

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

March 27, 2025

9:01 a.m.

[9:01:17 AM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Hoffman called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senator Donny Olson, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Mike Cronk
Senator James Kaufman
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Kelly Merrick

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Sponsor; Senator Matt Claman, Sponsor; Sarena Hackenmiller, Staff, Senator Matt Claman; Kris Curtis, Legislative Auditor, Alaska Division of Legislative Audit; Senator Loki Tobin, Sponsor; Louie Flora, Staff, Senator Loki Tobin.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Phillip Hokenson, Chair, Alaska Veteran's Advisory Council, Fairbanks; Colin Maynard, Alaska Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, Anchorage; Matt Barusch, Government Affairs and Advocacy Council for Interior Design Qualification; Casey Kee, Self, Anchorage; Barbara Cash, Self, Anchorage; Melissa Tribyl, Self, Anchorage; Ramona Schimscheimer, Board Member, American Institute of Architecture Alaska, Anchorage; Catherine Fritz, Self, Juneau; Dana Nunn, Chair, Government Advocacy Committee, American Society of Interior Designers, Alaska Chapter, Anchorage; Elizabeth Goebel, Self, Anchorage; Larry Cash, Self, Anchorage; Reilly Kosinski, Zender Environmental

Health and Research Group; Scott Klag, Product Stewardship Institute; Dr. Lynn Zender, Zender Environmental Health and Research Group; Katie Capozzi, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alaska Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage; Lorene Anelon, Iliamna Development Corporation, Anchorage; Katie Reilly, Vice President of Environmental Affairs, Consumer Technology Association, Arlington, Virginia; Fallon Gleason, Self, Anchorage; Vanessa Tahbone, Self, Nome; Enisha Elbih, Self, Anchorage; Benny Piscoya, Kawerak Inc., Nome.

SUMMARY

SB 30 STATE PARK PERMITS FOR DISABLED VETERANS

SB 30 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 54 EXT ARCH, ENG, SURVEY BRD; REG INT DESIGN

SB 54 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 61 ELECTRONIC DEVICE RECYCLING

SB 61 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Hoffman discussed the agenda. He noted that there were three bills for the committee's consideration, all of which were being heard for the first time. The committee's intent was to hear the bills and set them aside for further review.

#sb30

SENATE BILL NO. 30

"An Act making certain veterans eligible for a lifetime permit to access state park campsites and the parking and restrooms of developed facilities without charge; and providing for an effective date."

[9:02:28 AM](#)

SENATOR JESSE BJORKMAN, SPONSOR, conveyed that SB 30 was a bill that would allow disabled veterans that had honorably served the country to have access to Alaska's state parks

free of charge. The bill would allow for veterans to apply for a pass to the parks and would waive the fee. He believed that those that had served the nation in the military deserved the utmost respect and had earned the right to enjoy the natural beauty of the state.

Senator Bjorkman noted that disabled veterans currently qualified for a free annual pass limited to camping. The bill proposed a simpler system for passes that would automatically renew every five years and would re-issue once a veteran had updated their address. There was currently no provision for disabled veteran's to be able to park in the parks for free. He proposed that the bill would make it easier for veterans to visit the state parks for the day. He made note of individuals that were present for invited testimony and to answer questions.

[9:04:56 AM](#)

PHILLIP HOKENSON, CHAIR, ALASKA VETERAN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), relayed that he was an Army veteran and in addition to serving as chair of the Alaska Veteran's Advisory Council, he was a member of the Alaska Pioneer Home Advisory Board. He mentioned that Alaska was known for having the highest population of veterans per capita, and additionally had the most women veterans and the youngest population of veterans per capita. He queried the question of why so many veterans chose to relocate or be in the state and discussed the state's support and recognition of veterans. He mentioned dollars being spent in the economy, specifically in healthcare and at the University of Alaska.

Mr. Hokenson discussed the value veterans brought to the state. He mentioned the Veteran's Administration (VA) Community Care Program. He pointed out that while Alaska was a leader in many ways, he thought the state did not live up to a national standard in providing veterans with expanded access to state parks. He cited that the National Defense Authorization Act of 2002 had established free lifetime access to national parks for veterans. He thought that free lifetime access to Alaska's state parks as proposed in the bill would support the health and wellbeing of veterans. He urged the committee to pass the bill.

[9:07:44 AM](#)

Co-Chair Hoffman OPENED public testimony.

[9:08:03 AM](#)

Co-Chair Hoffman CLOSED public testimony.

Senator Kiehl addressed a fiscal note from the Department of Natural Resources, OMB Component 3001. The note showed a decrease of \$300,000 in program receipts revenues, and a corresponding increase of \$300,000 in Unrestricted General Funds (UGF) going forward.

[9:08:46 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:09:34 AM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Hoffman conveyed that the committee was expecting an updated fiscal note, which it would review at a later time.

