

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 20, 2025

3:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair  
Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Vice Chair  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson  
Senator Robert Yundt

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION: ADDING A FACULTY MEMBER TO THE UA BOARD OF REGENTS

- HEARD

PRESENTATION: DEPARTMENT OF LAW OVERVIEW FUNCTIONS AND CURRENT LITIGATION

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JENNIFER WARD, Library Faculty  
University of Alaska Southeast  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-delivered a presentation on adding a faculty regent to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

BRIAN BLITZ, Professor  
University of Alaska Southeast  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-delivered a presentation on adding a faculty regent to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

MATTHEW CUELLAR, Professor  
University of Anchorage  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on adding a faculty seat to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

CORI MILLS, Deputy Attorney General  
Civil Division  
Department of Law  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented the Alaska Department of Law overview.

### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:30:08 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gray-Jackson, Yundt, and Chair Kawasaki. Senators Bjorkman and Wielechowski arrived thereafter.

### **PRESENTATION: ADDING A FACULTY MEMBER TO THE UA BOARD OF REGENTS**

[3:31:17 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the presentation Adding a Faculty Member to the UA Board of Regents.

[3:32:20 PM](#)

JENNIFER WARD, Library Faculty, University of Alaska Southeast, Juneau, Alaska, co-delivered the presentation on adding a faculty regent to the University of Alaska Board of Regents (UA BOR) and moved to slide 2. She named the different bodies that have been in support of adding a faculty regent since 2017.

[3:34:12 PM](#)

MS. WARD moved to slide 4 and stated that a few reasons to have a faculty regent on the BOR would be to strengthen decision making and university governance, supporting the university's public mission. She said they are advocating for an experienced academic professor with tenure. The faculty academic perspective is an important supplement to the business acumen of other regents.

[3:35:06 PM](#)

BRIAN BLITZ, Professor, University of Alaska Southeast, Juneau, Alaska, co-delivered the presentation on adding a faculty member to the UA Board of Regents and moved to slide 5. He referenced

current UAS faculty member Mary Wegner as saying she found it helpful for a member of the school board to have the knowledge gained through the classroom experience. He stated that the same benefit can apply to the board of regents and having a faculty member share valuable insight with other members.

[3:35:46 PM](#)

MS. WARD moved to slide 6 and showed a list of universities that currently have a faculty regent. She said the California State University Board of Trustees includes two faculty members as trustees and the State University of New York (SUNY) has eighteen members with one student and one faculty member.

[3:36:20 PM](#)

MR. BLITZ moved to slide 7 and stated that a student regent brings the student perspective to board decisions and helps peers understand how the board and system work. He stated that the student regents often go on to become engaged, informed Alaska citizens, which may be the greatest long-term benefit.

[3:37:03 PM](#)

MR. BLITZ moved to slide 8, and spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**A Faculty Regent Would Enhance Communication & Understanding.**

As a BOR member, a Faculty Regent would:

- listen to the Faculty Alliance, other governance, and chancellor reports & ask questions
- participate and speak throughout BOR meetings to illuminate potential impacts on student learning, faculty teaching, & research
- participate in BOR committee work
- provide the faculty and research perspective to issues under discussion by the BOR
- recuse themselves when conflicts of interest arise
- gain an understanding of the complexities faced by the BOR & communicate these complexities back to the faculty body

[3:38:18 PM](#)

MS. WARD moved to slide 9, and spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Current faculty involvement in UA's BOR**

- Faculty Alliance chair presents a 7 minute report at the BOR's quarterly meetings
- Faculty Alliance chair cannot otherwise speak at BOR meetings unless directly asked a question or upon closing comments
- Faculty Alliance chair DOES participate in BOR committee work as an ex-officio committee member

MS. WARD stated that the alliance leadership meets with President Pitney and Vice President of Academic Affairs monthly, the meetings have developed a good relationship but it's not adequate for communicating issues.

[3:39:31 PM](#)

MR. BLITZ moved to slide 10 and explained the structure of UA faculty leadership. He stated that all the University of Alaska schools have their own faculty senate, the three senates make up a faculty alliance.

