

BALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

February 22, 2024

1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator James Kaufman, Chair

Senator Löki Tobin

Senator Robert Myers

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator David Wilson, Vice Chair

Senator Jesse Kiehl

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

EO 131 REORGANIZING THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY OPERATIONS BOARD

- MOVED OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE SPECIAL CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 8

Disapproving Executive Order No. 131.

- MOVED SSCR 8 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SSCR 8

SHORT TITLE: DISAPPROVE EO 131

SPONSOR(S): RULES

02/12/24 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

02/12/24 (S) TRA

02/22/24 (S) TRA AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on EO 131.

JAN WRENTMORE, representing self

Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to EO 131.

NANCY BIRD, representing self
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to EO 131.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:31:07 PM](#)

CHAIR JAMES KAUFMAN called the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Tobin, Myers and Chair Kaufman.

EO 131 REORGANIZING THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY OPERATIONS BOARD

[1:31:42 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN announced the consideration of Executive Order No. 131 - Reorganizing the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board.

This is the second hearing of EO 131. It is the intention of the committee to take questions from members, public testimony, and look to the will of the committee.

[1:32:38 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN said that from an email she received her current understanding of the operating board's leadership had been incorrect; she asked to know who the current chair and vice chair of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board (AMHOB) are.

[1:33:01 PM](#)

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Juneau, Alaska, replied that the current chair of AMHOB is Shirley Marquardt, and the vice-chair is Ed Page.

[1:33:24 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN apologized for sharing incorrect information at the last meeting on this subject.

[1:33:40 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN opened public testimony on EO 131.

[1:34:04 PM](#)

JAN WRENTMORE, representing self, Skagway, Alaska, testified in opposition to EO 131. She expressed that the Alaska Marine Highway plays a significant role in the Skagway community's economy, emphasizing its consistent year-round impact, even

though it may not attract as many visitors as cruise ships. The Alaska Marine Highway facilitates access to healthcare and enables businesses to plan for the tourist season. Reflecting on its struggles over recent decades, she identified shifting political agendas as the primary challenge, noting the turnover of governors and Department of Transportation officials, each bringing new perspectives. She advocated for maintaining a diverse and knowledgeable board drawn from various communities and disciplines to ensure a stable and reliable course for the marine highway.

[1:35:57 PM](#)

NANCY BIRD, representing self, Cordova, Alaska, testified in opposition to EO 131. She expressed worry regarding Executive Order 131, citing her nearly 50-year history as a user of the Alaska Marine Highway system. She voiced concern that transferring the appointment authority of four members of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board from the house speaker and senate president's oversight could restrict rather than broaden diversity in appointments. Additionally, she noted discrepancies between board recommendations found on the AMHOB website and assessments provided by the Department of Transportation commissioner during the last meeting.

MS. BIRD noted a lack of specific instances where the board failed to provide expected recommendations and advice. She referred to pages 8-9 of the August 25, 2023, board minutes where three significant motions were recorded, although she remains unsure of their implications. Despite wanting to trust the DOT commissioner's assertion that everyone aims for the success of the marine highway system, she recalled a situation three years prior when the government shut it down, severing access to Prince William Sound. She urged an end to disputes over board membership to refocus efforts on revitalizing the ferry system. She advocated for support of SSCR 8 while expressing disapproval of EO 131.

[1:38:24 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN closed public testimony on EO 131.

[1:38:41 PM](#)

At ease

SSCR 8-DISAPPROVE EO 131

[1:38:51 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE SPECIAL CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 8 Disapproving Executive Order No. 131.

[1:39:14 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN solicited a motion.

[1:39:20 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN moved EO 131 with individual recommendations be reported from committee and SSCR 8, work order 33-LS1336\A, with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s) be reported from committee for further consideration in the Senate.

[1:39:53 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN found no objection and pursuant to Uniform Rule 49(a)(4), EO 131 and SSCR 8 were reported from committee for further consideration in the Senate.

[1:40:25 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kaufman adjourned the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting at 1:40 p.m.