Representative Bjorkman believed it was vitally important that the state's recognition of the state's veterans service match the value that other government entities extended to veterans. He thought providing a disabled veteran a parking pass to access the state's parks was a great way to recognize their service.

SB 30 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

[9:10:59 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:11:23 AM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb54

SENATE BILL NO. 54

"An Act relating to registered interior designers and interior design; extending the termination date of the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors; relating to the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors; establishing requirements for the practice of

registered interior design; relating to the practice of architecture, engineering, land surveying, landscape architecture, and registered interior design by partnerships; relating to liens for labor or materials furnished; relating to the procurement of landscape architectural and interior design services; and providing for an effective date."

[9:11:48 AM](#)

SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, SPONSOR, introduced the bill. He read from prepared remarks:

Senate Bill 54 will extend the statutory authorization for the Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors (AELS Board), add Registered Interior Designers to the board's jurisdiction, and make statutory changes requested by the board. This bill will allow the AELS Board to continue the important work of regulating design professionals in Alaska and add a qualified interior designer to the board.

The 2024 Sunset Audit of the AELS Board concluded that the board served the public's interest and recommended that we extend it for eight years. In this bill, the AELS Board is taking the opportunity to update outdated language based on their analysis since the last sunset audit.

Another important part of SB 54 is the opportunity for qualified interior designers to register with the AELS Board. Those wishing to practice registered interior design in buildings of public occupancy within a regulated scope of services impacting public health, safety, or welfare will now have a pathway to registration. SB 54 will allow designers practicing in public occupancy buildings to be qualified to do so, providing another measure of public safety protection and risk-mitigation for commercial buildings. It will increase the amount of design professionals able to work independently within the commercial real estate industry.

The National Council of Interior Design Qualifications (NCIDQ) Exam is a three-part, 11-hour examination that was established to identify interior design professionals with the skills and experience to take

on additional responsibility. This test is designed to assess the competency of candidates to protect the public through the practice of interior design, and covers subjects such as fire safety, ADA compliance, emergency egress, and material flammability. A candidate unable to prove their understanding of life safety, codes, and standards would be unlikely to pass the exam.

The goal is not to measure Interior Designers by the standards used by architects. While there are shared skillsets between architects and interior designers, interior designers focus on a narrower scope of work. By comparison, there are different licensing requirements for nurse practitioners and doctors, even though they sometimes perform similar activities. Currently, there is no state licensing of the interior design profession in Alaska. One consequence of this licensing gap is that Registered Interior designers do not have access to a construction stamp that would allow them to submit their work for permitting.

Passage of SB 54 will allow Alaska to join other forward-looking states in providing a construction document stamp to allow registered interior designers to submit their own work for permitting.

SB 54 does not restrict the requirements or daily practice for any other professional in design or construction including architects, engineers, contractors, trades people, decorators, or residential designers.

SB 54 is intended to be cost neutral to the State, as it is self-funded within the AELS Registration Board through application, registration, and renewal fees. As shown in the attached fiscal note, the passage of this bill would enable the AELS Registration Board to hire a much-needed additional Occupational Licensee Examiner, and the cost per licensee would only be an additional \$50 every two years.

We often talk of making Alaska open and ready for business. This bill turns those words into action and will make Alaska a better place to do business. Please join me in supporting SB 54.

9:16:00 AM

SARENA HACKENMILLER, STAFF, SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, addressed a Sectional Analysis (copy on file):

Section 1 AS 08.03.010. Termination dates for regulatory boards. Extends the AELS Board's termination date by eight years to June 30, 2033.

Section 2 AS 08.48.011(b). Board created. Adds two seats to the AELS board: one for an interior designer and one additional engineering seat. This addition creates separate seats for electrical and mechanical engineering, which currently share a seat. It also modifies the seat held by a mining engineer to include the option of either a mining engineer, or a petroleum engineer, or a chemical engineer.

Section 3 AS 08.48.011(b). Board created. This section affects the same statutes as Sec. 2. The interior designer sitting on the board must be registered once this act and board regulations go into place per Sec. 37.

Section 4 AS 08.48.055(b). Executive administrator of the board; investigator. Amends to add to statute a Range 23 salary for the AELS Board's Executive Administrator.

Section 5 AS 08.48.071(f). Records and reports. Adds registered interior designers to the list of professions about which the department shall assemble statistics relating to staff and board performance.

Section 6 AS 08.48.101. Regulations; policy guidance; bylaws; code of ethics. Adds a new subsection (c) authorizing the board to adopt regulations establishing a definition of interior design for the purpose of this chapter and requires that the definition include non-loadbearing interior construction, space planning, finish materials, and furnishings.