[3:40:18 PM](#)

MR. BLITZ moved to slide 11, and spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**A Few Details on Faculty Senates, UA Administration, United Academics and the UA BOR.**

**UA faculty** (through faculty senates) have primary responsibility over curriculum and degree content.

**UA administration** has primary responsibility for ensuring the UA mission is met, UA policies and sound academic practices are followed, & the institution is positively perceived by the public.

**UA's BOR** has primary responsibility for ensuring that UA stays true to its mission & has the financial resources it needs to operate successfully; the BOR possesses final decision-making authority.

**UA's faculty union**, United Academics, protects faculty working conditions through collective bargaining and

represents approximately 1,100 faculty and postdoctoral fellows in the bargaining unit throughout the UA system.

[3:41:01 PM](#)

MS. WARD moved to slide 12, and spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

### **Selecting the faculty Regent**

- mirror selection process for student regent
  - each Faculty Senate provides a short list of names to the Faculty Alliance (FA)
  - FA chair submits a comprehensive list of nominees to the governor for selection
  - Governor makes final selection
- limited to tenured faculty to ensure their protection & depth of knowledge of the UA system
- limited to two-year terms to limit interruption to faculty regent's professional and personal life

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MS. WARD moved to slide 13, and spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

### **What about conflicts of interest?**

**Faculty members** would recuse themselves when the BOR discusses items that present conflicts of interest (CBA approval, elimination of the faculty member's program, etc)

**Student regents** are trusted to recuse themselves when the BOR discusses items that present conflicts of interest (tuition increases, program elimination, etc)

**Every member of the BOR** will have a potential conflict of interest during their 8-year term (UA programs that compete with their businesses, children/grandchildren's athletic or academic programs, etc)

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MR. BLITZ moved to slide 14 and spoke about a tie vote not being an issue because in terms of voting a majority wins. He gave an example that a 6-6 vote is not a majority, so no one wins.

[3:42:38 PM](#)

MS. WARD moved to slide 15, and spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Other Boards Include Stakeholders Similar to a Faculty Member on the BOR.**

- Hospital boards regularly include doctors
- Alaska Board of Fisheries includes a variety of fishers (subsistence, commercial, recreational)
- Construction boards include architects
- UA BOR includes a student regent

[3:43:01 PM](#)

MS. WARD moved to slide 16 and stated that the Iditarod Board includes a musher.

[3:43:15 PM](#)

MS. WARD moved to slide 17 and stated that this is a positive step for the University of Alaska. Faculty input will strengthen board communication and decision-making, ensuring better governance and understanding of higher education needs and standards.

[3:44:15 PM](#)

MATTHEW CUELLAR, Professor, University of Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on adding a faculty seat to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He said adding a faculty seat to the Board of Regents would benefit faculty, students, and the university by improving representation and collaboration, protecting academic integrity, and supporting more informed decision-making. He stated that adding a faculty regent to the University of Alaska's Board of Regents is in the best interest of the university system and will enhance the university's role in public assets.

[3:45:19 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked whether there is a current faculty member serving as one of the 11 members on the Board of Regents and is there anything in law that prevents the governor from appointing a member faculty to the board.

[3:45:58 PM](#)

MR. BLITZ answered he doesn't know.

CHAIR KAWASAKI opined that with no law preventing a faculty member from being on the BOR, it wouldn't be unusual for faculty to be a board member.

MR. BLITZ stated that there has not been a member of faculty on the UA Board of Regents for the last 25 years.

[3:47:23 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked why the universities wouldn't want to designate a faculty regent a full eight-year term to the board. He said there has been legislation that designated there should be a member from the Matsu on the board because the Matsu had been unrepresented in prior years.

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MR. BLITZ explained that universities would prefer not to give a faculty regent an eight-year term because the university wants representation from various disciplines and institutions in the eight-year term. He stated that serving on the board also takes faculty away from their faculty workload. He suggested a two-year term would be more appropriate.

[3:49:24 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI stated that there has been a bill that has come up in past legislatures. He said the committee didn't invite the Board of Regents or university staff this meeting, but in the past, they've opposed this idea. He asked why the board members wouldn't support having a faculty member serve on the Board of Regents, even for a two-year term.

