

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
April 23, 2024
1:33 p.m.

[1:33:34 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Olson called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:33 p.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

Representative Stanley Wright, Sponsor; Forrest Wolfe, Staff, Representative Wright; Lisa Purinton, Legislative Liaison, Department of Public Safety; Nancy Meade, General Counsel, Alaska Court System; Representative Will Stapp, Sponsor; Honour Miller-Austin, Staff, Representative Will Stapp.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

David L. Morgan Jr., Governmental Affairs Associate, Reason Foundation; Ryan Tunseth, President, Alaska Marijuana Industry Association; Lacy Wilcox, Owner, THC Alaska, Juneau; Kelly Howell, Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Governor; Bryce Ward, Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough.

SUMMARY

CSHB 28 (FIN)

ACCESS TO MARIJUANA CONVICTION RECORDS

CSHB 28(FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CSHB 155(FIN)am

ESTABLISH AK MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMISSION

CSHB 155(FIN)am was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#hb28

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 28(FIN)

"An Act restricting the release of certain records of convictions; and providing for an effective date."

1:34:23 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STANLEY WRIGHT, SPONSOR, introduced the legislation. He referred to the Sponsor Statement (copy on file):

Alaskans voted to legalize the cultivation, sale, possession and recreational use of marijuana for persons 21 years of age or older in 2014. Despite this change in state law, some Alaskans remain blocked from employment and housing and other opportunities due to previous marijuana possession convictions that today are recognized as non-criminal activities.

House Bill 28 would make the records of individuals who were convicted of minor marijuana crimes confidential, so long as they were 21 years of age or older at the time of the offense and were not charged with any other crimes in the same incident. These records would automatically be removed from Court View. The records would also be removed from some background checks administered by the Department of Public Safety, if requested by the convicted individual.

According to figures provided by the Alaska Department of Public Safety, not less than 700 Alaskans are hindered in day to day life by marijuana convictions that are eligible for the confidentiality protections in this bill.

With Alaskans having spoken by means of legalization of marijuana this bill would allow those that by today's standards would not be considered as a criminal offender to move forward with their life without the obstruction that can be incurred by such a conviction on ones record while still allowing provisions for adequate access to background or statistical information for those appropriate agencies.

[1:36:12 PM](#)

FORREST WOLFE, STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT, provided a brief history of the legislation.

Senator Wilson wondered whether the legislation would allow for "bad boys to move in silence and violence."

Representative Wright replied in the negative, and stated that it was an opportunity for folks to reach their full potential and move on with their lives.

Mr. Wolfe furthered that the crimes outlined within the bill were non-violent crimes.

[1:40:06 PM](#)

Senator Wilson asked whether there would be a bigger way to solve the issue, because there might be a jealousy issue.

Representative Wright replied that he felt that it was an opportunity for folks to move on with their lives and be given some redemption. He remarked that as a Christian, he believed in that.

Mr. Wolfe furthered that there were some issues addressed in the bill that were no longer considered crimes. He remarked that the crimes referred to by Senator Wilson were still considered crimes under Alaska law.

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether it was still against the law to be in possession of marijuana.

Representative Wright replied that possession of marijuana was still illegal on the federal level, but remarked that the bill only addressed state law as it pertained to occurrences within the state of Alaska.

Senator Wilson wondered whether there was a manual or instructions about how the convictions might be overturned and the effect on the perpetrator's lives.

Representative Wright replied in the affirmative.

Co-Chair Stedman wondered how many Alaska citizens would be affected by the legislation.

Representative Wright replied that it was 8500 Alaskans.

Senator Bishop surmised that it was up to the individual to remove themselves from the record.

Representative Wright replied in the affirmative.

[1:45:31 PM](#)

DAVID L. MORGAN JR., GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS ASSOCIATE, REASON FOUNDATION (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

Co-Chair Olson asked about the mission of the REASON Foundation.

Mr. Morgan replied that it was a non-partisan thinktank to bring solutions to the table, such as criminal justice reform, consumer freedom, technology, and transportation.

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether Mr. Morgan lived in Alaska.

Mr. Morgan responded in the negative, and stated that he lived in Georgia.

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether the REASON Foundation was a national organization.

Mr. Morgan replied in the affirmative.

