

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 12, 2025

2:25 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Andrew Gray, Chair
Representative Chuck Kopp, Vice Chair
Representative Ted Eischeid
Representative Genevieve Mina
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Jubilee Underwood

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Mia Costello

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Chief Administration Law Judge

Joan Wilson -Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

State Board of Parole

Leitoni Tupou

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 62

"An Act relating to sexual assault examination kits; establishing the sexual assault examination kit tracking system; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PRESENTATION(S): IMPACTS OF FEDERAL WORKFORCE LAYOFFS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 62

SHORT TITLE: SEXUAL ASSAULT EXAMINATION KITS/TRACKING
SPONSOR(S): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/22/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(H)	JUD, FIN
02/05/25	(H)	JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/05/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/05/25	(H)	MINUTE(JUD)
03/12/25	(H)	JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

JOAN WILSON, Appointee
Chief Administrative Law Judge
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the Chief Administrative Law Judge appointee.

LEITONI TUPOU, Appointee
State Board of Parole
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the governor's appointee to the State Board of Parole.

DAVID KANARIS, Chief
Forensic Laboratories
Department of Public Safety
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 62.

ISAAC SMOLDON, Communications Director
My House
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 62.

PALOMA HARBOUR, Division Director
Division of Employment and Training Services
Department of Labor & Workforce Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on unemployment insurance eligibility during the Impacts of Federal Workforce Layoffs presentation.

TAYLOR WEST, Employment Security Analyst III
Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the Impacts of Federal Workforce Layoffs presentation.

BROCK WILSON, Professor
Institute of Social and Economic Research
University of Alaska Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on the economic contributions of the federal workforce during the Impacts of Federal Workforce Layoffs presentation.

CHARLES WARREN HILL, representing self
Lake Clark, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the Impacts of Federal Workforce Layoffs presentation.

ANDREW DIMOND, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the Impacts of Federal Workforce Layoffs presentation.

AARON LAMBERT, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the Impacts of Federal Workforce Layoffs presentation.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[2:25:42 PM](#)

CHAIR ANDREW GRAY called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 2:25 p.m. Representatives Mina, Eischeid, Vance, and Gray were present at the call to order. Representatives Kopp and Underwood arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :
Chief Administration Law Judge
State Board of Parole

[2:26:38 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY announced that the first order of business would be confirmation hearings.

[2:26:57 PM](#)

JOAN WILSON, Appointee, Chief Administrative Law Judge, gave a summary of her professional background [resume included in the committee packet]. She said she was pleased to be appointed to this position because she believes in providing due process to Alaskans and giving them the opportunity to share their stories. She explained that [the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH)] is the court that most Alaskans see if they have a problem with the state. She noted that the Chief Administrative Law Judge is a 5-year appointment, and her intention is to work with the Department of Law (DOL) to update OAH statutes.

[2:29:28 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY opened public testimony on Ms. Wilson's appointment. After ascertaining that no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[2:30:21 PM](#)

LEITONI TUPOU, Appointee, State Board of Parole, informed the committee that this would be his second term serving on the State Board of Parole. He summarized his professional background [resume included in the committee packet], including years of experience working for the Department of Corrections (DOC).

[2:31:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA inquired as to the biggest challenge facing the State Board of Parole.

MR. TUPOU said the biggest challenge is trying to figure out how to [rehabilitate] offenders who struggle with substance abuse. Another challenge is finding and funding providers.

[2:32:47 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP asked whether a lack of community-based services would impact the parole board's decision to release an offender.

MR. TUPOU said it can to a certain degree. At times, if services are not available, the offender will serve their sentence and must find programming on their own upon release.

CHAIR GRAY opened public testimony on Mr. Tupou's appointment. After ascertaining that no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[2:35:23 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY moved to advance the confirmations of Joan Wilson, appointed as the Chief Administrative Law Judge, and Leitoni Tupou, appointee to the State Board of Parole, to the joint session of the House and Senate for consideration. He reminded members that signing the reports regarding appointment to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees, and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.h

[2:35:52 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 2:35 p.m. to 2:37 p.m.

HB 62-SEXUAL ASSAULT EXAMINATION KITS/TRACKING

[2:37:34 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 62, "An Act relating to sexual assault examination kits; establishing the sexual assault examination kit tracking system; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR GRAY resumed public testimony on HB 62, which had been left open from the hearing on 2/5/25.