[3:50:01 PM](#)

MR. BLITZ said he assumed it would be a conflict of interest. He stated that for the last ten years the union and administration have been in conflict.

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MS. WARD added that some people might believe it is easier not to have a faculty regent in order to maintain the status quo. She opined to have a faculty regent would improve communication and understanding between faculty and administration.

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At ease.

**PRESENTATION: DEPARTMENT OF LAW OVERVIEW FUNCTIONS AND CURRENT  
LITIGATION**

[3:52:46 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting and announced the presentation Department of Law Overview Functions and Current Litigation.

[3:53:27 PM](#)

CORI MILLS, Deputy Attorney General, Civil Division, Department of Law (DOL), Anchorage, Alaska, presented the Alaska Department of Law overview and moved to slide 2. She spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**What does the civil division do?**

The civil division provides high-quality legal services to the executive branch through litigation, agency advice, research, legislative drafting, regulatory review, case management, and fostering good governance.

[3:54:40 PM](#)

MS. MILLS moved to slide 3 and stated there are 144 attorney positions within the Department of Law, Civil Division, with about 250 employees' total. She stated that the pie chart breaks down the hours the Civil Division worked for each department in FY2024. She stated that the Department of Public Safety (DPS) doesn't get as much help from the Civil Division because DPS gets most of its legal help from the Criminal Division. She said the Civil Division's largest customer is the Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS) because within the DFCS there is the Office of Children Services and Alaska Psychiatric Institute.

[3:56:26 PM](#)

MS. MILLS moved to slide 4, Hours billed by core mission categories and explained the pie chart showing the percentage of hours billed to the core mission categories, or core categories of legal representation. She stated that the largest chunk of hours is billed on legal representation, which pertains to courtroom litigation. She continued to speak about the other categories listed.

[3:57:39 PM](#)

MS. MILLS moved to slide 5, Civil Division Organization and explained a chart that shows the committee how the Civil Division operates. She mentioned the green boxes represent budget components and within those components are different departments.

[3:58:04 PM](#)

MS. MILLS moved to slide 6 and discussed the resource development and infrastructure components. First, she discussed the Environmental Section of this budget component stating it works closely with the legislature and gets more media attention than some other sections. The Environmental Section handles enforcement action, issues permits and defends the permits in court, working both proactive and defensive litigation. Second, the Transportation Section handles a lot of condemnation cases like securing land and compensating owners for projects. Transportation also faces defense litigation, challenges with documentation and the National Environmental Policy Act. Third, the Oil and Gas Section involves both proactive and defensive litigation. This section proactively files lawsuits for unpaid royalties and taxes and defends the state in disputes over leases with oil and gas companies. Lastly, the Natural Resources Section does a lot of statehood defense litigation. This section works defensive litigation for Fish and Game including anything from Board of Fisheries, Board of Game and any permitting and lawsuits.

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MS. MILLS moved to slide 7, and discussed the Health, Safety and Welfare budget component. She stated that this component includes the Child Protection Section. Each year the Civil Division handles 5,000 litigation matters and around 3,000 are child in need of aid cases for the Office of Children's Services. The attorneys are constantly in court aiming for resolution even if that means termination of parental rights. Children's cases generate many appeals that get solved with a 90 percent success rate by the appellate team. She said the Human Services Section covers public assistance issues, including ongoing benefits related cases and backlogs. Working in tandem with the Alaska Psychiatric Institute, Human Services also handles mental health commitments to protect individuals or others from harm. She stated that Human Services oversee guardianships and conservatorships to protect vulnerable adults. She stated that Mr. Waller heads up the Regulatory Affairs and Public Advocacy Section. This section works to keep utility

rates reasonable for Alaskans commonly appearing before the regulatory commission of Alaska in major rate proceedings.

