

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

May 6, 2023

9:01 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair  
Senator Matt Claman, Vice Chair (via teleconference)  
Senator Jesse Bjorkman  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Senator Kelly Merrick (via teleconference)

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 141

"An Act establishing June 9 of each year as Don Young Day."

- MOVED HB 141 OUT OF COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 26 (TRB)

"An Act relating to the official languages of the State of Alaska; renaming the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council as the Council for Alaska Native Languages; and relating to the Council for Alaska Native Languages."

- MOVED CSHB 26 (TRB) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 17

"An Act relating to political contributions; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SB 17 OUT OF COMMITTEE

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3 (JUD) am

Encouraging Congress to pass the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act or a similar bill.

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 141

SHORT TITLE: ESTABLISHING DON YOUNG DAY

SPONSOR(s): RULES

03/27/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
03/27/23 (H) STA  
04/11/23 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
04/11/23 (H) Moved HB 141 Out of Committee  
04/11/23 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
04/14/23 (H) STA RPT 7DP  
04/14/23 (H) DP: STORY, ALLARD, ARMSTRONG,  
C.JOHNSON, CARPENTER, WRIGHT, SHAW  
04/20/23 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
04/20/23 (H) VERSION: HB 141  
04/21/23 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
04/21/23 (S) STA  
05/04/23 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
05/04/23 (S) Heard & Held  
05/04/23 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
05/06/23 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: HB 26

SHORT TITLE: COUNCIL FOR ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

SPONSOR(s): STORY

01/19/23 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23  
01/19/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/19/23 (H) EDC, FIN  
02/10/23 (H) TRB REPLACES EDC REFERRAL  
02/10/23 (H) BILL REPRINTED  
03/08/23 (H) TRB AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106  
03/08/23 (H) Heard & Held  
03/08/23 (H) MINUTE(TRB)  
03/13/23 (H) TRB AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106  
03/13/23 (H) Heard & Held  
03/13/23 (H) MINUTE(TRB)  
03/20/23 (H) TRB AT 3:30 PM DAVIS 106  
03/20/23 (H) Moved CSHB 26(TRB) Out of Committee  
03/20/23 (H) MINUTE(TRB)  
03/22/23 (H) TRB RPT CS(TRB) NEW TITLE 5DP  
03/22/23 (H) DP: CARPENTER, DIBERT, VANCE, ALLARD,  
MCCORMICK  
04/14/23 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519  
04/14/23 (H) Heard & Held  
04/14/23 (H) MINUTE(FIN)  
04/27/23 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519  
04/27/23 (H) Moved CSHB 26(TRB) Out of Committee

04/27/23 (H) MINUTE (FIN)  
04/28/23 (H) FIN RPT CS (TRB) NEW TITLE 10DP  
04/28/23 (H) DP: TOMASZEWSKI, CRONK, ORTIZ,  
COULOMBE, STAPP, GALVIN, HANNAN,  
JOSEPHSON,  
04/28/23 (H) D.JOHNSON, FOSTER  
05/03/23 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
05/03/23 (H) VERSION: CSHB 26 (TRB)  
05/04/23 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
05/04/23 (S) <Pending Referral>  
05/05/23 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
05/05/23 (S) STA, FIN  
05/05/23 (S) STA WAIVED PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE, RULE  
23  
05/06/23 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 17

SHORT TITLE: CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS  
SPONSOR (s): KAWASAKI

01/18/23 (S) PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23  
01/18/23 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/18/23 (S) STA, JUD  
04/27/23 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
04/27/23 (S) Heard & Held  
04/27/23 (S) MINUTE (STA)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE CRAIG JOHNSON  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 141 as House Rules Chair.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, District 3  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of HB 26.

MIRANDA WORL, Staff  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented the sectional analysis for HB 26 on behalf of the sponsor.

KAY LARSON-BLAIR, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony in support of HB 26.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:01:51 AM](#)

**CHAIR SCOTT KAWASAKI** called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Bjorkman, Wielechowski, Merrick (via testimony), Claman (via teleconference), and Chair Kawasaki.

**HB 141-ESTABLISHING DON YOUNG DAY**

[9:03:03 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of HOUSE BILL NO. 141 "An Act establishing June 9 of each year as Don Young Day."

[9:03:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRAIG JOHNSON, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, stated that this is a Rules Committee bill that was brought forward for all of Alaska

[9:04:12 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reopened public testimony on HB 141; finding none, he closed public testimony and solicited a motion.

[9:04:25 AM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN moved to report HB 141, work order 33-LS0669\B, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

CHAIR KAWASAKI found no objection and HB 141 was reported from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee.

**HB 26-COUNCIL FOR ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES**

[9:05:05 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 26(TRB) "An Act relating to the official languages of the State of Alaska; renaming the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council as the Council for Alaska Native Languages; and relating to the Council for Alaska Native Languages."

[9:05:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, District 3, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HB 26, introduced the legislation paraphrasing the following:

The Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council was created by the 27<sup>th</sup> Legislature. The Governor appointed five voting members, who are professional language experts and who represent diverse regions of the state. Additionally, there are two non-voting members. One member of the Senate, appointed by the Senate President and one member of the House, appointed by the Speaker. I have been fortunate to serve as the non-voting member from the House in the past legislature.

