

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

May 16, 2025
1:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Chair
Senator Kelly Merrick, Vice Chair
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Forrest Dunbar

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Robert Yundt

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 121

"An Act relating to the practice of accounting; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SCS HB 121(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 154

"An Act establishing the Home Care Employment Standards Advisory Board; relating to payment for personal care services; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SSSB 154 OUT OF COMMITTEE

SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 62

"An Act relating to the board of parole; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 89

"An Act relating to physician assistants; relating to collaborative agreements between physicians and physician assistants; relating to the practice of medicine; relating to health care providers; and relating to provisions regarding physician assistants in contracts between certain health care providers and health care insurers."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 121

SHORT TITLE: ACCOUNTING; PRACTICE PRIVILEGE

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) SCHRAGE

02/28/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/28/25 (H) L&C
03/10/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/10/25 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
03/12/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/12/25 (H) Heard & Held
03/12/25 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
03/14/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/14/25 (H) Moved HB 121 Out of Committee
03/14/25 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
03/17/25 (H) L&C RPT 5DP 1NR
03/17/25 (H) DP: COULOMBE, BURKE, NELSON, HALL,
FIELDS
03/17/25 (H) NR: CARRICK
03/17/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/17/25 (H) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
03/24/25 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
03/24/25 (H) VERSION: HB 121
03/26/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/26/25 (S) EDC, L&C
04/09/25 (S) EDC REFERRAL REMOVED
04/09/25 (S) STA REFERRAL ADDED
04/22/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/22/25 (S) Heard & Held
04/22/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)
05/06/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
05/06/25 (S) Heard & Held
05/06/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)
05/08/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
05/08/25 (S) Moved SCS HB 121(STA) Out of Committee
05/08/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)
05/09/25 (S) STA RPT SCS 2DP 3NR NEW TITLE
05/09/25 (S) DP: KAWASAKI, GRAY-JACKSON
05/09/25 (S) NR: YUNDT, WIELECHOWSKI, BJORKMAN
05/14/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
05/14/25 (S) Heard & Held
05/14/25 (S) MINUTE(L&C)
05/16/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 154

SHORT TITLE: HOME CARE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ADV BOARD
SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) YUNDT

04/02/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/02/25 (S) L&C, FIN
04/22/25 (S) SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE INTRODUCED-REFERRALS
04/22/25 (S) L&C, FIN
05/14/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
05/14/25 (S) Heard & Held
05/14/25 (S) MINUTE(L&C)
05/16/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 62

SHORT TITLE: BOARD OF PAROLE: MEMBERSHIP, REPORT
SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) TOBIN

01/24/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/25 (S) STA, L&C
02/19/25 (S) SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE INTRODUCED-REFERRALS
02/19/25 (S) STA, L&C
03/11/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/11/25 (S) Heard & Held
03/11/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)
04/08/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/08/25 (S) Moved SSSB 62 Out of Committee
04/08/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)
04/09/25 (S) STA RPT 3NR 1DP
04/09/25 (S) NR: KAWASAKI, WIELECHOWSKI, YUNDT
04/09/25 (S) DP: GRAY-JACKSON
04/30/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/30/25 (S) Heard & Held
04/30/25 (S) MINUTE(L&C)
05/16/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

AMANDA NDEMO, Staff
Representative Calvin Schrage
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a brief summary of HB 121.

NOAH KLEIN, Associate Counsel
Alaska Court System
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions about HB 121.

RYAN MCKEE, Staff
Senator Rob Yundt
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a brief summary of SB 154.

TONY NEUMAN, Director
Division of Senior and Disability Services
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a summary of the fiscal note of SB 154.

LOUIE FLORA, Staff
Senator Loki Tobin
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a brief summary of SB 62.

KONRAD JACKSON, Staff
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a summary of changes for SB 62 from version N to version H.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:33:28 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Merrick, Gray-Jackson, Dunbar and Chair Bjorkman.

HB 121-ACCOUNTING; PRACTICE PRIVILEGE

[SCS HB 121(STA) was before the committee.]

[1:34:48 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN announced the consideration of HOUSE BILL NO. 121 "An Act relating to the practice of accounting; and providing for an effective date."

[1:35:14 PM](#)

AMANDA NDEMO, Staff, Representative Calvin Schrage, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided a brief summary of HB 121:

[Original punctuation provided.]