Section 7 AS 08.48.111. Power to revoke, suspend, or reissue certificate. Adds registered interior design to a list of professions that the board may suspend or refuse to renew, or whose certificate may be revoked,

or who may be reprimanded if found guilty of fraud, gross negligence, incompetence, or misconduct in accordance with a code of ethics as adopted by the board. This section also removes the requirement that the code of ethics be distributed in writing to every registrant and applicant.

Ms. Hackenmiller relayed that Section 8 through Section 12 were conforming changes. She continued to address the Sectional Analysis:

Section 13

AS 08.48.215(a). Retired status registration.

Distinguishes that retirement status under this chapter is available only for professional architects, engineers, land surveyors, or landscape architects.

Section 14

AS 08.48.218. Untitled practice of interior design.

Adds new section stating that unregistered individuals may practice interior design but shall refrain from using the title "registered interior designer."

Ms. Hackenmiller relayed that Section 15 through Section 21 were conforming changes. She continued to address the Sectional Analysis:

Section 22

AS 08.48.281. Prohibited practice.

Adds a new subsection (c) specifying that a person that is not registered with the board may not use the title "registered interior designer."

Section 23

AS 08.48.291. Violations and penalties.

Specifies that a person who practices or offers to practice registered interior design in the state without being registered or authorized to practice is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction is punishable by a fine of not more than \$10,000, or by imprisonment for not more than one year, or by both.

Ms. Hackenmiller relayed that Section 22 through Section 25 were conforming changes. She continued with Section 26:

Section 26

AS 08.48.321(b). Evidence of practice. Adds a new subsection (b) stating that using the title "registered interior designer" implies that the person is registered with the board.

Section 27 AS 08.48.331. Exemptions. New paragraph (15) aligns AS 08.48 with Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) statutes allowing certain ADEC employees who are authorized to construct conventional onsite wastewater systems to do so without a professional license if the wastewater system has a design flow of less than 500 gallons of wastewater a day.

Section 28 AS 08.48.331. Exemptions. In paragraph (11), adds the construction of natural gas pipelines to the conditions in which an employee or officer of a company operating in Alaska must have a professional license.

Section 29

AS 08.48.331. Exemptions.

Adds new subsection (c) allowing the Department of Environmental Conservation to adopt regulations limiting the locations in the state where exemption 15 may apply. Adds new subsection (d) defining the requirements that a utility company must meet to be exempted from having a professional license to operate under exemption 15.

Section 30

AS 08.48.341(4). Definitions.

Adds registered interior design to the definition of "certificate of authorization."

Section 31

AS 08.48.341(23). Definitions.

Distinguishes existing registrant types as "professional" and adds "registered interior designers" to the definition of "registrant."

Ms. Hackenmiller relayed that Section 33 through Section 38 were conforming under other titles outside AS 08.48. She continued to address the Sectional Analysis:

Section 39

AS 08.48.011. Board created.

Subsection (c) is repealed. Subsection (c) is related to board seats which no longer apply due to Sections 2 and 3 of this bill.

Ms. Hackenmiller specified that Section 40 and 41 established the effective date and grace period for registration of interior designers. She continued to address the Sectional Analysis:

Section 42 Effective date Clarifies that Sections 28 and 29 take effect January 1, 2026.

Section 43 Effective date Except as stated in Sections 41 and 42, this Act has an effective date of July 1, 2025.

[9:21:38 AM](#)

Senator Kiehl asked Ms. Hackenmiller about a description of the items that were considered "interior design" under the bill.

Ms. Hackenmiller identified that the definition of "registered interior design" and "registered interior designer" were in Section 32.

Senator Kiehl relayed that Section 32 indicated it was the practice of interior design. He asked if there was a more specific definition.

Senator Claman directed attention to Section 6 of the bill, where directions were given to the AELS board to define the scope of practice.

Co-Chair Hoffman asked what the AELS Board signified.

Senator Claman relayed that it was the Architects Engineers and Landscape Surveying Board, for which the bill extended authorization.

[9:23:31 AM](#)

KRIS CURTIS, LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR, ALASKA DIVISION OF LEGISLATIVE AUDIT, directed attention to the "A Sunset Review of the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors (board)" (copy on file). She described the audit as "very clean" with no recommendations and with support for an eight-year extension. The audit found that the audit concluded that the board served the public's interest by conducting meetings in an effective manner; actively amending regulations to improve the registration process; and effectively registering architects, engineers, land surveyors, and landscape architects.

Ms. Curtis directed attention to the report on page 6 on registration and certificate activity. As of January 2024, the board had 6,628 active registrants. The schedule of revenues and expenditures was on page 8, which indicated that there was a \$1.2 million surplus as of January 2024. She noted that the commissioner and the board chair both concurred with the report's conclusions.

[9:25:01 AM](#)

COLIN MAYNARD, ALASKA BOARD OF ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND LAND SURVEYORS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), read from prepared testimony:

For the record, my name is Colin Maynard, I am a retired Civil and Structural Engineer and am a member of the Alaska State Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors (or AELS). I am testifying at the direction of the Board as the Chair of the AELS Legislative Liaison Committee.

