

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE

April 11, 2025

2:01 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Matt Claman, Chair
Senator Jesse Kiehl, Vice Chair
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Löki Tobin
Senator Robert Myers

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 9

"An Act relating to the surrender of infants; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 78

"An Act relating to disclosure of information regarding employee compensation by employers, employees, and applicants for employment."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 9

SHORT TITLE: SURRENDER OF INFANTS; INF. SAFETY DEVICE

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) MYERS

01/10/25	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(S)	HSS, JUD
02/20/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/20/25	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
02/25/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/25/25	(S)	Heard & Held
02/25/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)

02/27/25 (S) HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/27/25 (S) <Above Item Removed from Agenda>--
02/27/25 (S) MINUTE(HSS)
03/13/25 (S) HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/13/25 (S) Moved CSSB 9(HSS) Out of Committee
03/13/25 (S) MINUTE(HSS)
03/14/25 (S) HSS RPT CS 2NR 1DP SAME TITLE
03/14/25 (S) NR: DUNBAR, GIESSEL
03/14/25 (S) DP: HUGHES
03/31/25 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/31/25 (S) Heard & Held
03/31/25 (S) MINUTE(JUD)
04/11/25 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

No witnesses to report.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[2:01:10 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Myers, Tobin, Stevens, and Chair Claman.

SB 9-SURRENDER OF INFANTS; INF. SAFETY DEVICE

[CSSB 9(HSS) was before the committee.]

[2:01:42 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 9 "An Act relating to the surrender of infants; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR CLAMAN said this is the second hearing of SB 9 in the Senate Judiciary Committee. He said the bill sponsor submitted three amendments to his office. He invited the bill sponsor to speak to the bill and the amendments.

[2:02:20 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS, speaking as sponsor, said he would not offer two of the three amendments today. He explained that one amendment removed the word "abandonment" from the proposed sign on the infant safety devices. Although legally accurate, the term is emotionally charged and could deter someone already in crisis from using the device, with potentially tragic outcomes. He said

he is exploring alternative wording and is not offering the amendment today.

[2:04:03 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS said the second amendment deleted language on page 4 of the bill that required the Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS) to conduct and approve safety inspections of the infant safety devices. The DFCS indicated it would require a fiscal note to hire staff for that work, which raised concerns given the State's tight budget. He said that SB 9 would likely result in only a small number of devices statewide. He said Fairbanks and Anchorage have shown interest in a device, and he speculated that larger populated areas such as Juneau and the Mat-Su might show interest too. He anticipated that each locale would have only one device each. He said that hiring a full-time employee to inspect a handful of devices seemed somewhat wasteful. A few committee members expressed interest in ensuring the devices are safe, and he is investigating the matter. He stated that he is speaking with DFCS and the Department of Health (DOH) to identify appropriate regulatory oversight without adding costs. He said for now, he will not offer those two amendments, but may revisit the topics later.

[2:06:01 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS moved to adopt Amendment 3, work order 34-LS0085\G.3.

34-LS0085\G.3
Bergerud
4/8/25

A M E N D M E N T 3

OFFERED IN THE SENATE BY SENATOR MYERS
TO: CSSB 9(HSS)

Page 2, lines 15 - 17:

Delete "fire department, or other facility designated by the commissioner as an appropriate location for an infant safety device under regulations adopted by the commissioner"

Insert "or fire department"

[2:06:15 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN objected for purposes of discussion.

[2:06:23 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS explained that Amendment 3 removes original language in the bill that would allow the commissioner to designate other appropriate locations for infant safety devices under regulations adopted by the commissioner. He said Amendment 3 was written largely due to a fiscal note consideration. He said the Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS) does not perform this type of task. DFCS was concerned that having this discretionary responsibility would require hiring someone to write regulations and inspect facilities, which it does not want to do. He said if Amendment 3 were adopted, the remaining locations for devices would be medical and emergency service facilities, such as:

- police stations
- trooper posts
- fire departments
- hospitals
- emergency rooms
- freestanding birth clinics
- tribal health organizations
- offices of private physicians
- rural health clinics

SENATOR MYERS noted that these facilities are inspected on a regular basis.

