents. He asked how Mr. Colligan would work with the faculty, particularly since PhDs are essential for a respected university, especially in becoming a research institution. He requested Mr. Colligan to elaborate on his working relationship with professional faculty.

[4:08:09 PM](#)

MR. COLLIGAN acknowledged that he had overlooked one of the university's primary goals—achieving R1 status—and emphasized what that would mean for the entire northern region. He noted that while UAF is currently an R2 university, placing it in the top 8 percent, achieving R1 status would provide additional

opportunities for research and other benefits to Alaska and northern countries.

[4:08:16 PM](#)

MR. COLLIGAN shared that he began his career before certain technologies, like GIS, were taught at universities and had even helped develop them. He said his company employs individuals with Master's and PhDs, emphasizing the importance of having knowledge specialists leading the way. He stated that he values advanced degrees, recognizing their critical role in both the community and the long-term viability of the university, but noted that this is just one focus, albeit the highest priority.

MR. COLLIGAN pointed out that part of achieving R1 status involves graduating a certain number of PhDs. Once that goal is reached, the level of funding and research dollars coming into the state could increase tenfold.

[4:10:09 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated that she has a liberal arts degree in sociology and pointed out that the University of Alaska is the only public university without a sociology program, which she believes is a travesty. She emphasized that liberal arts foster innovation and produce individuals committed to human service, including thought leaders, non-profit specialists, and legislators. She noted that his comments were heavily focused on science and technology and asked how he plans to seek out or accept perspectives different from his own. She inquired about his ethos regarding engaging with alternative viewpoints.

MR. COLLIGAN apologized for focusing too much on science and technology, acknowledging the importance of a well-rounded education. He emphasized that all university degrees and programs, including those in the sciences, require knowledge of "softer" sciences like history and language. He pointed out that most innovators possess this broader knowledge and keep an open mind to foster new ideas. He stated that without understanding history, one is blind to the future and noted that soft sciences are just as important, if not more so, when it comes to leadership. While it's great to be focused on science, he said, true innovation comes from having a broad and open-minded perspective.

[4:12:21 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on the confirmation of Mr. Church and Mr. Colligan; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[4:12:40 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Education Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

**University of Alaska Board of Regents**

Seth Church - Fairbanks

Stephen Colligan - Wasilla

He reminded members that signing the report(s) regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[4:13:05 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated the names would be forwarded to a joint session of the Alaska State Legislature.

[4:13:14 PM](#)

At ease

**CONFIRMATION HEARINGS**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION and EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

[4:15:10 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of the governor's appointees Pamela Dupras and Barbara Tyndall to the Board of Education and Early Development.

[4:15:42 PM](#)

PAMELA DUPRAS, Appointee, Board of Education and Early Development, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Anchorage, Alaska, gave a brief overview of her personal, education, and work history. She stated she has taught for 22 years in a variety of locations in Alaska.

[4:17:00 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked about the State School Board's responsibility for Mt. Edgecumbe and how it differs from its responsibilities for other school districts.

MS. DUPRAS said that, as a new board member, her understanding is that the State School Board listens to reports and stays informed about decisions made at Mt. Edgecumbe. She noted that

the key difference is that Mt. Edgecumbe is a residential school serving students from across the entire state, unlike other school districts.

SENATOR STEVENS commented that Mt. Edgecumbe is a remarkable school, noting that many Native leaders have graduated from it. He expressed his gladness upon hearing that she attended the school.

[4:17:57 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked for her ethos and perspective on the relationship between the State Board of Education, local school boards, parents, and students.

[4:18:21 PM](#)

MS. DUPRAS stated that the responsibility of the State Board of Education is to listen carefully to all parties involved, including local school boards, parents, and students, and to consider their viewpoints before making decisions. She emphasized that decisions are not made by one person but by a group, making it important for state board members to be mindful of what constituents want and their opinions. She noted that the board reviews a lot of public input to ensure it considers how its actions impact all students and reflects their needs.

CHAIR TOBIN asked what she sees as the relationship between the State Board of Education and the legislature.

[4:19:39 PM](#)

MS. DUPRAS replied that she is still learning but noted that one of the more exciting developments from the state has been its focus on the state of reading in Alaska. She is aware of several other bills related to education. She views the legislature as the governing body responsible for creating the rules that hold the State Board of Education accountable in its work.

[4:20:16 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN thanked Ms. Dupras for her willingness to serve and announced the next appointee.

[4:20:38 PM](#)

BARBARA TYNDALL, Appointee, Board of Education and Early Development, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Fairbanks, Alaska, provided a brief overview of her personal and work history, highlighting her teaching experience and understanding that children are not "cookie cutters" of each other, even within the same family. She shared how she first

learned about multi-sensory teaching and the importance of recognizing that children learn differently and face unique challenges. As a member of the State Board of Education, she attended a Career and Technical Education (CTE) conference in Anchorage, where she saw educators excited about making education relevant in the classroom. She expressed her enthusiasm for expanding youth career tracks across the state, such as those she observed in Bethel and Barrow, which focus on practical skills like construction, welding, technology, farming, and business.