House Bill 121 modernizes Alaska's CPA licensure process to help address the state's accountant shortage and align with national standards. The bill reduces the required education from 150 to 120 credit hours for CPA candidates, provided they have two years of relevant experience, making the pathway to licensure more accessible. It also updates practice privilege provisions, allowing qualified out-of-state CPAs to practice in Alaska without obtaining a separate license. These changes aim to increase the state's CPA workforce while maintaining professional standards and supporting economic development.

[1:36:26 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN said that he would like to discuss the differences between the House and Senate versions of HB 121 and the changes made so far, including provisions added in the State Affairs Committee to allow Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) to serve as professional conservators. He asked Mr. Klein to talk about the provisions added.

[1:37:25 PM](#)

NOAH KLEIN, Associate Counsel, Alaska Court System, Juneau, Alaska, answered questions about HB 121. He stated that SB 99, now included in HB 121, removes the requirement for private professional conservators who are certified public accountants to also be certified as guardians. He said these CPAs would still need to complete the standard conservator training. The court remains neutral, noting that the change could increase the number of professional conservators by easing licensing requirements, leaving the policy decision to the legislature.

[1:39:14 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN asked him to explain the training or education required for guardianship that CPAs would be exempt from when becoming private professional conservators.

[1:39:29 PM](#)

MR. KLEIN replied that CPA's would not take the 20-30 question test that licensed guardians are required to take.

[1:40:28 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN asked what knowledge guardians needed that conservators did not need to fulfill their duties responsibly.

[1:40:44 PM](#)

MR. KLEIN replied that it's not that guardians need different knowledge, but that their duties differ. Guardians oversee all aspects of a ward's life, including housing, living arrangements, and access to benefits, while conservators focus solely on managing the ward's financial affairs.

CHAIR BJORKMAN asked for confirmation that 90 percent of people with conservatorship would need guardianship status.

MR. KLEIN replied that the vast majority of wards in Alaska have a guardianship and conservatorship or just a guardianship. He said a private professional conservator's certification would only apply to cases requiring conservatorship; if guardianship were also needed, the guardianship requirements would still apply.

CHAIR BJORKMAN asked whether the policy question before the committee is whether CPAs should be allowed to serve as guardians without taking the guardianship test.

[1:42:24 PM](#)

MR. KLEIN replied that he would phrase it as whether the legislature believes CPAs should be allowed to serve as conservators without taking the guardianship test, while still completing the required training that family member conservators currently undergo.

[1:42:52 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN asked whether SB 99 would prohibit a CPA from serving as a guardian.

MR. KLEIN replied that a certified public accountant (CPA) could serve as a guardian after completing the additional requirements for private professional guardians.

[1:43:13 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked if guardianship was even being considered. She thought the discussion was only about conservatorship for CPAs.

[1:43:25 PM](#)

MR. KLEIN replied that guardianship is part of the discussion because certification as a guardian currently includes both guardianship and conservatorship, which is legally sufficient to become a private professional conservator.

[1:43:49 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked if conservators deal with finances and guardianship deals with everything, including finances.

[1:43:57 PM](#)

MR. KLEIN replied that guardianship covers all aspects of a ward's life, and guardianship certification tests all areas of responsibility.

[1:44:25 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on HB 121; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[1:44:59 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR stated that he would prefer to advance the State Affairs Committee version, which includes the conservatorship portion, and move both CPA-related bills simultaneously to achieve some efficiency.

[1:45:46 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN stated his agreement.

[1:46:14 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN solicited the will of the committee.

[1:46:16 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK moved to report SCS HB 121(STA), work order 34-LS0382\G, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[1:46:34 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN found no objection and SCS HB 121(STA) was reported from the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[1:46:54 PM](#)

At ease.

SB 154-HOME CARE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ADV BOARD

[1:48:58 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 154 "An Act establishing the Home Care Employment Standards Advisory Board; relating to payment for personal care services; and providing for an effective date."

[1:49:28 PM](#)

RYAN MCKEE, Staff, Senator Rob Yundt, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided a brief summary of SB 154:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Alaska faces an acute shortage of direct care workers, particularly outside of population centers. The potential provider workforce demographic, those age 18 to 64, is in decline. Furthermore, low pay and lack of benefits force many caregivers out of the profession and make recruitment and retention increasingly more difficult for agencies providing in-home care services.