[2:38:08 PM](#)

DAVID KANARIS, Chief, Forensic Laboratories, Department of Public Safety, testified in support of HB 62. He said the bill would establish new timelines and amend existing ones, codify the sexual assault kit tracking system into law, and provide additional proviso rights and transparency. He urged passage of HB 62 from committee.

[2:39:11 PM](#)

ISAAC SMOLDON, Communications Director, My House, testified in support of HB 62. He urged the committee to move the bill forward in support of its advocacy for sexual assault.

[2:40:16 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY closed public testimony on HB 62.

[HB 62 was held over.]

PRESENTATION(S): Impacts of Federal Workforce Layoffs

[2:40:24 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY announced that the final order of business would be the Impacts of Federal Workforce Layoffs presentation.

CHAIR GRAY made the following opening remarks:

We are here to examine the impacts of federal workforce reductions under the Trump administration. These cuts have disrupted public services and affected thousands of workers.

On March 5, 2025, VA Secretary Doug Collins announced 72,000 job cuts at the Department of Veterans Affairs, significantly reducing veteran employment in the federal workforce and threatening critical services for those who served.

In Alaska, agencies like the National Park Service face deep staffing cuts, jeopardizing the maintenance and accessibility of Denali, Katmai, Mendenhall Glacier, and Glacier Bay.

Tourism is a major driver of Alaska's economy, generating billions and supporting thousands of jobs. Layoffs at the National Park Service, Forest Service, and FAA could disrupt guided tours, air traffic safety, and businesses dependent on visitors, including lodges, fishing charters, and local retailers.

This hearing will examine these impacts.

[2:43:03 PM](#)

PALOMA HARBOUR, Division Director, Division of Employment and Training Services, Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD), provided brief opening remarks.

CHAIR GRAY noted that the purpose of the presentation was to give people an idea of what benefits they might be eligible for after layoff.

[2:44:03 PM](#)

MS. HARBOUR directed attention to a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Unemployment Insurance Eligibility" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She began on slide 2, "Monetary Eligibility," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Base wage period is the first four quarters of the five quarters preceding the claim

- Minimum base wage \$2,500 = Benefit of \$56 per week
- Every additional \$250 in wages = \$2 in benefits
- Maximum base wage \$42,000 = Benefit of \$370 per week
- Dependent allowance \$24 per, max of three

Number of weeks that can be claimed depends on how the wages are distributed across the base period quarters

- If all of the wages are earned in one quarter, then not eligible for benefits
- Minimum of 16 weeks and maximum of 26 weeks

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MS. HARBOUR continued to slide 3, "Non-Monetary Eligibility Requirements," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Able and Available for Full-Time Work

- Available means five days per week and customary hours for the occupation
- Able means physically and mentally able to perform the essential duties of the work
- Transportation (vehicle, bus, walking distance, and other methods)
- Actively seeking work based on experience and/or training
- Register for work and post an active resume in AlaskaJobs
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) participation, if selected

[2:49:22 PM](#)

MS. HARBOUR, in response to a question about how travel impacts eligibility, stated that the individual must be able and available to work, and if they're traveling out of Alaska, they wouldn't be available. She added that remote work would be taken into consideration when reviewing a claim. She directed a follow-up question to Mr. West.

[2:51:34 PM](#)

TAYLOR WEST, Employment Security Analyst III, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), explained that when an individual files for unemployment insurance, they must be able and available to seek and accept immediate fulltime work within 5 days of their customary work week. If an individual has traveled away from their area of residence, there is a presumption that the person would not be able to accept immediate work. If a claimant is living in a specific area, the expectation is that they are looking for work within that area.

[2:53:22 PM](#)

MS. HARBOUR turned to slide 4, "Separating from Employment," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Voluntary Discharge

- Burden is on the employee to establish good cause for leaving
- Also demonstrate attempts made to preserve employment

Benefit Impacts if No Good Cause

- 6 weeks disqualification
- 3 weeks reduction in benefits
- No extended benefits if available

Layoff = No Benefit Impact

Discharged due to Misconduct

- Burden on employer to establish misconduct
- Also demonstrate employee knew expectations and reasonable attempts to correct behavior
- Exception: gross misconduct e.g., theft

Benefit Impacts

- Six-weeks disqualification
- Three-weeks reduction in benefits

- No extended benefits if available
- Felony or theft connected to work = 52-week disqualification

[2:56:14 PM](#)

MS. HARBOUR, in response to a series of committee questions, confirmed that there had been an uptick in federal employment claims from 10 on average per month to 138; the Unemployment Trust Fund is overly solvent at this time, so the benefit costs could triple, and revenues would still cover the increase. She noted, however, that unemployment insurance claims hit a record low and staffing is at a very low level, so the biggest impact would be a delay in determinations.