At our February 2025 meeting, the AELS Board voted 7-2 to support this bill. I would like to address a few provisions which have financial impacts. First, I have to say that the Board is proud to see that the Legislative Audit found that the Board has been complying with the relevant statutes and regulations and is performing its duty to protect public safety, health, and welfare. We believe that an extension of eight years is warranted. Now to the financial issues:

Section 2 - Board makeup

- o Adding petroleum and chemical engineering disciplines to the mining engineering seat as an option, instead of a fallback position, expands the pool of possible volunteers from 36 to 148 while keeping the seat in the resource extraction industry. This does not add any cost.
- o Breaking the current mechanical/electrical engineering seat into two seats recognizes that they are the two most common disciplines after civil engineering, even more than architects or land surveyors, which have two seats each. It also recognizes that these disciplines are different from each other and expecting one person to have expertise in both is asking a bit much.
- o Adding an Interior designer seat will allow someone with expertise in that field to help craft regulations regarding that new discipline.
- o We understand that we are already one of the largest State licensing Boards, but we currently regulate eighteen different disciplines with more registrants than all but two Boards. Most of our meetings are done virtually and the cost of travel is minimal. The cost of the Board is borne by those registrants, not by the public.

Section 4 - Executive Administrator salary

- o The Board has been having problems retaining our Executive Administrator. The Board has been working with the Division and Department to get an Office of Management and Budget class evaluation for years. The fact that the position is a class of one has not made that very easy and it has dragged out for years. The evaluation finally started last fall, still has at least one more step to go, and may not have a conclusion with which the Board agrees. Before the evaluation started, the Board decided to request that our statute specify that the AELS Executive Administrator has a salary in Range 23. Other Boards that have a similar number of registrants have a similar provision.

Most of the costs in the fiscal note are based on the addition of a licensing examiner, thereby expanding the Board's staff from three to four: an executive administrator, two licensing examiners, and an investigator. This is necessary due to the existing workload. The addition of interior designers will add

about 1% to the number of registrants. The costs will be borne by the approximately 6700 active registrants and 800 Corporations and Limited Liability Companies.

[9:28:23 AM](#)

MATT BARUSCH, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS AND ADVOCACY COUNCIL FOR INTERIOR DESIGN QUALIFICATION (via teleconference), relayed that his organization administered the national interior design certification examination, which was regulated in 29 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. He explained that the interior design profession was regulated because of the direct impact the work had on the health, safety, and welfare of the public in public spaces. The bill adopted a framework consistent with a majority of states that regulated the profession. His organization supported that bill because it would help support public protection, and looked forward to supporting the AELS Board as it implemented the legislation.

[9:29:26 AM](#)

Co-Chair Hoffman OPENED public testimony.

[9:29:53 AM](#)

CASEY KEE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. She was an Anchorage resident and a NCIDQ-certified interior designer.

[9:30:28 AM](#)

BARBARA CASH, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in strong support of the bill. She was a long-time NCIDQ-qualified interior designer in Anchorage. She contended that the bill enabled registered Alaska designers for federal projects.

[9:31:24 AM](#)

MELISSA TRIBYL, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation. She was a certified interior designer with NCIDQ and owned an architectural firm. She thought the bill would expand services.

[9:32:26 AM](#)

RAMONA SCHIMSCHEIMER, BOARD MEMBER, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in opposition to the bill. She was a licensed architect. She shared that the American Institute of Architecture (AIA) Alaska had worked with the sponsor to address concerns.

[9:33:56 AM](#)

CATHERINE FRITZ, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), testified in opposition to the bill. She had been an active member of the Alaska chapter of AIA. She had been registered as an architect since 1990. She had served on the AELS Board for eight years. She thought there were many aspects of the bill that would be difficult and confusing to administer. She opposed the expansion of the board to 13 members as proposed in the bill, and contended that the board was already the largest board with 11 members. She noted that prior to 2023, there was a restriction that had now allowed mechanical and electrical engineers to serve on the board simultaneously, which had been remedied by legislation. She contended that there were fewer than two dozen interior designers that were qualified to serve on the board.

Ms. Fritz shared the concern that it was not appropriate to have a registered interior designer on the AELS Board because they would not be registered and regulated. She emphasized that SB 54 was a title act. She noted that a seat on the board would allow an interior designer authority and responsibility to act on the regulated practices of engineering and architecture, which she did not think was appropriate. She could not think of a reason to expand the board. She mentioned the addition of a landscape architect to the board as a temporary seat in 1998. If the bill passed, there would need to be a limited amount of regulation developed. She thought a temporary seat could add subject matter expertise if needed.