[4:03:02 PM](#)

MS. MILLS moved to slide 8, Special Litigation and Appeals budget component which includes Special Litigation and Opinions, Appeals and Ethics Sections. She stated that Special Litigation and Appeals handles complex high-stakes cases including constitutional issues and urgent election matters. This section works with subject experts from other sections and help see cases through. The Special Litigation and Opinions Section also enforces consumer protection and antitrust laws, managing multistate cases like opioid litigation and recent auto dealer and motorhome company issues. The Opinions, Appeals, and Ethics Section handles cases after the superior court, taking over at the appellate level, including the Alaska Supreme Court and federal circuits. This section focuses mainly on child protection and mental health commitment appeals, serving as the final stage in most litigation.

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MS. MILLS moved to slide 9, the Government Services budget component which include these three sections: Legislation, Regulation and Legislative Research - oversees all legislative drafting and regulations projects for state agencies  
Profession Development and Public Service - oversees fellowship and internship programs  
Project Support (IPS) - advises on the Public Records Act and Disclosure of Information.

[4:05:36 PM](#)

MS. MILLS moved to slide 10, Civil Defense Litigation which includes sections on Torts, Workers' Compensation and Corrections. She stated that this budget component is a significant part of Civil Divisions caseload. This component works closely with risk management to defend the state in various tort lawsuits—for example, if someone slips and falls on state property, this component steps in to represent the state. Civil Defense Litigation also handles workers' compensation claims brought against the state as an employer. A major source of litigation comes from the Department of Corrections, which faces a high volume of lawsuits, currently around 250 active cases. Given the nature of the corrections system and the time inmates have, litigation is frequent. This component is responsible for defending the state in these types of civil lawsuits.

[4:06:44 PM](#)

MS. MILLS moved to slide 11 and 12. She stated that these two slides contain the highlights for each six components of the division.

[4:07:27 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked how many attorneys are employed by the Department of Law.

[4:07:34 PM](#)

MS. MILLS answered there are just under 300 attorneys between the criminal and civil divisions.

[4:07:44 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked how many lawyers are needed at the Department of Law.

MS. MILLS answered that the corrections caseload is busting at the seams but, the DOL is collaborating with the Department of Corrections to address this. She stated that overall, the division is in a good position, with improvements in vacancy rates thanks to the legislature and salary increases. She said there is a shortage of graduating law students, leading to fewer applicants and more competition with the private and public sectors. She said as a result, new attorneys tend to be less experienced, requiring more mentorship and professional development. She explained that a new section was made called professional development and public service to focus on the development of young attorneys and improve retention, ensuring they stay long enough to become productive.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked for the average salary for attorneys and the average turnover rate.

MS. MILLS answered that most of the attorneys in the division currently have fewer than four years of experience. In terms of turnover, there was a significant loss of 93 out of 144 civil attorneys over a five-year period, primarily due to COVID. She stated that recently, turnover has improved, with the main concern being upcoming retirements. The DOL has about 25 attorneys that are expected to retire in the next five years. She said retention has been better in the last few years, but competition with the private sector remains a challenge.

[4:11:44 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked for the number of cases that use outside council.

MS. MILLS answered that the majority of cases use in house council. She stated that outside council may be used for litigation, special expertise, or high-profile cases. She explained that outside council was used more frequently about four years ago when the workload was higher.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if she anticipates fewer cases against the federal government with a new federal administration in place.

MS. MILLS answered that the current situation is uncertain, and it's difficult to predict. She stated there are many requests for continuances as the administration figures out a direction to go. She opined that litigation will increase over the next two years due to over 80 ongoing cases that won't be going away anytime soon, along with potential new cases brought by other parties. She continued that after the two years, a decline in litigation is expected, leading to a more stable situation.

[4:14:35 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the claim that challenges Count 3 Section 504 [of the Rehabilitation Act] as unconstitutional in the Texas vs Becerra case was being withdrawn.

MS. MILLS answered that the claim challenging Section 504 as unconstitutional has not been withdrawn yet. She said a joint status report was filed recently with thirteen or fourteen other states, clarifying the intent of the claim. She stated that the plaintiffs do not plan to ask the court to enjoin Section 504 or declare it unconstitutional on its face. The claim is an "as-applied" challenge to a specific rule, arguing that if the rule is deemed to fit within the Rehabilitation Act, that interpretation would be unconstitutional.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that Section 504 prohibits discrimination against disabled individuals by any entities receiving federal funding. He asked if Section 504 includes the 15 percent of students in Alaska with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)—roughly 20,000 K-12 students.

