

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 21, 2023

3:29 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Kelly Merrick

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Matt Claman, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNOR APPOINTEES

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR SUCCESSOR

Commissioner Jason Brune

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

ALASKA POLICE STANDARDS COUNCIL

Rebecca Hamon - King Salmon
Steve Dutra - North Pole
Daniel Carothers - Douglas

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JASON BRUNE, Commissioner
Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the appointee for Lieutenant Governor Successor.

REBECCA HAMON, Appointee
Alaska Police Standards Council

Department of Public Safety (DPS)
King Salmon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified for reappointment to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified for reappointment 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 public seat on the Alaska Police Standards Council.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:32:39 PM](#)

CHAIR SCOTT KAWASAKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:29 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Merrick, Bjorkman, and Chair Kawasaki. Senator Wielechowski arrived soon thereafter.

CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNOR APPOINTEES **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR SUCCESSOR** **ALASKA POLICE STANDARDS COUNCIL**

[3:33:30 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of the Lieutenant Governor Successor and welcomed Commissioner Jason Brune to the witness table.

[3:33:42 PM](#)

JASON BRUNE, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Juneau, Alaska, testified as the appointee for Lieutenant Governor Successor. He stated that he has been proud to serve under Governor Dunleavy since the first day of the governor's first term in 2018. He spoke about his efforts to earn the legislature's trust over the last four years and that one of his proudest moments was when former Senator Begich stated on the record that he regretted not voting for his confirmation. He is honored to be selected as the lieutenant

governor's successor, but he prays it is never necessary. He offered to answer questions.

[3:34:22 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI joined the committee.

[3:36:00 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked, should he assume to the role of lieutenant governor, if there were things he would change within the Division of Elections.

COMMISSIONER BRUNE responded that he would rely on legislators to offer suggestions if changes need to be made.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI noted that the new director of the Division of Elections (DOE) mentioned the possibility of the state dropping its membership in the nonprofit Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which is the organization that works with other member states to verify peoples' addresses to ensure they aren't voting in multiple jurisdictions. He asked Commissioner Brune for his position on the matter.

COMMISSIONER BRUNE said he finds the relationships he has with other states valuable, and he believes that ensuring that people don't vote multiple times in multiple jurisdictions is important. However, he would need to follow up with a response because he wasn't familiar with ERIC and what DOE previously presented to the committee.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if he would advocate to eliminate Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) if he were to become lieutenant governor.

COMMISSIONER BRUNE said he'd leave that decision to the people to speak through the current initiative to repeal RCV or to the legislature to take action through the legislative process.

[3:39:48 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened public testimony on the appointment of Commissioner Brune as Lieutenant Governor Successor; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[3:40:35 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK moved to forward the following name to a joint session for consideration:

Lieutenant Governor Successor

Commissioner Jason Brune - Juneau

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 KAWASAKI stated that without objection the name would be forwarded.

[3:41:07 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked Rebecca Hamon to introduce herself and tell the committee why she wanted to continue to serve on the Alaska Police Standards Council.

[3:41:48 PM](#)

REBECCA HAMON, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety (DPS), King Salmon, Alaska, testified for reappointment to the Alaska Police Standards Council. She stated that she has served on the council since she was first appointed by Governor Parnell. The council has a good process to help the state have high-quality, well-trained police that the people can support and trust. The council also works to ensure that this is a good career. She would like to continue to work on the regulations package in process to ensure the changes make sense for the state.

[3:44:27 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked her to talk about the Crisis Now model where a social worker or somebody who has behavioral health training is called to evaluate the situation and decide whether law enforcement is needed.

MS. HAMON said she works as an advocate for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and many of the people she works with struggle with mental health issues or active addiction. Interactions with law enforcement are often difficult and her organization often looks for other options than the police coming in "hot" when there's a call. She said the King Salmon community is working to develop a system that relies on peer support and crisis advocates to be with the police in response situations that have a mental health component. She continued that a team approach also seems important to change the trajectory of teen suicide.

[3:46:57 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI invited Chief Dutra to identify himself and tell the committee why he wants to continue to serve on the Alaska Police Standards Council.

[3:47:08 PM](#)

CHIEF STEVE DUTRA, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety (DPS), North Pole, Alaska, stated that he would like to continue to serve on the Alaska Police Standards Council for much the same reason as Ms. Hamon. It's a noble cause and he believes in the mission of maintaining the standards of police officers statewide. He said it's a lot of work but it's rewarding. He likes to hold the line on police standards and after 27 years he has the experience and training to know what it takes to be a good officer.

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked what the dropout rate is for applicants who don't go on to be a police officer.

CHIEF DUTRA said it's about half but that number is trending up. He added that it's very difficult to keep officers until the end of their careers.

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked why that might be.

CHIEF DUTRA attributed it to the lack of a retirement benefit and that public service doesn't have the draw it once did. He said more needs to be done to incentivize the career because people are opting for careers that are more lucrative.

[3:50:00 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK asked him to share his thoughts on the statewide policy manual.

CHIEF DUTRA said he's very supportive. It's used by 38 states; it's beneficial to small departments that aren't capable of producing a police manual; it's been vetted and meets high police standards nationwide; it's been vetted judicially; and it helps an agency that is seeking accreditation for professional police standards.

[3:51:39 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened public testimony on the reappointment of Chief Dutra to the Alaska Police Standards Council; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[3:52:11 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked Daniel Carothers to identify himself and tell the committee about his interest in serving on the Alaska Police Standards Council.

[3:52:32 PM](#)

DANIEL CAROTHERS, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Douglas, Alaska, stated that he has lived in Alaska for 46 years and has a diverse background, primarily in different corrections positions throughout the state. He served as deputy commissioner for the Department of Corrections under this administration for several months before he retired, and just before that he ran a polygraph business that included counseling and field probation polygraphs. Currently he commercial fishes in the summer and works for a pharmaceutical company to try to help people who have been incarcerated address their drug addictions.

[3:56:19 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK referenced a July 31, 2018 letter he wrote about repealing Senate Bill 91. She asked if he feels the changes the legislature has made in law enforcement policy, including the repeal of Senate Bill 91, have made a positive impact.

MR. CAROTHERS said the changes are definitely better than the original law, but it's not perfect.

[3:57:51 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened public testimony on the appointment of Daniel Carothers to the Alaska Police Standards Council; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[3:58:45 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK moved to forward the following names to a joint session for consideration:

Alaska Police Standards Council

Rebecca Hamon - King Salmon

Steve Dutra - North Pole

Daniel Carothers - Douglas

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 KAWASAKI found no objection and the names were forwarded.

3:59:52 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 3:59 p.m.