

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

May 13, 2025

8:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Rebecca Himschoot, Co-Chair
Representative Donna Mears, Co-Chair
Representative Carolyn Hall
Representative Ky Holland
Representative Mike Prax

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Justin Ruffridge

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 207

"An Act relating to a matching grant program for fire station construction and renovation; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 207 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 184

"An Act relating to the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority; and relating to workforce housing development projects."

- MOVED CSHB 184(CRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 126

"An Act relating to the reinstatement of Native corporations; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 126(TRB) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 207

SHORT TITLE: FIRE STATION GRANT PROGRAM

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(S) SCHRAGE BY REQUEST

04/25/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

04/25/25 (H) CRA, FIN
05/06/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
05/06/25 (H) Heard & Held
05/06/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
05/08/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
05/08/25 (H) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
05/13/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 184

SHORT TITLE: AIDEA FINANCE WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOP.
SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) STORY

04/11/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/11/25 (H) CRA, L&C
04/24/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
04/24/25 (H) Heard & Held
04/24/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
04/29/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
04/29/25 (H) Heard & Held
04/29/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
05/01/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
05/01/25 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
05/08/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
05/08/25 (H) Heard & Held
05/08/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
05/13/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 126

SHORT TITLE: REINSTATEMENT OF NATIVE CORPS
SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) FOSTER

03/05/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/05/25 (H) TRB, CRA
05/01/25 (H) TRB AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
05/01/25 (H) Moved CSHB 126(TRB) Out of Committee
05/01/25 (H) MINUTE(TRB)
05/02/25 (H) TRB RPT CS(TRB) NEW TITLE 6DP 1NR
05/02/25 (H) DP: MOORE, UNDERWOOD, SCHWANKE, BURKE,
STORY, DIBERT
05/02/25 (H) NR: CARRICK
05/08/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
05/08/25 (H) Heard & Held
05/08/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
05/13/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE CALVIN SCHRAGE
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, gave a recap of HB 207.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, gave a recap of the bill.

PAUL LABOLLE, Staff
Representative Neal Foster
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a summary of CSHB 126(TRB) on behalf of Representative Foster, prime sponsor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:05:52 AM](#)

CHAIR DONNA MEARS called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Representatives Hall, Holland, Himschoot, and Mears were present at the call to order. Representative Prax arrived as the meeting was in progress.

^#hb207

HB 207-FIRE STATION GRANT PROGRAM

[8:07:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 207, "An Act relating to a matching grant program for fire station construction and renovation; and providing for an effective date."

[8:07:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CALVIN SCHRAGE, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, gave a recap of HB 207, which relates to grants for fire stations in Alaska. The bills would allow the state to create a structured program from which to fund the renovation or construction of fire halls throughout the state. He highlighted a need for this program in Ketchikan, for example, where old sewage lines are backing up into the fire station, as well as

fire halls that have been damaged from prior earthquakes or have asbestos in their building materials. He reiterated that the bill would create a structured way to identify need and make long-range plans on how to fund facilities and depoliticize the process.

8:10:12 AM

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether the sponsor had considered adding this to the "community grants section" to ensure that all community capital requests are considered and prioritized.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE said that question prompted some thought, but he opted to keep it as a standalone grant program to avoid complication.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX contended that if the program were to be depoliticized, there needs to be an evaluation prioritization procedure established ahead of time.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE agreed and expressed his hope that [the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED)] would opt to draft regulation for the program. Alternatively, the Fire Chiefs Association could be used as a secondary means to help score and prioritize these structures.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether DCCED would have the expertise to understand the needs of the fire departments. He suggested that the program should instead go through the State Fire Marshal's office within Department of Public Safety (DPS), or Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF).

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE opined that DCCED is equipped to handle the program given its experience with grants. He added that the department could coordinate and information share with other agencies to accomplish the task.

CO-CHAIR MEARS pointed out that it would reinforce DCCED as a community liaison and a touchstone for projects.

8:15:31 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND referenced the letter from Director Moller, Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA), [included in the committee packet] and asked whether the bill language should be modified to suggest that funding for fire

stations would meet the criteria for funding, or whether there's enough flexibility in the existing language.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE said he was pleased with DCRA's response with respect to flexibility for integrated facilities because it acknowledges that fire stations are often co-located with emergency management services and dispatch services, and would fit within the proposed program, per Alaska statutes. He opined that the bill would meet the need of the grant requests.