MS. MILLS answered that the funding of Section 504 for services under Medicaid is not at risk from this lawsuit. She stated that the concern is a rule interpreting Section 504 under Medicaid creates inconsistencies that make it difficult for providers to meet the standards, potentially leading them to stop offering

services. She continued that the goal is to revert to the previous system to ensure continued funding and service provision. She stated that while the issue is complex, the intent is not to stop funding, but to address the challenges posed by the new rule's requirements.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if it's still the intention to not seek a strike down of Section 504.

MS. MILLS answered that the claim was poorly drafted and does [Department of Law] not intend to seek a strike-down of Section 504. A court document has been filed to clarify this position, under penalty of perjury.

[4:19:24 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked if adjusting the state's caps on non-economic relief awards for wrongful death (\$400,000) and personal injury (\$1,000,000) to better reflect an actuarial value of someone's life or limb impact the Department of Law.

[4:19:55 PM](#)

MS. MILLS answered that with increasing the caps on non-economic relief for wrongful death and personal injury could impact the state budget and risk management pool by leading to higher payouts in settlements or judgments. The Department of Law is generally successful at managing and keeping damages within appropriate ranges, higher caps would likely result in more lawsuits and potentially more money being paid out. She stated that adjusting the caps would be a policy decision for the legislature and executive branch to make.

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked whether adjusting the cap to reflect more accurate actuarial value would influence industry, state agencies, or others to take greater care to avoid killing or injuring people.

MS. MILLS answered that various factors influence decisions but compared to the rest of the world, the U.S. is already one of the more litigious societies. She stated she is uncertain how much of a difference increasing the caps will make.

[4:22:17 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked whether the attorney general or governor directs the state's participation in cases and how those decisions are made.

[4:23:17 PM](#)

MS. MILLS answered that the decision to join a multistate case is made through a consultation process between the attorney general and the governor, considering whether the case aligns with state interests. She stated that the attorney general's office provides legal services to the executive branch and reviews the case internally. A lead attorney is assigned to work with other states to ensure the state's interests are represented. She stated that the lack of clarity might be because the case may not be fully briefed yet, and the complaint was initially a notice pleading.

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked if the attorney general is the decision maker.

MS. MILLS answered that the decision to join a multistate lawsuit rest with the attorney general, in consultation with the governor.

CHAIR KAWASAKI stated that Section 504 should not be declared unconstitutional due to its importance for disabled veterans and children with IEPs. He stated that the case also raised concerns related to gender ideology. He asked if the attorney general signed on to the brief that seeks to strike down Section 504 because the case relates to gender ideology.

MS. MILLS stated that the state's primary concern in joining the lawsuit was not related to gender ideology, but to a provision in the rule regarding the adoption of the most integrated setting and the at serious risk of institutionalization of standards of care. She said the state believed the metrics were vague, created significant burdens for providers, and were almost impossible to meet. She said the state of Alaska and the Department of Health argued that the rule mischaracterized the Olmstead decision especially in Alaska's vast geography with limited mental health services. She stated that there were concerns with the threat of losing Medicaid funding if the standards were not met.

[4:27:57 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that the State of Alaska faces a significant issue regarding its reliance on natural gas with 70 percent of the state's energy coming from natural gas. He said with Hilcorp controlling 90 percent of the natural gas leases in the region, the Federal Trade Commission were worried they could manipulate prices or withhold gas. He said a consent decree gave the attorney general authority to monitor Hilcorp's compliance with drilling, production, and exploration obligations. He asked

if the attorney general has ever conducted an investigation or taken any action to ensure that consumers are protected from potential antitrust behavior.