[3:00:56 PM](#)

BROCK WILSON, Professor, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), directed attention to a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Economic Contributions of Federal Civilian Workers in Alaska" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He began with a bar chart on slide 9 that showed federal civilian workers as a proportion of the labor force by state in 2024. He turned to slide 11 that featured a bar chart showing employment of federal civilian workers in Alaska.

[3:04:55 PM](#)

MR. WILSON, in response to a question from Chair Gray, said the military is not included in the data. He continued to slide 12, which showed a bar chart of average monthly salary of federal civilian workers in Alaska in quarter 3 of 2024. Slide 15 showed a map of per capita federal civilian workers by census district in quarter 3 of 2024.

[3:07:48 PM](#)

MR. WILSON, in response to a question from Chair Gray, said the data on slide 15 is based on employment address. He continued the presentation with a bar chart on slide 17 that showed the count of federal civilian workers by agency in Alaska in 2024. Slide 19 featured a bar chart showing top 10 largest federal sub-agencies in Alaska, excluding military in 2024. Slide 20 featured a bar chart showing the count of federal civilian workers by experience in Alaska in 2024.

[3:12:25 PM](#)

MR. WILSON concluded the presentation on slide 21, "Conclusion," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Federal employment plays a significant role in the Alaskan economy
- Reduction in federal employment in Alaska would likely have a disproportionate impact compared to other states, given higher reliance on federal workers
- Industries in Alaska, particularly government-dependent sectors, would be significantly impacted by shifts in federal workforce levels
- Further analysis is needed to assess the long-term effects on wages, industry growth, and regional disparities across Alaska

[3:13:42 PM](#)

CHARLES WARREN HILL, representing self, former maintenance worker/supervisor for Lake Clark National Park & Preserve, detailed his role at the park and the events that took place surrounding his termination, as well as the impact it's had both personally and professionally. He shared that the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) terminated 20 percent of the Lake Clark employees and that any requests for information or employment documents have been stonewalled. He noted that no other employment opportunity in Port Alsworth would make up for the loss of income he's experienced and in order to do so, he would be forced to sell the land he's purchased and relocate.

[3:18:34 PM](#)

MR. HILL, in response to a question about the impact of layoffs on tourism, stated that no one is left with supervisory experience or with the experience to enforce Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) codes and fire codes. All that's left are janitors and laborers, and no one to answer phones. Visitor services would be very limited, he said.

[3:21:09 PM](#)

ANDREW DIMOND, representing self, former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) employee, detailed his role at NOAA and the events that took place surrounding his termination, as well as the impact it's had both personally and

professionally. He said the termination letter from DOGE stated that the agency no longer needed his skills or knowledge, despite his fisheries surveys providing critical information for Alaska. In response to committee questions, confirmed that he was providing important work with a specific skillset and that his colleagues would not have expected his termination. He shared his understanding that the terminations were carried out from the topmost level of NOAA. At this time, he was uncertain whether his immediate supervisor was trying to reverse the terminations. He added that he would resume his job given the chance.

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AARON LAMBERT, representing self, former fisheries management specialist at NOAA, detailed his role at NOAA and the events that took place surrounding his termination, as well as the impact it's had both personally and professionally. He said the firing of probationary employees would affect NOAA's ability to conduct the Cook Inlet stock assessment, respond to fisheries disaster declarations, and many other functions. He explained why the position was his "dream job" and read a statement from the termination letter, which he characterized as blatantly false, as he was selected precisely for his unique skills. He implored the legislature to reach out to industry and federal representatives to spread the message that NOAA needs their help. He said Alaskans depend on commercial, subsistence, and recreational fishing for their livelihoods and way of life.

[3:35:26 PM](#)

MR. LAMBERT, in response to committee questions, confirmed that similar positions are available at the state; however the pay is 40 percent less and it would take 10 years to reach the same level of compensation. He said legally, the state cannot fill this void because NOAA manages federal fisheries within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that are beyond the state's jurisdiction. He said he plans to stay in Alaska as long as his wife maintains her employment at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) under delegated authority for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

[3:40:20 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 3:40 p.m.

[3:40:28 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY thanked the federal employees for their service and apologized for their termination. He noted that additional testimony is available on the legislature's website [Bill Action and Status Inquiry System (BASIS)].

[3:42:15 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:42 p.m.