[9:37:30 AM](#)

DANA NUNN, CHAIR, GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY COMMITTEE, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS, ALASKA CHAPTER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. She was a longtime Anchorage resident and an NCIDQ-certified interior designer. She thought SB 54 represented many years of collaborative efforts. She thought the bill remained

true to the fundamental intent of improving public health, safety, and welfare while established means of registering qualified interior designers. She urged the committee to pass the bill.

[9:39:06 AM](#)

ELIZABETH GOEBEL, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill. She relayed that she was an interior designer in Anchorage currently working on her NCIDQ certification.

[9:39:31 AM](#)

LARRY CASH, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. He relayed that he was an Alaskan architect and worked with qualified interior designers for many years. He supported interior designers' state registration with stamp and seal privileges as provided in the bill.

[9:40:23 AM](#)

Co-Chair Hoffman CLOSED public testimony.

Senator Kiehl addressed a new fiscal note from the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing, OMB Component 2360. He expanded that the fiscal note showed an increased FY 26 cost of \$172,600 and one position, all in receipt-supported services. The fiscal note also reflected that \$263,900 of Designated General Funds (DGF) was included in the governor's request. There was \$401,700 in receipt support services and two positions from FY 27 going forward.

Senator Claman thought the bill was a positive step forward for the state.

SB 54 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

[9:41:59 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:43:02 AM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb61

SENATE BILL NO. 61

"An Act relating to an electronic product stewardship program; relating to collection, recycling, and disposal of electronic equipment; establishing the electronics recycling advisory council; and providing for an effective date."

9:43:25 AM

SENATOR LOKI TOBIN, SPONSOR, conveyed that SB 61 had a very interesting premise, and she would speak to the reason she wanted to introduce the legislation. She discussed managing waste, which was connected to life expectancy. She explained that as our society had advanced and evolved, electronic waste had become an issue, and now management of electronic waste was a necessity. She emphasized that without effective systems, communities burned flat screen televisions next to schools and left fax machines on the tundra.

Senator Tobin explained that SB 61 was developed by the Alaska Solid Waste Task Force. She listed stakeholders as the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Kawerak Incorporated, and Zender Environmental. The bill was supported by the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Alaska Municipal League, the Solid Waste Association of North America as well as numerous Alaska communities, organizations, and businesses including the Denali Commission.

Senator Tobin emphasized that every time a person purchased an electronic device, they paid for another state to have a product stewardship plan for the objects. Many states had processes that required manufacturers to pay for recycle processes for electronic materials. She noted that Canada, European countries, and Hawaii had such stewardship plans. She explained that SB 61 created a manufacturer-funded system for collecting and recycling electronic devices such as flat-screen televisions, computers, monitors, fax machines, and printers.

Senator Tobin discussed hazards to communities and noted the bill would require manufacturers to pay for what tribes

were currently paying for. Manufacturers allocated funding from product sale revenue to cover collection and recycling activities. The funding would support the efforts currently underway by communities, non-profit organizations, tribes, and businesses.

[9:47:10 AM](#)

Senator Tobin specified that under Senate Bill 61 a manufacturer whose electronic devices are sold in Alaska would register with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and pay an annual administrative fee to the department. Manufacturers could register individually or more commonly join a product responsibility organization that specialized in implementing the programs and dividing the costs of the program among manufacturers. Manufacturers or their product responsibility organization would produce a proposed plan, which would be reviewed and amended by a 13-member advisory council and approved by DEC.

Senator Tobin relayed that there were expert testifiers online and available to answer questions on how the plans were operated and how it was currently happening in Alaska. She noted that in a previous committee of referral, changes included removing (from electronic materials to be recycled) microwaves, batteries containing electronics, and FTA devices. The bill was also amended to reduce collections sites. Additionally, the bill was amended to allow for the advisory council to meet virtually to save on costs. The legislation had the individual penalty removed, which would allow individual communities to handle the issue.

Senator Tobin thought it was important to note that the bill helped DEC oversee the program, but there was no involvement from the state other than approving the plans that electronic manufactures produced. The community would help devise the process. She emphasized that the activities were already happening in communities, and the tribes and non-profits were braiding together funding that was volatile. She proposed that the bill would help create a more sustainable practice to ensure the hazardous materials were removed from landfills.

Senator Merrick asked how many manufacturers would be required to register with DEC under the bill.

9:50:21 AM

LOUIE FLORA, STAFF, SENATOR LOKI TOBIN, relayed that every producer of electronics in the state would be required to register. He did not have a number, which would be available upon registration.

Senator Kaufman was curious about the carve-outs, and what was in and not in the bill. He mentioned microwaves and considered items that could end up deteriorating at a remote location. He mentioned electric vehicles and asked how the bill would affect larger items that could potentially contaminate land.

