

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

February 20, 2025

3:25 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Ashley Carrick, Chair
Representative Andi Story, Vice Chair
Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Representative Ky Holland
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative Elexie Moore

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Sarah Vance

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 25

"An Act relating to disposable food service ware; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 10

"An Act relating to the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska."

- MOVED HB 10 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 21

"An Act relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age; and relating to confidentiality of voter registration and preregistration records of minors at least 16 years of age."

- MOVED CSHB 21(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 25

SHORT TITLE: DISPOSABLE FOOD SERVICE WARE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) JOSEPHSON

01/22/25 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25 (H) STA, L&C
02/18/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/18/25 (H) Heard & Held
02/18/25 (H) MINUTE(STA)
02/20/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 10

SHORT TITLE: ADD FACULTY MEMBER UNIV BOARD OF REGENTS
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CARRICK

01/22/25 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25 (H) STA, FIN
02/06/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/06/25 (H) Heard & Held
02/06/25 (H) MINUTE(STA)
02/13/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/13/25 (H) Heard & Held
02/13/25 (H) MINUTE(STA)
02/20/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 21

SHORT TITLE: VOTER PREREGISTRATION FOR MINORS
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STORY

01/22/25 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25 (H) STA, JUD
02/11/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/11/25 (H) Heard & Held
02/11/25 (H) MINUTE(STA)
02/13/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/13/25 (H) Heard & Held
02/13/25 (H) MINUTE(STA)
02/20/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, discussed HB 25.

PAMELA MILLER, Executive Director
Alaska Community Action on Toxics

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 25 and discussed the health implications of polystyrene.

DYANI CHAPMAN, State Director

Alaska Environment

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 25.

LINDSAY STOVALL

American Chemistry Council, Inc.

Sacramento, California

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 25.

BRITTNEY ROBINS, Assembly Member

Wrangell City Assembly

Wrangell, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 25.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:25:58 PM](#)

CHAIR ASHLEY CARRICK called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:26 p.m. Representatives Moore, McCabe, Holland, Himschoot, Story, and Carrick were present at the call to order.

HB 25-DISPOSABLE FOOD SERVICE WARE

[3:26:42 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 25, "An Act relating to disposable food service ware; and providing for an effective date."

[3:27:17 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, discussed HB 25. He responded to an outstanding question regarding enforcement that was brought up during the bill's previous committee hearing [2/18/25]. He remarked on permit requirements from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to operate restaurants and talked about the avenues for enforcement. He stated that DEC is currently "short-handed", and enforcement could be somewhat complicated.

He also remarked that a testifier was available to discuss the bill.

3:29:49 PM

CHAIR CARRICK opened public testimony on HB 25.

3:30:24 PM

PAMELA MILLER, Executive Director, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, discussed the health implications of polystyrene. She said that the Alaska Community Action on Toxic's strongly support HB 25 because it is an effective measure to protect health and reduce pollution on Alaska's land and in its water. She said there are multiple reasons why the group supports the legislation. The first is because the proposed bill would help address the adverse health effects of polystyrene. She said that it is a hazardous material that should not be used for either food or beverage containers. She said that research indicates that it is a carcinogen, and exposure increases the risk of certain cancers. She said that it can also damage white blood cells, the liver, nervous systems, distort vision and hearing, cause memory loss, and cause slower reaction times. In short, she said, it is a neurotoxin and should be avoided as a food packaging material. She stated that styrene can leak from packaging into the food, and this was especially pronounced when styrene encounters a hot item or fatty lipid rich content. She gave an example of a Styrofoam coffee cup filled with creamer and how leeching would occur.

MS. MILLER said that an additional point of concern was the environmental persistence of polystyrene. She remarked that these products do not degrade. She said once in the environment; polystyrene breaks down into microplastics and spreads easily due to its light weight. She said that it can be ingested by wildlife and causes a host of issues. She said that in landfills, polystyrene continues to release chemicals into the environment, and this can be especially problematic in rural Alaska where landfill controls are not in place. She said that when burned, polystyrene releases harmful chemicals into the air.

MS. MILLER also said that this product cannot be recycled. She said the health implications of its chemical composition are a major reason why this is the case. She said that chemical recycling, a process that converts plastics into fuel was a problem-ridden process that simply generates hazards in a

different fashion. She said that the only chemical recycling facility in the U.S. was closed due to problems. She said that as of June 2024, 11 states and 250 cities/counties have banned or placed restrictions on polystyrene. She said that McDonalds banned polystyrene foam in 1990. She said there are widely available and affordable substitutes to accommodate alternative choices. She said that Green Alaska Solutions is an Alaska-based business that provides such alternatives to Alaska businesses. She said that customers appreciate safer alternatives and are creating a demand for alternatives. She urged committee support for the bill because it is an important step in addressing the plastic crisis.

