

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
March 21, 2024  
9:05 a.m.

9:05:02 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Olson called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair  
Senator Donny Olson, Co-Chair  
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair  
Senator Click Bishop  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Senator Kelly Merrick  
Senator David Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Almeria Alcantra, Staff, Senator Donny Olson; Lisa Purinton, Acting Legislative Liaison, Department of Public Safety; Col. James Cockerell, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety; Ken Alper, Staff, Senator Donny Olson; Tim Lamkin, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens;

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Kendra Kloster, Co-Director of Law and Policy, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center; Dr. Charlene Agpik Apok, Executive Director, Data for Indigenous Justice;

SUMMARY

SB 151 MISSING/MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE;REPORT

SCR 10 JOINT LEGIS SEAFOOD INDUSTRY TASK FORCE

#sb151

SENATE BILL NO. 151

"An Act establishing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Review Commission; relating to missing and murdered indigenous persons; relating to the duties of the Department of Public Safety; and providing for an effective date."

[9:05:32 AM](#)

Co-Chair Olson relayed that it was the first hearing for SB 151.

[9:06:00 AM](#)

ALMERIA ALCANTRA, STAFF, SENATOR DONNY OLSON, addressed a Sectional Analysis (copy on file):

CS FOR SENATE BILL 151 (STA) "Missing/Murdered Indigenous People; Report" Sectional Analysis

**Section One:** Amends AS 18.65.240(a) requiring cultural training, supervised by an Indigenous coordinator or entity, be incorporated into the standards of police officer training under the Alaska Police Standards Council.

**Section Two:** Amends AS 44.41.020 by adding subsection (k), requesting the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to submit names and information relating to missing persons to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) database.

**Section Three:** Amends AS 44.41 by adding Sec. 44.41.023, directing the Department of Public Safety to employ at least two individuals to investigate cases involving missing and murdered indigenous peoples and act as liaisons between law enforcement agencies, communities in the state, and federally recognized tribes.

**Section Four:** Amends the uncodified law by adding the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Review Commission. **Section Five:** Directs the Department of Public Safety to conduct a needs assessment to be

submitted to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2026.

**Section Six:** Amends the uncodified law by adding a new section, clarifying that those certified to be police officers on or before the effective date of sec. one must participate in the mandated cultural training within two years of the effective date of this Act.

**Section Seven:** Repeals Section Five on January 1, 2026.

**Section Eight:** Sets a sunset date for the Commission of January 1, 2027.

**Section Nine:** Sets an effective date of January 1, 2025.

[9:08:50 AM](#)

KENDRA KLOSTER, CO-DIRECTOR OF LAW AND POLICY, ALASKA NATIVE WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill. She relayed that in addition to being Co-Director of Law and Policy at the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, she was a member of the Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit (MMWIG2S) Alaska Working Group, which consists of 5 Alaska Native non-profits working on every front of issues related to Alaska Natives.

Ms. Kloster explained that the bill came forward after many discussions between communities and various state departments. She stressed the importance of the cultural training provision, explaining the need for understanding of Alaska Native communities. She cited communication barriers throughout investigative processes. She said she had worked with MMIP investigators, the positions of which this bill would solidify.

Ms. Kloster noted that there were currently four MMIP investigators and identified that the bill only made a proviso for two investigators. She noted that Alaska has one of the highest rates of MMIP across the nation and stressed the need for MMIP investigators. She supported an increase in investigators from two to four and added that there was enough work for as many as six. She urged the committee to strengthen the mandatory reporting language.

[9:13:07 AM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman was interested to know the geographical dispersion of MMIP. He considered that this was a statewide issue.

Ms. Kloster relayed that she had some data that she would share with the committee. She noted that the Executive director for Data for Indigenous Justice could speak to the question. She stated that the issue was statewide.

[9:14:30 AM](#)

Co-Chair Olson asked Ms. Kloster to touch upon the urgency and concern regarding the subject matter of the bill.

Ms. Kloster reiterated that she worked with the MMIWG2S working group and other organizations, which received regular calls from families asking for help with cases of missing or murdered family members. She said that the numbers of MMIP was increasing, and Alaska ranked the highest in the nation for MMIP. She stressed that the matter of MMIP was urgent and required immediate attention.