Mr. Flora relayed that there were multiple laws in different states that covered different products. The bill was limited to specific waste streams because it was the first time contemplating a product stewardship law. The sponsor had wanted to limit the bill to a specific waste stream, because broadening the bill could potentially involve other unforeseen constituencies that might oppose the bill. He mentioned that the sponsor had looked at the consideration of vapes in the future, which were a problem at schools and municipalities. Currently the bill was focused on electronics.

Senator Tobin added that a more detailed list of products could be found on page 19 of the bill.

Co-Chair Stedman asked how the bill would work on islands. He asked who would pay for the storage or sorting.

Senator Tobin relayed that the storage and sorting would be part of a proposed plan that a manufacturer or product stewardship organization would detail. She relayed that there were individuals available online that were actively working on product stewardship in Savoonga.

Chair Stedman pointed out that all communities were different. He was concerned with who paid the cost and how it interacted with the manufacturer and mentioned the cost to communities.

Senator Tobin relayed that under the bill, the burden of cost would be on the manufacturers, which would be part of the product stewardship plan. She mentioned that other

states had been collecting resources to help with product stewardship, and there were practices in place.

[9:55:09 AM](#)

Senator Kiehl asked if the sponsor could provide insight on what percentage of landfills in the state had a liner.

Mr. Flora thought that under 10 percent of landfills had a liner. He thought most class 3 facilities in rural Alaska did not have a liner.

Senator Kiehl contemplated electronics with substances that could seep into the water table. He asked how the bill would work with communities that handled electronics collection. He mentioned that currently in Juneau, it was possible to drop electronic waste four days a week. He mentioned the practices in other areas.

Mr. Flora relayed that the advisory council had specific positions for the large municipal landfills and other stakeholders. The process of creating an e-recycling plan would consider ongoing efforts and were required to fund ongoing efforts to the greatest degree possible.

Senator Tobin pointed out that member's packets included a presentation from the Solid Waste Alaska Task Force, which provided some additional detail on current efforts (copy on file). She noted that about 70 percent of communities had some level of e-waste recycling. She hoped the entire state would have access to the program.

Senator Kaufman considered the list and had more questions. He asked if the list of e-waste would include all kitchen appliances. He asked about dishwashers that had electronics, and whether the items were included.

Senator Tobin thought stakeholders could answer Senator Kaufman's question. She thought some of the items Senator Kaufman mentioned such as refrigerators needed experts to remove harmful aspects before they could be successfully recycled. Under the legislation, it might be more complicated than simply removing the items from unlined landfills.

[9:59:17 AM](#)

REILLY KOSINSKI, ZENDER ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND RESEARCH GROUP (via teleconference), relayed that he was a member of the Solid Waste Alaska Taskforce (SWAT). He spoke from written remarks:

- Personally, I live in Haines and work for Zender Environmental as a Statewide Coordinator for the Backhaul Alaska Program

- Backhaul Alaska is a SWAT initiative that is administered by Zender Environmental.

- It's a Program that aims to help all Alaskan communities effectively and affordably backhaul hard-to-manage or potentially hazardous waste-streams that should be diverted from landfills - especially rural landfills

- Ewaste is one of the materials our Program prioritizes, and I hope to provide a brief background regarding Alaska's current ewaste recycling efforts and existing infrastructure.

- Currently new electronics have little issue getting into communities - there is a very robust infrastructure in place for delivering products throughout the state.

- So, in short - the transportation infrastructure for recycling is already there - It's a matter of managing the logistics in reverse.

- Our Backhaul Alaska Program has been doing just this - using existing shipping routes to facilitate more efficient backhaul of wastes & recyclables, including ewaste.

Alaskan Communities Recycling Ewaste

- Our Program has either fully or partially funded backhaul & recycling shipments covering roughly 100 different communities since 2018.

- It should be noted that we're doing this for not just ewaste, but other hard-to-manage waste streams such as lead acid batteries, tires, mercury containing products, and appliances.

- Plus, we are performing a lot of the operational aspects ask of the manufacturers in this bill.

- We're just 1 of multiple organizations that have been backhauling ewaste on a local and regional level.

- Some of the other organizations supporting regional efforts include:

- oKawerak in Nome serves 16 Bering Strait communities
- oManiilaq in Kotzebue
- oBBAHC serving Dillingham & Bristol Bay Communities
- oA collaboration AVCP, Donlin Gold, and Delta Backhaul in Bethel
- oCook Inlet Keeper in the Kenai Borough
- oKANA in Kodiak serving island-wide
- oPOW Island
- oCRNA in Glennallen serving the Copper River Valley
- oGreen Star of Interior Alaska serving Interior communities

- These organizations actively coordinate with outlying communities within their region to bring ewaste into hubs for subsequent repackaging and shipment to recyclers.

- For our part, we try to partner with these regional organizations where we can and leverage funds to help support their efforts.

- Also, there are plenty of communities that individually manage ewaste for recycling

- Further, there are established recycling companies in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Kodiak that accept ewaste.