[4:30:09 PM](#)

MS. MILLS answered that the attorney general's office cannot discuss specifics about whether an investigation is underway. She confirmed even without the consent decree; the office has the authority to investigate potential antitrust violations. She said the office will work in consultation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), as DNR is the expert in ensuring production, while the attorney general's office focuses on consumer protection.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that last year, Hilcorp threatened to shut down production in Cook Inlet if the legislature didn't rescind an amendment to close the S-Corp loophole. He said the legislature withdrew the action after the threat. He opined that this behavior seems like an abuse of market power. He asked if the attorney general's office will be monitoring the situation.

MS. MILLS responded that she will talk with the attorney general about the letter and how they intend to respond.

[4:32:42 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked about the state's obligation to adequately fund education and whether the state follows court orders in the Moore and Kasayulie cases.

MS. MILLS answered that the DOL hasn't received clear court guidance on what qualifies as adequate funding. She stated that in the Moore and Kasayulie cases, the judge didn't address funding levels but focused on outcomes, telling the state to step in and find a solution. That led to a settlement about ensuring rural REAA districts were treated equally with urban school districts in terms of facility funding. She stated that since rural districts lack revenue streams, the court emphasized fairness but didn't set specific funding standards.

[4:35:02 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI said a few years ago, the Kenai grand jury was investigating potential corruption within both the judicial branch and possibly the Department of Law. He continued that the Supreme Court intervened and implemented rules regarding the powers of grand juries. He asked to hear thoughts on that rule and whether people have felt like they can be open and expose potential corruption.

[4:35:41 PM](#)

MS. MILLS explained that the process of grand jury investigations are largely managed by prosecutors, as mandated by the Supreme Court but the attorney general has the gatekeeping role. She stated that the attorney general determines whether petitions to open grand jury investigations are valid. She said several applications have been received, with some applications resulting in grand jury investigations and others being denied for not meeting the required threshold. She said the department is working to make the process transparent by having a committee review applications to ensure they meet constitutional criteria before submission to the attorney general for a final decision.

[4:37:48 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked who is responsible for investigating credible corruption claims within the court system and the Department of Law.

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MS. MILLS stated that law enforcement can investigate criminal conduct if there is suspicion of a crime; the Judicial Conduct Commission handles complaints about judges; while the Alaska Bar Association addresses concerns about attorney ethics. She said the Ombudsman's Office, which operates independently within the legislative branch, investigates systemic corruption within state government. She stated that there is a constitutional provision for an investigative grand jury focused on public safety and welfare. She emphasized that the public could submit concerns for review.

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked what legislative changes would be recommended to establish how an investigative grand jury is initiated, who should oversee it, and how it can remain separate from the judicial system and the Department of Law. He opined the attorney general should not be the gatekeeper.

MS. MILLS agreed the attorney general should not be the gatekeeper for the investigative grand jury process. She stated that someone in Department of Law is currently focused on making the existing process more transparent and exploring future options. She said while the Department of Law doesn't have an immediate solution, they are open to continued discussions and are actively working on finding a way forward.

[4:43:25 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI stated that unlike Alaska, some states elect their attorney general, creating a different dynamic. He said legislators are subject to investigations through the legislative ethics committee made up of both lawmakers and citizens. He stated that the committee is an important check and balance giving people the right to challenge the actions of legislators.

[4:44:19 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the deputy attorney general can address the issue of prosecutorial delays. He said there was an article in the Anchorage Daily News discussing the delays in prosecutions. The article includes a sexual assault case from 2017 that was witnessed by police and others and had DNA evidence. That case was delayed 50 time before going to trial seven years later. He stated that the article also mentioned in the past year, only seven criminal cases went to trial within the 120-day limit. He asked what was needed from the legislature to help speed up the process and whether she believes the situation has been resolved.

[4:45:05 PM](#)

MS. MILLS said she is not the best person to discuss prosecutorial delays but knows Director Kemp and Deputy Attorney General Skidmore have addressed the issue in other hearings. She emphasized the Department of Law does not want delays and is working to document the departments readiness for trial to make it clear the department is committed to moving cases forward. She mentioned that there are various reasons for delays and encouraged the committee to hear directly from Director Kemp and Deputy Attorney General Skidmore, who have been dealing with the court system, defense, and the overall criminal justice system, particularly after COVID.

[4:47:26 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 4:47 p.m.