

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 20, 2025

3:41 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

SENATE BILL NO. 64

"An Act relating to elections; relating to voters; relating to voting; relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age; relating to voter registration; relating to the Alaska Public Offices Commission; relating to synthetic media in electioneering communications; relating to campaign signs; relating to public official financial disclosures; relating to the crime of unlawful interference with voting in the first degree; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 120

"An Act establishing the Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission; and relating to the powers and duties of the Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 107

"An Act establishing a violation for hindering the Alaska Sunset Commission; establishing the Alaska Sunset Commission to review, audit, and make recommendations on discontinuation of or changes to state entities; and relating to the powers and duties of the Alaska Sunset Commission."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13
Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska
relating to the appointment of state judges by the governor.

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 25
"An Act relating to information on judicial officers seeking
retention in office."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 64
SHORT TITLE: ELECTIONS
SPONSOR(s): RULES

01/24/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/25	(S)	STA, FIN
01/30/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
01/30/25	(S)	Heard & Held
01/30/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
02/04/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/04/25	(S)	Heard & Held
02/04/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/11/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/11/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/11/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/13/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/13/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/13/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/18/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/18/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/18/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/20/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 120
SHORT TITLE: CLIMATE CHANGE COMMISSION
SPONSOR(s): GRAY-JACKSON

03/05/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/05/25	(S)	STA, FIN
03/13/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/13/25	(S)	Scheduled but Not Heard
03/20/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 107

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA SUNSET COMMISSION

SPONSOR(s): HUGHES

02/19/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/25 (S) STA, FIN
03/20/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SJR 13

SHORT TITLE: APPOINTMENT OF STATE JUDGES

SPONSOR(s): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

02/28/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/28/25 (S) STA, JUD
03/20/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

DAVID DUNSMORE, Staff
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the summary of changes for SB 64.

DEIRDRE GOINS, Staff
Senator Gray-Jackson
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the sectional analysis for SB 120.

LEILA PYLE, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 120.

HAJO EISKEN, Director
International Arctic Research Center
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 120.

BRENTWOOD HIGMAN, representing self
Seldovia, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 120.

BEN BOETTGER, Energy Policy Analyst Specialist
Cook Inlet Keeper
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 120.

MIKE COONS, representing self
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 120.

CISCO MERCADO, Policy Director
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 120.

KEN GRIFFIN, representing self
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 120.

BRITTANI ROBBINS, representing self
Wrangell, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 120.

MADELEINE BASS, Alaska Youth for the Environmental Action
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 120.

SENATOR SHELLY HUGHES
District M
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 107.

MEAD TREADWELL, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 107.

EIELIA PRESTON, Staff
Senator Shelly Hughes
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an overview of SB 107.

ERIK BEVERLY, Executive Director
Texas Sunset Commission
Austin, Texas

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 107.

DENNIS HULL, State Affairs Manager
Americans for Tax Reform
Washington, D.C.

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 107.

TREG TAYLOR, Attorney General
State of Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SJR 13.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:41:10 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:41 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Wielechowski, Gray-Jackson, Yundt and Chair Kawasaki. Senator Bjorkman arrived thereafter.

SB 64 - ELECTIONS

[3:42:14 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 64 "An Act relating to elections; relating to voters; relating to voting; relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age; relating to voter registration; relating to the Alaska Public Offices Commission; relating to synthetic media in electioneering communications; relating to campaign signs; relating to public official financial disclosures; relating to the crime of unlawful interference with voting in the first degree; and providing for an effective date."

[3:42:31 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI solicited a motion.

[3:42:39 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON moved to adopt the committee substitute (CS) for SB 64, work order 34-LS0153\T, as the working document.

[3:42:53 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI objected for purposes of discussion.

[3:43:09 PM](#)

DAVID DUNSMORE, Staff, Senator Bill Wielechowski, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented the summary of changes for SB 64:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Summary of Changes Draft CS Version H to Draft CS
Version T

The following provisions were **removed** from the bill:

- All provisions related to allowing voters to register to vote within 30 days of an election.
- Section 6 and Section 35 subsection (n) related to printing materials in other languages.

[3:43:40 PM](#)

MR. DUNSMORE continued with the summary of changes:

The following provisions were **added** to the bill:

- Section 14 clarifying that for contributions made to influence the results of ballot measures or questions that the entity making the contribution is considered the true source of the contribution.
- Section 29 setting the deadline for all absentee ballots to be received at 10 days following the election. Under current law, ballots being returned from outside the United States may be received up to 15 days after the election.
- Section 43 adds the provisions of the original bill related to synthetic media which were removed in the previously adopted working document.