- By our count, at least 70% of communities already,
 - oHave been recycling ewaste within the last 5 years

- oHave access to established ewaste recycling services, or

- oHave access to ewaste collection events

- I'd say this is a conservative estimate. I don't have full knowledge of every community & region's efforts, but these are the ones that we're aware of.

- But all these current programs and efforts goes to show how important diverting ewaste from landfills is to communities throughout the state.

Not starting from scratch

- This bill would not require anything to be built from scratch, no studies are needed - it would be building off of 20+ years of development and refinement

- There are many Alaskan entities with experience that would gladly partner, leverage, and contribute to the development an efficient statewide program.

- Importantly, SB61 will allow for a formalized process and provide a solid foundation to build around.
 - Instead of multiple fractured efforts, we can have single program to coordinate ewaste recycling on a statewide level.
- Need for stable, long-term funding
- Proud of our work, but our funding is limited.
 - Backhaul Alaska is predominately federally grant funded
 - Our main source funding will run out the end-of-summer this year,
 - We have additional funding sources that can help cover maybe the next year or 2, but our Program will likely have to scale-back significantly if renewed funding is not available.
 - There is a lot of uncertainty around the continued availability of federal grants used to operate our Program and others.
 - This uncertainty is a barrier to long-term planning and capacity building.
 - We cannot effectively plan or invest resources beyond a year or 2 because it's uncertain if we'll be able to providing the same level of service we're currently offering.
 - SB61 would establish that stable, long-term funding needed for managing ewaste on a statewide level.
 - Thank you, I'm available for any questions

Mr. Kosinski explained that the funding for his program was limited. He discussed funding sources from federal funds and grants and felt there was much uncertainty. He discussed the challenge of working on long-term plans without long term funding.

[10:04:32 AM](#)

SCOTT KLAG, PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP INSTITUTE (via teleconference), explained that the Product Stewardship Institute was a national policy organization that had been working on product stewardship programs across the states. The institute had been working with the development of electronic stewardship programs since the year 2000. He discussed his background working in waste and recycling laws. He explained that stewardship programs were an approach that required producers and manufacturers to share in the management of the end-of-life of products. Programs included coverage of leftover paint, batteries, mattresses,

and pharmaceuticals. Recently several states had passed laws covering packaging.

Mr. Klag relayed that the bill would set out what products were covered, and what obligations the manufacturers would have. He discussed the importance of designing a program to build on existing private and public infrastructure. He cited that 24 states had passed legislation covering electronics and millions of pounds of the materials had been diverted.

Mr. Klag continued and noted that Oregon had recently updated its law and expanded the scope of products included, similar to what was proposed in the bill. He thought the bill addressed important elements for an effective law that was designed in collaboration with stakeholders. He thought the bill would provide sustainable financing, which was a crucial element.

[10:08:00 AM](#)

DR. LYNN ZENDER, ZENDER ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND RESEARCH GROUP (via teleconference), relayed that she had a doctorate in civil engineering. She thought the bill had been carefully vetted. She discussed tightening budgets. She referenced state programs in Hawaii, Maine, and Washington. She mentioned speaking to stakeholder groups. and discussed forming an advisory group. She mentioned feedback sessions to tribal and urban groups.

Dr. Zender mentioned the health benefits of the bill, and noted that electronics contained lead, cadmium, flame retardants, and PFAS, which caused a myriad of health problems. She described rural landfills with no liners, which allowed leaching into nearby water sources. She cited that in one rural Alaska study, there were health effects linked to proximity to the dump. There were correlations of hazardous waste and birth defects. She discussed the proximity of landfills to villages and discussed water sources and contamination. Electronics and batteries made up the bulk of hazardous waste in rural Alaska. She discussed the limitation of landfill liners. She discussed potential cuts to federal funds.

[10:12:30 AM](#)

Dr. Zender referenced an opposition letter from the Consumer Technology Association (CTA) (copy on file), to which her organization had responded with a letter addressing counterpoints to the arguments presented (copy on file). She thought the letter from CTA was inaccurate and presented wrong information. She thought product stewardship programs were a market-based approach.

10:14:00 AM

Co-Chair Hoffman OPENED public testimony.

10:14:26 AM

KATIE CAPOZZI, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ALASKA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in opposition to the bill. She relayed that while the chamber supported responsible recycling efforts and environmental stewardship, it thought that the bill placed an unachievable and costly burden on manufacturers, which would ultimately negatively impact Alaskan consumers and businesses. She thought the bill would establish one of the most costly and burdensome programs in the nation, while not taking into account the state's unique logistical and infrastructure challenges. She thought the state lacked the infrastructure to support the bill. She contended that the bill's inclusion of all batteries contained in electronics proposed to expand the existing system beyond what it could handle. She thought the bill asked manufacturers to create a program from scratch and would pass costs on to consumers. She encouraged future dialog and collaboration with stakeholders.