[8:18:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HALL asked for the bill sponsor's thoughts on Ms. Moller's suggestion that if the legislature intends for multiple funding sources to be used, it would be best to outline that in statute.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE said adding more specifics into statute would almost certainly provide further clarity, but the document also acknowledges that it could be done through regulation. He stated that the intent is to provide flexibility that allows for multiple funding streams for the construction.

CO-CHAIR MEARS reiterated that the intent is to use multiple sources of funding.

[8:20:38 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 8:20 a.m.

[8:21:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT moved to report HB 207 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX objected. He opined that there's no real hurry to establish this fund and shared his belief that the program could be made better with specific instructions, integration into the community grant fund, and an established process for the grant applications. Further, he opined that the program would not depoliticize the process and shared an example.

CO-CHAIR MEARS pointed out that the way projects are funded is changing, and this would be a way to identify statewide needs. For that reason, she opined that it would accomplish the goal of depoliticization.

[8:24:32 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Hall, Holland, Himschoot, and Mears voted in favor of reporting HB 207 out of committee. Representative Prax voted against it. Therefore, HB 207 was reported out of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee by a vote of 4-1.

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[8:25:10 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:25 a.m. to 8:27 a.m.

^#hb184

HB 184-AIDEA FINANCE WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOP.

[8:27:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 184, "An Act relating to the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority; and relating to workforce housing development projects."

[8:27:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, gave a recap of the bill. She said Alaska's housing crisis continues to contribute to the outmigration of Alaskan individuals and families, which in turn, contributes to the workforce shortage and highlights the need for multi-unit worker housing. The bill seeks to expand the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA's) purpose in statute. Section 1 adds to the purpose of AIDEA to create additional employment by providing various means of financing and facilitating the financing of construction of new workforce housing facilities containing five or more dwelling units. AIDEA has shown support for the bill despite not engaging in financing workforce housing for some time.

[8:28:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HALL moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HB 184, labeled 34-LS0855\A.1, Walsh, 5/9/25, which read:

Page 1, lines 1 - 2:

Delete "the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority; and relating to"

Insert "financing by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority for"

Co-CHAIR MEARS objected for purposes of discussion,

[8:29:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HALL explained that Amendment 1 proposes a title change to tighten the purpose of the bill. It would make clear that the bill is about the financing of workforce housing loans with AIDEA.

CO-CHAIR MEARS removed her objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[8:29:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HALL moved to adopt Amendment 2 to HB 184, labeled 34-LS0855\A.2, Walsh/ 5/8/25, which read:

Page 6, line 28, through page 7, line 1:
Delete all material.

CO-CHAIR MEARS objected for purposes of discussion.

[8:29:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HALL explained that Amendment 2 deletes Section 5, which provides the definition that sets financial limits as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (USHUD). The change was requested because the definition of workforce housing was seen as an unnecessary barrier, as the monitoring of tenants' income could deter developers from applying for the program. Furthermore, there's no need to put restrictions on affordable housing, because when a typical market rate apartment building is constructed, it's already providing affordable housing.

CO-CHAIR MEARS removed her objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 2 was adopted.

[8:31:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT moved to report HB 184, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying

fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 184(CRA) was reported out of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.

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[8:31:54 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:31 a.m. to 8:33 a.m.

^#hb126

HB 126-REINSTATEMENT OF NATIVE CORPS

[8:33:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEARS announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 126, "An Act relating to the reinstatement of Native corporations; and providing for an effective date." [Before the committee was CSHB 126(TRB).]

[8:34:06 AM](#)

PAUL LABOLLE, Staff, Representative Neal Foster, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Foster, prime sponsor, said the bill would reinstate Native village corporations that were involuntarily dissolved. He added that the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs committee substitute (CS) made it so this could be resolved administratively, without legislation, by DCCED.

[8:34:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT moved to report CSHB 126(TRB) out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 126(TRB) was reported out of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.

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[8:36:36 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.