[4:24:21 PM](#)

MS. TYNDALL noted that districts are seeing success, including increased graduation rates, and mentioned that charter schools and homeschooling are thriving in Alaska. She added that the Reads Program is starting to show positive results. While acknowledging that education is in transition, she is optimistic about the future and emphasized the need for continued adjustments and adaptations to move education forward.

[4:25:43 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON referenced the board's annual report to the legislature, which mentioned the education clause in the Alaska Constitution art. VII, sec. 1, which states, in part, "Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution." She asked if Ms. Tyndall agreed with the education clause in the constitution.

MS. TYNDALL replied that education is for every child, meeting them where they are. She acknowledged that public schools are secular and accepts that. She noted that all five of her children graduated from public high schools, as did she from a public high school in Valdez. She concluded by saying she agrees with the education clause for now.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON reiterated Ms. Tyndall's clarifying remark "for now."

MS. TYNDALL added that if changes were made in the future, she would probably agree.

[4:27:08 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN said she was curious to hear Ms. Ty's thoughts on the relationship between the State Board of Education and the legislature. She asked if Ms. Ty believes the State Board has

the authority to enact regulations without an authorizing statute.

MS. TYNDALL said that, she is fairly new on the board and believes that the board should follow the rule of law. She mentioned that she has not spoken to legislature regarding the board and would only do so if she knew it was appropriate. She added that she would make sure to understand the proper process before engaging with the legislature.

[4:28:07 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked Ms. Ty for clarification on what she meant by "speaking to the legislature."

MS. TYNDALL replied that she would never speak on behalf of the board, as she believes there are designated individuals for that role.

CHAIR TOBIN asked what she believes her specific role is as a board member in listening to public input, and how she balances her personal beliefs with public comment and testimony.

MS. TYNDALL replied that it is extremely important to listen to all sides and emphasized that she would spend time doing so. She stated that the school board should represent all people and viewpoints. She noted that public testimony is heard, and notes are taken. Having attended about four meetings so far, she reiterated the importance of this process.

CHAIR TOBIN stated that those four meetings have had significant public testimony in opposition to board actions, and she expressed curiosity about how all perspectives are balanced. She mentioned that it seems like minority input is elevated among the public.

[4:29:41 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL stated that those four meetings have had significant public testimony in opposition to board actions, and she expressed curiosity about how all perspectives are balanced. She mentioned that it seems like minority input is elevated among the public and sought clarification on how that is handled.

MS. TYNDALL admitted that she did not fully understand the board's governance when she was first appointed. She mentioned that there is a large manual she is working through to learn more. She explained that, for the most part, the board listens

to everyone. She then sought clarification, asking if he was suggesting that the board had been overriding legislation, as she wasn't sure what the specific issue was.

[4:30:56 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL expressed interest in her understanding of the structure of the State Board of Education, noting that this understanding is important for legislators to assess whether her appointment is appropriate. He mentioned that, prior to joining the board, she had forwarded resolutions to legislators regarding the appropriate roles for the Department of Education and Early Development. He recalled one resolution stating that the department didn't have the authority to place mental health counselors in schools. He pointed out that statutes exist that license school psychologists and address mental health in schools. He asked her to share her understanding of how statutory authority relates to the department's authority.

[4:32:07 PM](#)

MS. TYNDALL said that this concern about the resolution also came up in the House, which occurred several years before serving on the board. She mentioned that her understanding of the board's authority is evolving, and her concern at the time likely stemmed from people around her who were worried about parental notification. She explained that decisions like school closures, such as those being discussed in Fairbanks, come from the superintendent, and are decided by the local school board, acknowledging that different authorities exist at different levels.

MS. TYNDALL stated that she doesn't see the state school board overriding a local school board and suggested that her previous concern may have been due to ignorance between local and state authority. She clarified that she does not recall ever referring to the state school board specifically and apologized for her past misunderstanding. She emphasized that she is now getting up to speed on what the state board can and cannot do and is focused on listening to everyone to gain a balanced view of the education system.

[4:33:46 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL compared the constitution to the foundation of a building, with the legislature passing laws like load-bearing walls, and regulations existing to implement and clarify the statutes. He asked if it was her understanding that the board can create requirements or regulations when there are no laws providing a clear pathway.

[4:34:37 PM](#)

MS. TYNDALL replied no. She stated that it is her understanding that regulations are meant to implement the law. She reiterated that, while she is new to the board, she has learned a lot and has enjoyed being part of it.

[4:35:12 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN mentioned the closing of schools and other issues due to a lack of funding. She asked Ms. Tyndall what she believes her role is as a board member in ensuring that schools receive the resources needed to provide high-quality education to every child in the public school system.