Senator Merrick asked if the changes to the bill in the Senate Resources Committee made the bill more palatable to the Alaska Chamber.

Ms. Capozzi thought there were improvements made in the committee, but the chamber still could not support the bill.

10:17:40 AM

LORENE ANELON, ILIAMNA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. She relayed that she spoke on behalf of the village of Iliamna and the corporation. She discussed the expense of

recycling. She discussed challenges with maintaining a clean environment in the village. She discussed handling of e-waste and tires. She thought the bill would improve community clean-up and would prevent harmful chemicals from impacting the subsistence lifestyle. She thought the bill would help rural communities.

[10:19:40 AM](#)

KATIE REILLY, VICE PRESIDENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, CONSUMER TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA (via teleconference), spoke in opposition to the bill. She relayed that her association's members would be responsible for paying for and delivering on an electronic product stewardship program in the state. She suggested that the proposal in the bill would place a significant burden on electronics manufacturers. She cited that there had not been a new e-waste program passed since 2014, and cited that electronics were the fastest declining product waste stream in the country.

Ms. Reilly expressed concern about the provisions proposed in the bill. She thought there was no clear data on electronic data generation across the state. She was concerned about significant costs for manufacturers. She discussed a requirement for a collection event required for communities with less than 5,500 people, which would result in over 200 expensive collection events. She discussed the potential for skyrocketing costs. She pondered where and how much e-waste was being generated. She referenced CTA's written testimony (copy on file). She highlighted a fiscal note from the Department of Environmental Conservation. She mentioned that CTA's overall concern with the bill was the addition of considerable costs for doing business in the state, while being structured beyond what was needed to meet the need.

[10:23:13 AM](#)

FALLON GLEASON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill. She worked in environmental health in Bristol Bay and had assisted numerous villages with e-waste. She thought recycling e-waste was imperative. She discussed federal funding used by tribes to recycle e-waste, and the potential for using the funds for other matters related to health. She stressed that e-waste created a burden for small rural communities.

[10:24:42 AM](#)

VANESSA TAHBONE, SELF, NOME (via teleconference), spoke in support of SB 61. She worked for Kawerak, a regional non-profit, as an environmental project coordinator. She was a regional coordinator for the Back-haul Alaska Program. She had worked to get electronics out of landfills in rural communities. She noted that there were already storage and shipping routes in place. She conveyed that electronic recycling had already been happening in her region for over a decade. She was an avid subsistence hunter and gatherer and discussed chemical pollution on the land. She emphasized that there was existing infrastructure.

[10:27:25 AM](#)

ENISHA ELBIH, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill. She was a resident of South Naknek and was speaking on behalf of the tribe. She noted that her community had a class 3 unlined landfill, which meant pollutants could leach into the land and air. It was her community's first year shipping out e-waste. She mentioned the uncertainty of future funding and thought the cost of shipping should be on the manufacturer.

[10:29:12 AM](#)

BENNY PISCOYA, KAWERAK INC., NOME (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. He relayed that he was a Native man, and he had participated in hunting and fishing. He had learned from his grandfather to "pack it in, pack it out," which he thought should apply to e-waste.

[10:29:52 AM](#)

Co-Chair Hoffman CLOSED public testimony.

[10:29:59 AM](#)

Senator Kiehl addressed a new fiscal note from the Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Environmental Health, OMB Component 3202. For FY 26, the department estimated there would be a cost of \$499,600 of UGF, and two full-time positions. The number stabilized in FY 28, with a cost of \$420,700. In FY 29, the fund source

switched from UGF to General Fund program receipts and remained level going forward.

Co-Chair Hoffman asked the sponsor if she wanted to offer closing comments.

Senator Tobin emphasized that currently 70 percent of Alaskan communities had an e-waste recycling program paid for by Alaskans through grants, community contributions, and tribal dollars. The bill did not create a statewide recycling program but instead established a statewide electronic stewardship plan. She clarified that although the initial costs would be paid by UGF, the annual fees would eventually be paid for by the manufacturer fee associated with registration with a digital stewardship program. The costs would be backfilled. She mentioned potentially making a longer time horizon for implementing the program, to ensure the state was able to recoup the costs. The actual costs incurred by establishment of a stewardship plan would be paid for by manufacturers on a service charge that people already paid. She emphasized that people were already paying for e-recycling for other states, in Canadian provinces, and in Europe. The bill proposed to continue the existing program, but paid for by manufacturers. She looked forward to stakeholders contacting her office for dialogue.

Co-Chair Hoffman thanked the sponsor.

SB 61 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Hoffman noted that the deadline for amendments to SB 30, SB 54, and SB 61 was set for Tuesday, April 8 at 5 o'clock p.m.

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ADJOURNMENT

10:33:59 AM

The meeting was adjourned at 10:33 a.m.