We need to create a strong and long-lasting home care infrastructure in Alaska which will expand access to quality, affordable home and community-based care for seniors and people with disabilities, keep people in their homes and out of costly facilities, and bolster the creation of jobs. We also need to ensure that Medicaid funding for personal care services is wisely spent, with an adequate portion of the rate going to pay and benefits for direct care workers, in order to help address the workforce shortage. SB 154 accomplishes both objects by:

- Establishing a Home Care Employment Standards Advisory Board that will investigate, advise, and develop recommendations on Medicaid rates and other policies to improve the wages, working conditions, and recruitment and retention of direct care workers.
- Requiring that agencies providing personal care services spend at least 70 percent of the total annual funding they receive from the department for personal care services on the pay and benefits of Personal Care Assistants providing such services.

[1:51:51 PM](#)

TONY NEUMAN, Director, Division of Senior and Disability Services, Juneau, Alaska, provided a summary of the fiscal note for SB 154, Department of Health, OMB component 2663, dated May 9, 2025. He stated that the fiscal note estimates would require \$163,000 in the first year and \$327,200 in FY 2027. SB 154 would be funded 50/50 by federal receipts and the general fund,

allowing for one full-time position initially and a second in FY 2027.

[1:53:07 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on SB 154; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[1:53:39 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN solicited the will of the committee.

[1:53:41 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK moved to report SSSB 154, work order 34-LS0836\N, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[1:53:55 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN found no objection and SSSB 154 was reported from the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[1:54:10 PM](#)

At ease.

SB 62-BOARD OF PAROLE: MEMBERSHIP, REPORT

[1:56:13 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 62 "An Act relating to the board of parole; and providing for an effective date."

[1:56:37 PM](#)

LOUIE FLORA, Staff, Senator Loki Tobin, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided a brief summary of SB 62:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SB 62 will create a Board of Parole equipped with expertise in a wide spectrum of the criminal justice, corrections, reentry, mental health and substance abuse fields.

[1:56:58 PM](#)

MR. FLORA continued with the summary for SB 62:

This will inform parole decisions in a new, potentially more holistic way. It also will help

broaden the public understanding of parole decisions by requiring an annual report.

The Legislative audit identified that the Board of Parole has maintained extra staff positions provided under the 2016 criminal justice reform act SB 91- so the cost of adding two new board members is net zero if the additional staff costs are transferred. (I rambled off script for a few sentences after this)

- SB 62 also expands the expertise of the Parole Board, designating a seat for a person with Drug and Alcohol counseling - 80 percent of our inmates have a drug or alcohol addiction issues.
- It designates a seat for an Alaska Native Tribal member - 40 percent of the incarcerated population are Alaska Natives.
- It designates a seat for a professional physician, psychologist or psychiatrist with mental health expertise and
- It designates a seat for a crime victim, family member of a crime victim or a member of victim's rights organization
- Intent is create a board of parole with relevant expertise in addition to the correctional expertise already found the parole board and that this board will do more to support affirmative parole decisions, with greater transparency.

[1:59:18 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN solicited a motion.

[1:59:21 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK moved to adopt the committee substitute (CS) for SB 62, work order 34-LS0227\H, as the working document.

[1:59:32 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN objected for purposes of discussion.

[1:59:48 PM](#)

KONRAD JACKSON, Staff, Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented summary of changes from version N to version H for SB 62 and read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Summary of Changes
CS for Sponsor Substitute for Senate Bill 62 (L&C)
Version 34-LS0227\N to 34-LS0227-H

Sections 1: Delete all material.

Renumber remaining sections accordingly.

Section 2: Inserts new Section 2, Amending AS 33.16.020(c) by adding a limit of service as presiding officer to one term.

Section 3: Amends AS 33.16.030(b) (1) to require the physician, psychologist or psychiatrist board member have experience treating drug or alcohol addiction.

Deletes AS 33.16.030(b) (3).

Section 6: Amends AS 33.16.080 Establishing the Commissioner shall hire the executive director and for administrative purposes, be located in the of the Commissioner.

Renumber remaining sections accordingly.

[2:01:25 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN expressed his personal comments on the committee substitute (CS), he collaborated with the bill sponsor and the Department of Corrections to ensure SB 62 has full departmental support, improves Board of Parole efficiency, and clarifies board decisions. He said key discussions include defining qualifications for a victim-of-a-crime board member without overly limiting candidates, considering an ex-officio member to represent victims' interests, and potentially limiting consecutive terms for board officers.

[2:04:06 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN removed his objection.

[2:04:14 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN found no further objection and CSSB 62 was adopted as the working document.

2:04:36 PM

CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 62 in committee.

2:05:33 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Bjorkman adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 2:05 p.m.