The following **changes** were made to existing provisions in the bill:

- In Section 10, language is added clarifying that the process for a voter to cancel their registration must require the voter to verify their identity.
- In Section 19, language is added clarifying that precincts that hand count results only need to count the first-choice rankings.
- In Section 32, the date for absentee ballot review to begin is changed from 10 days to 12 days before the election.

[3:45:33 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI said the process has been collaborative, involving many meetings with stakeholders, legislators from both parties, and the administration. SB 64 isn't final yet and will likely see more changes but progress has been made toward a better product and building broad consensus.

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CHAIR KAWASAKI removed his objection. He found no further objection and CSSB 64 was adopted as the working document.

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CHAIR KAWASAKI held SB 64 in committee.

SB 120-CLIMATE CHANGE COMMISSION

3:46:53 PM

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 120 "An Act establishing the Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission; and relating to the powers and duties of the Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission."

3:47:16 PM

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON speaking as sponsor, presented a summary of SB 120:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today on an issue that affects every Alaskan—climate instability and the urgent need for our state to take decisive action. Alaska is at the forefront of global warming, and our communities, economy, and way of life are already feeling the consequences.

In 2019, record-breaking heat led to massive fish die-offs and destructive wildfires like the Swan Lake Fire. Just last year, Typhoon Merbok caused catastrophic flooding along our western coastline. Infrastructure is crumbling due to permafrost thaw, and coastal erosion is forcing communities to relocate. Traditional hunting and fishing practices are being disrupted, threatening food security for our most vulnerable communities.

We must act now. Senate Bill 120 would establish the Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission to coordinate efforts, secure funding, and develop

strategies to mitigate and adapt to these growing challenges. Investing in preparedness is far more cost-effective than reacting to disasters after the fact. Senate Bill 120 is a step in the right direction.

I urge you to support this bill and take meaningful action to protect Alaska's future. Together, we can ensure our state remains resilient and prosperous in the face of climate change.

[3:49:36 PM](#)

DEIRDRE GOINS, Staff, Senator Gray-Jackson, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided the sectional analysis for SB 120:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Sectional Analysis - Version A

Section 1- Adds a new subsection to AS 44.19.

The legislature finds that a state of emergency exists because of the threat climate change poses to communities, traditional ways of living, fish and game populations, natural ecosystems and the economy of Alaska.

Section 2- Adds new sections to AS 44.19.

Article 6. Alaska climate Change Emergency Response Commission.

Sec. 44.19.651 Commission established.

The Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission is established in the Office of the Governor.

[3:50:31 PM](#)

MS. GOINS continued with the sectional analysis of SB 120:

Sec. 44.19.653 Composition of Commission

The commission will contain 15 members, six will be departmental representatives who serve by virtue of office, and nine will be municipal representatives.

(b) The following departmental representatives shall serve by virtue of office:

- (1) the commissioner of fish and game;
- (2) the commissioner of environmental conservation;
- (3) the commissioner of natural resources;
- (4) the commissioner of commerce, community, and economic development (CCED);
- (5) the commissioner of transportation and public facilities;
- (6) the director of the division in CCED responsible for community and regional affairs.

(c) The governor shall appoint nine municipal representatives to the commission. Each municipal representative must be a mayor, or a member of the assembly or council. The Governor's appointees shall be from:

- (1) Northwest Alaska, including, generally, the area of the North Slope Borough and the Northwest Arctic Borough;
- (2) Bering Strait area, including the Bering Strait regional educational attendance area;
- (3) Southwest Alaska, including the area within the Lower Yukon, Lower Kuskokwim, and Southwest regional educational attendance areas and the Lake and Peninsula and Bristol Bay Boroughs;
- (4) Kodiak-Aleutians area, including the area of the Kodiak Island and Aleutians East Boroughs and the Aleutian, Adak, and Pribilof regional educational attendance areas;
- (5) Upper Cook Inlet area, including the Municipality of Anchorage and the MatanuskaSusitna Borough;
- (6) Lower Cook Inlet area, including the area within the Kenai Peninsula Borough;
- (7) Prince William Sound area, including the area east of the Kenai Peninsula Borough to 141 West longitude;
- (8) northern Southeast Alaska, including the area southeast of 141 degrees West longitude and north

of 57 degrees North latitude and the entirety of the City and Borough of Sitka,

(9) southern Southeast Alaska, including the portion of Southeast Alaska not contained in the area described in (8) of this subsection.