[9:17:24 AM](#)

DR. CHARLENE AQPIK APOK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DATA FOR INDIGENOUS JUSTICE (via teleconference), spoke in favor of the bill. She noted that she was Co-Director of Gender Justice and Healing at Native Movement. She noted that Data for Indigenous Justice put out a report in 2021 that listed 229 cases of MMIP in the state; that number had risen to over 1000 in 2024. She stated that DPS had collaborated with other agencies to release quarterly reports to help law enforcement understand the resources necessary to combat the issue. She stressed that the matter was ongoing and urgent. She advocated for an increase from two to four investigators in the bill.

Dr. Apok reiterated the urgent nature of the crisis.

[9:20:43 AM](#)

Dr. Apok discussed the need a committee of diverse voices coming together in a collaborative effort to address the issue. She felt that the bill was an equitable measure that would address the issue of MMIP in the state.

Dr. Apok discussed mandatory reporting and expressed gratitude that agencies were currently entering data into a database. She emphasized the importance of mandatory reporting and stressed the need for DPS to have up-t-date and modern data infrastructure and technology.

[9:23:15 AM](#)

Senator Bishop asked Dr. Apok about her comments and asked her to repeat the information about "archaic" databases.

Dr. Apok relayed that several years ago conversations about data collection and reporting had revealed that some DPS data systems in the state were "archaic" - long term and modern infrastructure for law enforcement would be necessary to combat the issue of MMIP in Alaska.

Co-Chair Olson asked for Dr. Apok's thoughts on cooperation between her organization and the Department of Law and DPS.

Dr. Apok responded that the partnerships should be strong and continually fostered.

[9:25:56 AM](#)

LISA PURINTON, ACTING LEGISLATIVE LIAISON, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, spoke to a new fiscal note from the Department of Public Safety, OMB Component number 2325. She said that to help manage and support the commission, a program coordinator position would be necessary, which would add to the year one cost. She noted that costs would decrease going forward. The required report would cost the department additional funds as the work would be contracted outside of the department. She said that an implementation plan would be necessary after the report was complete, which would require additional funds. She said that the note also included funding for two of the four investigators needed.

[9:29:26 AM](#)

Senator Bishop referenced Section 1 of the bill that referenced cultural training. He asked whether the training was already in use or had to be developed.

Ms. Purinton relayed that the department, through the academy, offered cultural awareness training. She believed any cost could be absorbed by the department. She deferred to the commissioner for additional information.

[9:30:31 AM](#)

Co-Chair Olson He asked whether the funds were sufficient for the scope of the effort that was going forward.

Ms. Purinton thought that the requested funds would cover the report, but additional funds could be needed to implement the findings of the report.

Co-Chair Olson asked whether the sunset date was realistic.

Ms. Purinton replied that the work could push past the sunset date, and it could be helpful to revisit the sunset date.

[9:32:49 AM](#)

COL. JAMES COCKERELL, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, offered some background detailing his work to date on the MMIP emergency. He discussed his retention of investigators, who worked under his direction. He relayed that he received requests from all over the state to investigate MMIP cases. He described that the investigators were engaged in tedious work that involved significant emotions and were dedicated to the issue. He shared that he provided a quarterly report on MMIP in Alaska, culling information from police departments across the state.

Commissioner Cockrell related that information on missing Alaskans was submitted to the National Missing and Unidentified Person System (NamUs) 60 days after a report was filed in-state. He explained that NamUs was a long-term missing persons database. He said that when a person went missing in Alaska the report went into the missing person clearing house, which DPS managed for all police departments around the state. He furthered that a follow-up occurred after 30 days and if the person was still missing after 60 days, they were entered into NamUs. He offered to provide copies of missing person database information.

[9:38:24 AM](#)

Commissioner Cockrell said that anything known about the nature of the disappearance was noted in the database. He explained that Alaska did not have a provision that prevented reporting a missing person before they had been missing 24 hours. He said that time was critical to finding the missing person. He expressed excitement about the outreach and the report. He noted that DPS had two tribal liaisons, as well as victim navigators who provided support to victims and who were highly used.

Commissioner Cockrell expressed strong support for the legislation. He stressed that a better job needed to be done to provide professional police services in rural areas of the state.

[9:42:45 AM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman noted that the proposed termination date was in 2026.

Commissioner Cockrell suggested the date be pushed out, based on the objectives of the department.

Ms. Alcantra asked whether the question related to the sunset date or the report date for the DPS needs assessment.