[3:39:13 PM](#)

DYANI CHAPMAN, State Director, Alaska Environment, testified in support of HB 25. She said that plastic pollution is a massive problem and if society continues its current trajectory, then there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050. She said that plastic pollution is on Alaska beaches, the streets and even in the water. She remarked that in 2023, Alaska Environment tested 39 different water sources in Southcentral Alaska and 100 percent of testing samples were contaminated with microplastics. She remarked that this included Anchorage tap water. She said that similar studies around the state have yielded similar results. She said that wildlife often mistakes plastics for food, which can have damaging impacts on their health. In both humans and wildlife alike, she said, microplastics have been linked to health ailments such as fertility issues, cancers, dementia, and other ailments. She said that several steps are needed to address the plastic pollution problem, and that polystyrene is among the "gnarliest" of plastics due to its breakdown, transportability and composition of the chemical styrene, a toxic chemical. She remarked that she was delighted to hear that many of the restaurants in Representative Vance's district had made a transition away from Styrofoam and said that it demonstrates that moving away from this product is possible. She said however, that polystyrene is still commonplace in the Anchorage area. In conclusion she said that nothing that is used for mere minutes should compromise environmental health for hundreds of years.

[3:41:47 PM](#)

LINDSAY STOVALL, American Chemistry Council, Inc., testified in opposition to HB 25. She said that the council believes that HB

25 takes the wrong approach to plastic mitigation and the broader impacts should be considered. She stated that compostable alternatives only degrade in a controlled composting environment, and they will ultimately end up in a landfill. She said that HB 25 favors one material over the other. She said that without a commercial composting facility, the alternative materials will ultimately end up in a landfill. She also said that styrene is a clear colorless liquid used to make durable products, and it is processed to make polystyrene, and it is a different product. Once converted she said that most styrene becomes inert. She claimed that low levels of styrene do not amount to a level that warrant concern as a carcinogen. She remarked that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) claimed that these products were safe and met current regulatory standards.

[3:45:41 PM](#)

BRITTNEY ROBINS, Assembly Member, City of Wrangell testified in support of HB 25. She remarked that she is incredibly passionate about the health and well-being of her community and planet. She remarked that out of the six eateries in Wrangell only two currently use polystyrene products for take-out. She remarked that she was the sous-chef and manager at one of the cafés and when the company was thinking about how to provide food for people, they avoided polystyrene due to the easily found information regarding its toxicity. She said that initially they had used plastic soup cups but given the inability to recycle on the island the café later moved to compostable bowls. She said that while the previous testifier said that commercial composting would be required for these products, the City of Wrangell had a garden that could handle composting duties. She said that the cost to change to compostable bowls did not indicate any need to change prices at the café.

[3:48:36 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 25.

[3:48:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said that one of the struggles with the proposed bill is the "price point" to change food wares. He said previously he had helped put together a small hot dog business and the difference between a white paper bag and a

brown paper bag was about 1.5 cents and it was enough to impact profit margins because of competition amongst other similar businesses. He asked about the price differentials when the café changed food ware from polystyrene to compostable products.

MS. ROBBINS responded that the café started with biodegradable products from the beginning. She said that getting products that could be composted locally was a focus due to the lack of recycling infrastructure on Wrangell Island. She said that when pricing out certain products from plastic to compostable the price difference came down to pennies and did not warrant a price change on the menu. She said that Wrangell is small and there were no competing businesses with the same service and design.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said that an issue amongst competing businesses is that a couple pennies can make a huge difference. He wondered whether there was a way to encourage compostables to be cheaper. He asked whether a multi-pronged approach, perhaps a credit could be issued for using compostables.

MS. ROBBINS responded that there are a lot more products available. She said that some of these alternatives are available on Amazon. She said that paper is safer than polystyrene. She remarked that she understood that additional pennies can amount to higher costs but affirmed that the well-being of the community was important.

[3:52:57 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK after ascertaining that there were no additional questions, set an amendment deadline and announced that HB 25 was held over.

HB 10-ADD FACULTY MEMBER UNIV BOARD OF REGENTS

[3:53:22 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 10, "An Act relating to the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska."

CHAIR CARRICK remarked that public testimony was already held, and no amendments had been submitted. She asked if any committee members had questions about HB 10. Hearing no questions, Chair Carrick entertained a motion.

[3:54:00 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR STORY moved to report HB 10 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 10 was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[3:54:27 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:54 p.m. to 3:57 p.m.

HB 21-VOTER PREREGISTRATION FOR MINORS

[3:57:34 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 21, "An Act relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age; and relating to confidentiality of voter registration and preregistration records of minors at least 16 years of age." [Before the committee, adopted on 2/13/25, was the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 21, Version 34-LS0241\N, Dunmire, 2/11/25 ("Version N").]

[3:58:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MOORE asked for clarification on the current bill of discussion.

[3:58:53 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease from 3:58 p.m. to 3:59 p.m.

[3:59:38 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK clarified the current bill, HB 21, [Version N].

[3:59:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY, in response to a previous question from Representative Vance regarding how many states had automatic voter registration for pre-registered minors, reported that 17 out of 22 states with youth preregistration had this feature. She remarked that she sent this list to her office and would later include it in other committee members' packets.

[4:00:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT moved to report CSHB 21 Version 34-LS0241\N, Dunmire, 2/11/25, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

[4:00:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE objected.

[4:01:09 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Story, Holland, Himschoot, and Carrick voted in favor of the motion to report CSHB 21, Version 34-LS0241\N, Dunmire, 2/11/25, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. Representatives McCabe and Moore voted against it. Therefore, CSHB 21(STA) was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee by a vote of 4-2.

[4:01:53 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:01 p.m. to 4:03 p.m.

[4:03:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK discussed upcoming committee meetings and their agenda.

[4:05:12 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.