The Council provides recommendations and advice to both the Governor and Legislature on programs, policies, and projects, and to network and advocate in support of the Council's mission. The mission is to advocate for the survival and revitalization of Alaska Native languages through collaboration and sharing for all.

The bill before you, HB 26, came from the desire of the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council to do three things, which must be changed in statute:

1. Shorten the Council name,
2. Expand its membership, and
3. Update the official languages of Alaska list to include Indigenous languages that were left out.

The few seemingly small changes proposed in HB 26 have significant meaning to the Council.

The bill proposes a name change, simplifying it from the "Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council" to the "Council for Alaska Native Languages." This reflects the goal of sustaining and reinvigorating Alaska Native languages, a concept that goes beyond preservation. It also provides a name more fitting for the diverse range of work that the Council does.

Another request is to add two new members, from 5 to 7 voting members. Alaska has over 23 distinct languages,

and to be able to be inclusive of more languages the Council feels two more members would capture a greater perspective. Adding members allows for greater representation on the Council and expands the involvement to reach other regions of the state.

Finally, the bill revises the official list of languages to include those that were unintentionally omitted when Alaska Native languages were made co-official languages of Alaska in 2015. The current list of 20 Alaska Native languages included in statute is based on a 1974 map by Dr. Michael Krauss. We now know from research that there are at least 23 distinct, Alaska Native languages.

I urge the committee to pass this legislation request from the Council - Gunalchéesh.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY reviewed the material in the bill packets.

[9:09:21 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked Ms. Worl to present the sectional analysis.

[9:09:37 AM](#)

MIRANDA WORL, Staff, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented the sectional analysis for HB 26 on behalf of the sponsor.

#### Sectional Analysis House Bill 26

**Section 1:** Amends AS 44.12.310(a) to add Cup'ig and Wetał (Ts'etsa'ut) as official languages of Alaska, and divide Tanana into the Benhti Kokhwt'ana Kenaga' (Lower Tanana) and Sahcheeg xut'een xneege' (Middle Tanana) languages.

**Section 2:** Amends AS 44.33.520(a) to simplify the name of the Council from "Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council" to "Council for Alaska Native Languages."

**Section 3:** Amends AS 44.33.520(c) by changing voting members from "five" to "seven."

CHAIR KAWASAKI noted that two of the committee members heard the bill when they served in the other body.

[9:10:45 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI turned to invited testimony on HB 26. He recognized Kay Larson-Blair and read a brief biography.

[9:11:53 AM](#)

KAY LARSON-BLAIR, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that she serves on the Alaska Native Preservation and Advisory Council (ANPAC) and the Cultural Heritage Program Director for the Bristol Bay Foundation. She also works with elders and language speakers within the Togiak area of Bristol Bay. She expressed strong support for HB 26, describing it as a critical step forward for the state and its diverse communities and languages. She said Alaska is home to 23 known indigenous languages which in 2014 were designated the official languages of Alaska. HB 26 supports language revitalization and reclamation work and the Council for the Alaska Native Language can play a critical role in this effort. She said it's important to understand that there are unique dialects and variations of each of the languages spoken in communities and regions. The proposed changes in statute will help preserve cultural heritage and knowledge for future generations.

MS. LARSON-BLAIR described the importance of language preservation in combination with revitalization and reclamation. She pointed out that educators, political leaders, religious leaders, and the general public actively banished the use of Native languages until very recently. She encouraged the committee to support the bill to reflect the Council's diverse work, its need for more than five voting members, and the additional three languages not recognized in statute. She said many of the languages are endangered but they could come back; they aren't extinct, they're "sleeping." The new name for the Council reflects its broad scope and important mission to promote and preserve the many unique Native languages spoken throughout the state. This will help ensure these languages receive the support and resources they deserve.

She encouraged the committee to read the priorities the Council passed two years ago following the governor's state of emergency declaration. These include standardizing indigenous languages and public education and establishing pathways for Alaska Native language teacher certification. She suggested that all teachers in Alaska should have knowledge of Alaska Native languages, especially if they're teaching in the state's public schools and they're working with Alaska Native youth. She urged the committee to support HB 26 which will help ensure that Alaska's

diverse communities continue to thrive and the state remains a leader in language preservation and promotion.

CHAIR KAWASAKI found no questions.

[9:17:52 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI found no one in the room or online who wished to testify and he closed invited and public testimony on HB 26.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY thanked the committee for hearing the bill. It makes small changes but they're very important to the Council.

CHAIR KAWASAKI solicited a motion.

[9:18:31 AM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN moved to report HB 26, work order 33-LS0266\B, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[9:18:46 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI found no objection and CSHB 26(TRB) was reported from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee.

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[9:19:04 AM](#)

At ease

### **SB 17-CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS**

[9:20:23 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 17 "An Act relating to political contributions; and providing for an effective date."

[9:20:42 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened invited and public testimony on SB 17; finding none, he closed public testimony and solicited a motion.

[9:20:58 AM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI moved to report SB 17, work order 33-LS0183\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[9:21:13 AM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI found no objection and SB 17 was reported from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee.

9:22:24 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 9:22 a.m.