[2:08:19 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that, historically, parents who abandoned a child did so to the care of the fire department. He cautioned that some tribal health organizations are only open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., expressing concern about the possibility that a baby could be left unattended for a long time. He said it makes sense to designate fire stations as the drop-off location because that is what comes to mind when thinking of abandoned children.

[2:09:02 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS replied that he is trying to balance several factors. He said one factor is providing options. He explained that not every community has an appropriate location available, and he does not want to exclude communities from participating. SB 9 does not mandate that facilities install a device. He explained that if a facility owner does not believe it is an appropriate location, the owner is free to refuse installation.

SENATOR MYERS said another factor is that Section 4 requires certain features in the devices. Section 4 requires the device to notify 911 automatically upon opening. It also requires 24-hour video surveillance of the device to enable a rapid response, even if no one is in the building at that moment. He is working with the Department of Health on the list, and it may require adjustments as he identifies the appropriate regulatory authority for the devices. He said the goal is to avoid being so restrictive that locations are excluded, while also not being so inclusive it creates a burden.

SENATOR STEVENS agreed and reiterated that tribal health organizations are only open certain hours and should have the option not to participate.

[2:10:58 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN said he has no plan to move SB 9 today.

[2:11:09 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN sought verification that the provision in Section 4 offers the commissioner the opportunity to establish inspection protocols, ensure facilities have the proper equipment, and prevent items that might impede breathing or create other risks. She said the commissioner might also be able to adopt regulations to address decommissioning if a facility is no longer fully staffed or if the device needs to be relocated. This would provide guardrails and a framework for moving the device to a new location. She acknowledged that she may be reading too much into the regulatory language and asked the bill sponsor to elaborate on where such oversight would lie.

SENATOR MYERS replied that in discussions with the Department of Family and Community Services, the Department of Health, and others, an interesting dynamic emerged between inspection of facilities and inspection of the devices themselves. He said the primary concern is the devices, which is why the language in Section 4, page 4, beginning on line 4, remains in the bill for now. It provides for some regulatory authority. He stated that as discussions continue, the specific department assigned that authority may change. He said oversight will remain; it is just a question of which department is most appropriate to exercise that authority.

[2:13:22 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN drew attention to the language on page 4, line 4, which does not appear to require ongoing monitoring or upkeep. She noted that anything has a lifespan and offered the example

of a fifty-year roof that eventually becomes unsafe and no longer protects a home. She asked whether SB 9 provides any stipulations for ongoing monitoring or upkeep. She expressed concern that removing regulatory authority would eliminate the ability to require periodic inspections, or to ensure that no extra blankets or other items are placed in the device. She referenced prior testimony indicating that animals had been placed in devices or that other contamination issues had occurred. She stated that regulatory authority would provide greater oversight to ensure infant safety and health.

[2:14:29 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS replied that the language on page 2, which the amendment addresses, identifies locations where a device may be placed and allows expansion of that list by regulation. However, that does not necessarily address concerns about the devices themselves. He said there is a tension between regulating the location of the device and regulating the device itself. He expressed his understanding that her concern relates primarily to the device. He explained that is why he is leaving the language on page 4. He acknowledged the need and interest in periodic inspections and stated that discussions are ongoing to determine the appropriate regulatory authority. He said that he is aware of three manufacturers of these devices in the United States. One manufacturer conducts annual inspections of its devices. He has not been able to obtain information about the other two manufacturers. He expressed his understanding for the need and interest in periodic inspections from a regulatory authority.

SENATOR MYERS stated that facilities such as fire departments or hospital emergency rooms would likely check the devices as part of their routine equipment inspections. He reiterated that he asked the chair to hold the bill to allow more time to determine the appropriate regulatory authority to conduct inspections. He concluded that the concerns she raises are not necessarily addressed with Amendment 3.

[2:16:39 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN removed his objection.

CHAIR CLAMAN found no further objection and Amendment 3 was adopted.

[2:16:49 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN held CSSB 9(HSS), as amended, in committee.

2:17:07 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Claman adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 2:17 p.m.