

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 3, 2023

1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Matt Claman, Chair
Senator Jesse Kiehl, Vice Chair
Senator James Kaufman
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Löki Tobin

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS:

State Commission for Human Rights
Shiela Cernich - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Alaska Police Standards Council
Rebecca Hamon - King Salmon
Daniel Carothers - Douglas
Stephen Dutra - North Pole

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

SENATE BILL NO. 37

"An Act establishing the crime of airbag fraud."

- MOVED SB 37 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 37

SHORT TITLE: CRIME COUNTERFEIT/NONFUNCTIONING AIRBAG

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) CLAMAN

01/18/23	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/13/23
01/18/23	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

01/18/23 (S) JUD
01/27/23 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
01/27/23 (S) Heard & Held
01/27/23 (S) MINUTE(JUD)
03/22/23 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/22/23 (S) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
03/29/23 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/29/23 (S) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
04/03/23 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

SHIELA CERNICH, Appointee
State Commission of Human Rights
Office of the Governor
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the Alaska Commission for Human Rights.

REBECCA HAMON, Appointee
Alaska Police Standards Council,
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
King Salmon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

DANIEL CAROTHERS, Appointee
Alaska Police Standards Council
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Douglas, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

STEPHEN DUTRA, Appointee
Alaska Police Standards Council
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

ACTION NARRATIVE

1:30:55 PM

CHAIR MATT CLAMAN called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kaufman, Kiehl, Giessel, Tobin and Chair Claman.

[1:31:42 PM](#)

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS
ALASKA STATE COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ALASKA POLICE STANDARDS COUNCIL

CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of the confirmation hearings for the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights and the Alaska Police Standards Council. He stated that the Senate President referred the following Governor's appointments to the Judiciary Committee: the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights and the Alaska Police Standards Council. He noted that members received resumes or applications from each appointee. He noted that the appointees were online and would testify.

He opened public testimony.

[1:32:03 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked Shiela Cernich, appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights, to provide her testimony.

[1:32:17 PM](#)

SHIELA CERNICH, Appointee, State Commission for Human Rights, Anchorage, Alaska, reported living in Anchorage for approximately 35 years. She stated that she retired in 2019 after working for 30 years as a union electrical contractor. She mentioned her experience managing a diverse group of people. She spoke about the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and recalled watching the protests and learning about discrimination. She stated that discrimination is still present today. She stated that the State Commission for Human Rights provides a voice and platform for those who feel they have been discriminated against. She announced that she has a resolute and thorough work ethic. Her life experiences will be an asset to the commission.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked if this was her first or a subsequent appointment to the commission.

MS. CERNICH replied that this was her first appointment.

[1:34:07 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked about a recent United States Supreme Court ruling related to sexual orientation and gender-based discrimination in the workplace. He asked Ms. Cernich if she was familiar with the ruling.

MS. CERNICH replied in the affirmative.

SENATOR KIEHL understood that the Alaska Attorney General provided guidance to the State Commission for Human Rights about discrimination. He wondered if the guidance from the Attorney General was absent, would Ms. Cernich share the opinions handed down by the United States Supreme Court.

MS. CERNICH replied that "people are people" and everyone deserves the right to be protected from discrimination as it is currently stated by law. She explained that she intends to obey the current law and would alter her beliefs as the law changes.

SENATOR KIEHL appreciated the fair answer to a delicate question.

[1:36:27 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked Rebecca Hamon, appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council, to provide her testimony.

[1:36:53 PM](#)

REBECCA HAMON, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, King Salmon, Alaska, stated she was first appointed in 2011. As a 25-year Alaska resident, she stated that she fell in love with Alaska and her community. She reported working in advocacy for an organization known as Safe and Fear Free Environment. She stated that she provides advocacy for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. She works as a legal advocate and provides direct services covering multiple boroughs. She initially served on the council to better understand law enforcement challenges in small communities. She stressed the need for high-quality peace officers serving Alaskan communities. She reported that she was elected vice-chair of the council and enjoys her time serving. She mentioned ongoing projects such as regulation revisions and service enhancements for optimal police services.

[1:40:07 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked if Governor Parnell appointed Ms. Hamon in 2011 for a three year term.

MS. HAMON replied that she was appointed for a four year term.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked if she was re-appointed by Governor Walker in 2015 and then re-appointed by Governor Dunleavy in 2019.

MS. HAMON responded in the affirmative.

[1:41:01 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked Daniel Carothers, Appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council, to provide his testimony.

[1:41:05 PM](#)

DANIEL CAROTHERS, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council Douglas, Alaska, stated that this was his first appointment to the Alaska Police Standards Council. He announced that he lived in Alaska for 47 years and served with the Department of Corrections for 28 years in multiple positions overseen by the council. He remarked on his experience working as a correctional officer, institutional probation officer, field probation officer, and superintendent, all of which are overseen by the Alaska Police Standards Council. He stated that he served as deputy commissioner for a short period. He reported retiring in 2005 when he transitioned to providing polygraphs for field probation, sex offender counseling, and public defender offices. He remarked that his background is diverse and well-suited for the Alaska Police Standards Council. He noted that he lived in Bethel for six years and was familiar with the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program. He stated that he also worked with the Parole Board as an institutional parole officer.

[1:44:30 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked what changes he would like to see in the council's scope. He wondered specifically about additional or ongoing training.

MR. CAROTHERS replied that the Alaska Police Standards Council has specific guidelines related to training requirements. He emphasized that parole and correction officers have challenging jobs. He opined that extending the training at the academy might offer greater advantages for correction officers encountering current threats. He spoke about recruitment challenges. He opposed efforts to lower academy standards. He opined that standards should be increased rather than decreased. He discerned that alternative solutions to recruitment problems exist.

[1:47:24 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked if he was based in Southeast Alaska.

MR. CAROTHERS answered that he lives in Douglas, Alaska.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked Stephen Dutra, Appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council, to provide his testimony.

[1:47:59 PM](#)

STEPHEN DUTRA, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, North Pole, Alaska stated that he was initially appointed to the council by Governor Walker in 2018 and reappointed by Governor Dunleavy in 2019. He stated that he is a twenty-plus year resident of Alaska. He reported working as a police chief for more than a decade and a police officer for over 27 years. He revealed that he served in North Pole for 24 years and worked for three years in Yakutat. He stated that he is the president of the Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police and a board member of the Alaska Police Officers Association.

CHAIR CLAMAN thanked Mr. Dutra for his continued service on the Alaska Police Standards Council.

[1:49:35 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked about further public testimony for any of the four appointees. After ascertaining that no one in the room or online wished to testify, he closed public testimony on the governor appointees.

[1:50:23 PM](#)

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

Alaska State Commission for Human Rights
Shiela Cernich - Anchorage

Alaska Police Standards Council
Rebecca Hamon - King Salmon
Daniel Carothers - Douglas
Stephen Dutra - North Pole

Signing the reports 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.

CHAIR CLAMAN announced that without objection, the names would be forwarded.

SB 37-CRIME COUNTERFEIT/NONFUNCTIONING AIRBAG

[1:51:07 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 37 "An Act establishing the crime of airbag fraud."

He stated that this was the second hearing of SB 37 in the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee. He reported that his office did not receive amendments for SB 37. He asked committee members for questions or comments. Seeing none, he asked Senator Kiehl for a motion.

[1:51:29 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL moved to report SB 37, work order 33-LS0277\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

CHAIR CLAMAN found no objection and SB 37 was reported from the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee.

[1:51:59 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Claman adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 1:51 p.m.