[1:48:51 PM](#)

RYAN TUNSETH, PRESIDENT, ALASKA MARIJUANA INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether the "AMA" was in favor of the bill.

Mr. Tunseth replied in the affirmative.

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether Mr. Tunseth was a medical doctor who supported the bill.

Mr. Tunseth replied that he was a member of the "AMIA" which was the Alaska Marijuana Industry Association.

[1:52:43 PM](#)

LISA PURINTON, LEGISLATIVE LIAISON, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, (DPS) addressed the fiscal note.

Senator Wilson surmised that the bill work for folks who needed to request their criminal records. He wondered whether there would be an interest in the subject in the bill.

Ms. Purinton responded that he could not speculate.

Senator Wilson wondered whether there was a need to examine the criminal records to determine what records should see elimination.

Ms. Purinton replied in the affirmative.

[1:57:45 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether DPS was in favor of the bill.

Ms. Purinton replied that the department was neutral on the bill.

Senator Merrick felt that researching 8500 cases seemed like "a lot of work."

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether the fiscal note returned to zero after FY 28.

Ms. Purinton replied that the costs were related to proactive reviews of the records.

Senator Kiehl wondered why there was a need to wait for folks to request removal, when the department would be researching all cases.

Ms. Purinton responded that the bill was written that way.

Representative Wright stated that he was willing to discuss a change in the language of the bill.

[2:00:31 PM](#)

NANCY MEADE, GENERAL COUNSEL, ALASKA COURT SYSTEM, stated that there was a zero fiscal note.

Co-Chair Olson wondered how to morally justify a change, when the crime was committed at a time of illegality.

Ms. Meade replied that the conviction was still on the record, but would merely be hidden from the public.

Senator Wilson wondered whether the court needed additional staffing for the legislation.

Ms. Meade replied that the court would not need additional staff as related to the language of the bill.

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether the Court System was in favor of the legislation.

Ms. Meade replied that the Court System was neutral on the bill.

[2:05:11 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson OPENED public testimony.

[2:05:27 PM](#)

LACY WILCOX, OWNER, THC ALASKA, JUNEAU (via teleconference), spoke in favor of the bill.

Representative Wright thanked the committee.

Mr. Wolfe thanked the committee.

Co-Chair Olson CLOSED public testimony.

CSHB 28(FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#hb155

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 155(FIN) am

"An Act establishing the Alaska Military Affairs Commission; and relating to the duties and powers of the Alaska Military Affairs Commission."

[2:08:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP, SPONSOR, introduced himself.

[2:09:00 PM](#)

HONOUR MILLER-AUSTIN, STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP, introduced herself.

Representative Stapp provided an overview of the bill.

[2:10:48 PM](#)

Ms. Miller-Austin provided a Sectional Analysis (copy on file):

Section 1

- Establishes the Alaska Military Affairs Commission in the Office of the Governor
- Defines the Commission membership to include nine voting members
- Sets (staggered) three-year member terms
- Details Commission meetings, quorum rules, and authorizes per diem and travel expenses
- Enumerates the duties of the Commission

Section 2

- Ensures that the administrative support for the Commission is held within the Office of the Governor
- Sunsets the Alaska Military Commission on June 30, 2030

Section 3

- Adds uncodified law regarding the initial terms of Alaska Military Affairs Commission members

Senator Kiehl queried the definitions of "armed forces" and "military installations."

Representative Stapp responded that he did not know that the Coast Guard did not fall under the Department of Defense, so that was amended on the House side. He wanted to be sure that all branches were included in the commission.

Senator Bishop surmised that it related to the economic indicators in Kodiak at only nineteen personnel.

Representative Stapp replied in the affirmative.

[2:14:40 PM](#)

KELLY HOWELL, CHIEF OF STAFF, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (via teleconference), spoke to the fiscal note.

[2:15:57 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson OPENED public testimony.

[2:16:10 PM](#)

BRYCE WARD, MAYOR, FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

Senator Merrick wondered whether there was a concern that the lieutenant governor may not have time to participate.

Representative Stapp responded that the intent was to have a centralized weight, and the other states used executive members a role on the commission.

Co-Chair Olson CLOSED public testimony.

CSHB 155(FIN)am was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

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ADJOURNMENT

[2:20:28 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