Co-Chair Stedman replied that he was questioning the sunset date.

Ms. Alcantra relayed that the date was set by the sponsor, to determine the need for the commission. She noted the report would be due January 1, 2027, which would determine next steps forward. She said that it would be up to the legislature to determine whether the commission should be extended.

Co-Chair Olson thought the date was set for as a legislative starting point to consider the work of the commission.

[9:45:01 AM](#)

Senator Bishop asked the commissioner to speak to how DPS interfaced with affiliate agencies to work on the issue, and how the bill might strengthen the relationships.

Commissioner Cockrell thought law enforcement in the state was like a big family, with many connections and shared assets. He mentioned the import of cooperation in the state because of its size and population.

Senator Bishop referenced Section 1 of the bill and cultural training. He assumed the training would be provided at the police academy.

Commissioner Cockrell stated that cultural training was currently available at the academy. He identified that he wanted to provide the training during in-services. He noted that there was a lot to teach incoming staff about the cultures in Alaska. He hoped that once the department had real cultural training provided by partners who were experts in Alaskan issues.

[9:48:40 AM](#)

Co-Chair Olson thanked Commissioner Cockrell for his service.

[9:49:00 AM](#)

Ms. Alcantra thanked the committee for considering the legislation.

Co-Chair Olson set an amendment deadline for the following Monday at noon.

SB 151 was heard and HELD in Committee for further consideration.

[9:49:25 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:54:36 AM](#)

RECONVENED

#scr10

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 10

Establishing the Joint Legislative Seafood Industry Task Force.

[9:54:45 AM](#)

Co-Chair Olson relayed that the resolution was first heard on March 7, 2024, at which time public testimony had been taken.

Senator Kiehl MOVED to ADOPT proposed committee substitute for SCR 10, Work Draft 33-LS1469\B (Wallace, 3/20/24).  
Co-Chair Olson OBJECTED for discussion.

9:55:29 AM

KEN ALPER, STAFF, SENATOR DONNY OLSON, discussed the changes to the bill:

**Change #1** Added language to the "whereas" sections describing increased costs of operations, high interest rates, and the fact that numerous processing facilities are either for sale, closing, or planning to shut down for some or all of the 2024 season.

**Change #2** Adds a new duty to the task force, to consider a policy for limited entry buyback programs. Also rewords the existing duties for clarity.

**Change #3** Reorganizes the membership in the task force. The total number of members is increased to thirteen, including the two senators and two representatives that were in the original resolution. The nine public members are:

- Three representatives of the seafood processing sector, including two larger processors (owning two or more shoreside plants in multiple communities) and one small processor (with a single plant).
- Three commercial seafood harvesters, including one salmon harvester, one whitefish harvester, and one shellfish harvester.
- Three representatives of fishing-dependent communities, including one from rural western Alaska, one from a Gulf of Alaska community, and one from Southeast.
- In addition, there are three non-voting ex-officio members. These are the Commissioners of Commerce, Fish and Game, and Revenue, or their designees.

**Change #4** Clarifies that the members of the task force shall objectively represent and support the statewide

seafood industry, not their specific region or fishery.

[9:58:24 AM](#)

Co-Chair Olson asked about the structural rewrite for the board.

Mr. Alper explained that the bulk of the structural rewrite came from the Senate President's office. He deferred to Mr. Lamkin for further details.

Co-Chair Olson understood the bill sponsor supported the changes.

Mr. Alper deferred to Mr. Lamkin.

Co-Chair Olson WITHDREW his objection. There being NO further OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

[9:59:54 AM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, STAFF, SENATOR GARY STEVENS, spoke to the crafting of the legislation. He said that the change in the board structure was to ensure parity and to bring about more diverse representation on the board. He thought that the model was imperfect but closer to fine. He expected that there would be many subcommittees created to make the board as inclusive as possible.

[10:01:39 AM](#)

Co-Chair Olson asked Mr. Lamkin to address the idea that a larger group could be more cumbersome and more difficult to gain consensus.

Mr. Lamkin agreed that the larger a task force could be less efficient. He said that the project was about building consensus.

[10:02:35 AM](#)

SCR 10 was heard and HELD in Committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Olson discussed housekeeping.

10:03:00 AM  
AT EASE

10:03:17 AM  
RECONVENED

#  
ADJOURNMENT  
10:03:26 AM

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.