MS. TYNDALL replied that is definitely within the board's purview. She mentioned that she is very aware of what is happening in her district, and, in a perfect world, more funding is needed. However, she is uncertain whether current legislation will address the issues. She described a visit to a local elementary school, noting low morale but also positive initiatives like the Reads program. She observed that due to a teacher's absence and the lack of substitute teachers, classrooms had to be combined, highlighting that schools do not have what they need. She emphasized that it is the board's responsibility to address this.

[4:38:00 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on the confirmations of Ms. Dupras and Ms. Tyndall; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[4:38:20 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Education Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

**Board of Education and Early Development**

Pamela Dupras - Anchorage

Barbara Tyndall - Fairbanks

SENATOR STEVENS reminded members that signing the report(s) regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[4:38:43 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated the names would be forwarded to a joint session of the Alaska State Legislature.

[4:38:51 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL commented that while all appointees are forwarded by right, he has serious concerns. He explained that in the last year, the State Board of Education and Early Development acted on an issue that legislators had attempted to address through statute, as a statutory change was necessary to achieve their goal. However, those bills did not pass, and the law didn't end up reflecting what was intended. He expressed concern that the state board manipulated regulations beyond their statutory authority to effectively create new statewide law.

SENATOR KIEHL emphasized his deep concerns about board members who voted in favor of that action, especially those who have previously commented on the legal authority of departments. He concluded by stating that he will further address these concerns during the joint session.

[4:40:05 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN said she shares those concerns and encouraged the public to share their insights through public testimony. Those serving on the board have a responsibility to fight for every child to be loved.

[4:40:25 PM](#)

At ease

**CONFIRMATION HEARINGS**  
**PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION**

[4:41:42 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of the governor's appointee Michael Robbins to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[4:42:09 PM](#)

MICHAEL ROBBINS, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED, Ketchikan, Alaska, provided a brief work history and stated that he has worked for thirty years in education, including twenty years in administration. He emphasized that he brings experience, compassion, and a commitment to improving Alaska's education system. His diverse teaching experience across Alaska

has given him a comprehensive understanding of the educational landscape.

[4:43:19 PM](#)

MR. ROBBINS expressed his belief in the fundamental importance of student-centered decision-making, noting that every decision in education should serve the best interests of students and guide them toward success in both academics and personal growth. Building strong relationships with students, staff, and the community is central to his approach, as he believes fostering a sense of belonging and trust is essential for creating an environment where everyone feels valued and supported.

MR. ROBBINS expressed his commitment to advancing educational goals as a member of the commission. He is confident that positive changes can be made to have a lasting impact on students' lives and looks forward to working collaboratively toward a shared vision of educational excellence.

[4:44:50 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN said he agreed with Mr. Robbins' statements. He noted that much of the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) involves disciplinary action for educators and deciding whether they should remain licensed. Often, the commission mirrors or reinforces the disciplinary decisions made by school districts. He asked Mr. Robbins to describe two or three scenarios in which he and the commission might take a different approach from a school district in evaluating an incident and the actions taken or not taken.

[4:45:54 PM](#)

MR. ROBBINS replied that he has only participated in one meeting as part of the commission so far. He explained that each case brought before the commission is evaluated by reviewing the investigation conducted by the school district, any new information that may have emerged, and the evidence presented to the commission. He emphasized that every case is nuanced, requiring careful consideration of the facts, the actions taken at the local level, and whether the disciplinary actions were appropriate or if further action by the commission is necessary. He concluded by stating that the process involves looking at all the available information, having a thorough discussion, and then determining the next steps while considering the actions already taken at the local level.

[4:47:14 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked if, during his time as a superintendent, he has ever had to forward a disciplinary action to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC).

MR. ROBBINS replied no.

SENATOR STEVENS commented that it doesn't happen often, and it is very serious to take away someone's license. He noted that it does happen occasionally.

MR. ROBBINS replied yes, unfortunately it happens occasionally.

[4:47:57 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL mentioned that continuing education requirements for teachers also fall under the commission's responsibilities. He asked Mr. Robbins for his opinion on whether current requirements are appropriate.

MR. ROBBINS replied that in New York State, once a teacher becomes permanently certified, they are not required to complete any continuing education credits. He expressed his belief that continuing education in Alaska is incredibly important. He compared it to the medical field, noting that patients wouldn't want to visit a doctor who hadn't kept up with medical advancements for twenty years. Similarly, educators need to continuously improve, and ongoing educational development plays a key role in enhancing student learning and achievement. He emphasized that all school staff, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators, should engage in continuing education to improve their craft.

[4:49:45 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on the confirmation of Mr. Robbins; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[4:50:06 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Education Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

**Professional Teaching Practices Commission**

Michael Robbins - Ketchikan

SENTATOR STEVENS reminded members that signing the report(s) regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the

appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[4:50:30 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN said the name would be forwarded to a joint session of the Alaska State Legislature.

[4:50:58 PM](#)

At ease

[4:51:15 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reconvened the meeting.

[4:51:29 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Tobin adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 4:51 p.m.