(d) Municipal representatives serve at the pleasure of the governor. Municipal representatives serve staggered terms of three years, until reappointed or replaced. A municipal representative may be reappointed. If a municipal representative ceases to be a mayor, assembly, or council member in the municipality the governor appointed them to represent, that representative's seat becomes vacant. If a municipal representative's seat becomes vacant for any reason before the expiration of that representative's term, the governor shall, within 30 days after the occurrence of the vacancy, appoint a municipal representative from the same region to serve the unexpired portion of the term.

(e) The commission shall, by majority vote, elect co-chairs. One co-chair shall be a departmental member, and one co-chair shall be a municipal member.

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MS. GOINS continued with the sectional analysis of SB 120:

Sec. 44.19.655. Compensation.

Members of the commission serve without compensation but are entitled to per diem and travel expenses authorized for boards and commissions under AS 39.20.180.

Sec. 44.19.657. Meetings.

Three departmental representative members designated under AS 44.19.653(b) and four municipal representative members appointed under AS 44.19.653(c) constitute a quorum for conducting business and exercising the powers of the commission. The commission shall meet at least quarterly, at the call of a cochair, at the request of the majority of the members, or at a regularly scheduled time as determined by a majority of the members. The commission shall keep and make available for public inspection a record of proceedings

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MS. GOINS continued with the sectional analysis of SB 120:

Sec. 44.19.659. Alternate Members.

(a) Each member of the commission shall have a permanent alternate to serve at meetings of the commission as follows:

(1) For a municipal representative member appointed under AS 44.19.653(c), the governor shall appoint a permanent alternate who at the time of appointment and throughout the period of service as a permanent alternate, is the mayor or a member of the assembly or council of a municipality within the same region as the permanently appointed member; in doing so the governor shall consider the recommendations of the permanent member;

(2) For a departmental representative member designated under AS 44.19.653(b)(1)-(5), a deputy commissioner of the relevant department or the director of a division of the department; and

(3) For a departmental representative member designated under AS 44.19.653(b)(6), the member's designee within that office.

(b) A member of the commission who is unable to attend a meeting shall advise the permanent alternate, who may attend and act in their place.

Sec. 44.19.661. Executive Director.

The commission may employ an executive director who serves at the pleasure of the commission. The executive director may not be a member of the commission. The executive director may contract with or employ personnel or consultants that the executive director considers necessary to carry out the powers and duties of the commission. The executive director is in the exempt service under AS 39.25 (State Personnel Act).

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MS. GOINS continued with the sectional analysis of SB 120:

Sec. 44.19.663. Powers of the commission.

The commission may:

(1) Apply for and accept grants, contributions, and appropriations, including application for and acceptance of federal, international, or private funds that may become available for financing infrastructure adaptation, renewable energy technology, community relocation, food and transportation security, education and research, or other needs related to climate change;

(2) contract for necessary services;

(3) consult and cooperate with

(A) public or private persons, organizations and groups interested in, affected by, or concerned with climate change effects and response;

(B) climate scientists holding doctorate degrees who are affiliated with an academic or nonprofit institution; and

(C) agents and officials in the different regions of the state and federal agencies concerned with or with jurisdiction over climate change effects and response;

(4) establish the duties of the executive director of the commission;

(5) assess fees for grant writing and other assistance; and

(6) take any reasonable action necessary to carry out the provisions of AS 44.19.651-44.19.672.

Sec. 44.19.665. Duties of the commission.

The commission shall

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MS. GOINS continued with the sectional analysis of SB 120:

(1) prepare a strategic response plan to address climate change threats that includes

(A) identification of areas in the state and sectors of the state economy that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change;

(B) options for assisting communities and sectors of the economy identified as being particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change; and

(C) Identification of specific threats posed by climate change on areas in the state and sectors of the state economy and a course of action to address the identified threats;

(2) provide grant writing and general assistance to governmental and nongovernmental entities in the state on climate change response issues, prioritizing assistance to rural governments, nonprofits serving rural areas, and tribal organizations;

(3) develop a program for the distribution of funds to assist local governments to respond to climate change effects;

(4) establish continuing coordination among state agencies to facilitate the development and implementation of the climate change response strategy;

(5) coordinate with the University of Alaska in efforts to seek out grants or other aid for climate change education and research;

(6) inform the public of available assistance for responding to climate change effects, including an outreach program to rural governments, nonprofits serving rural areas, and tribal organizations;

(7) advance the implementation of technology that provides for renewable energy, local food systems, and adaptive infrastructure in the state by recommending legislation and policies to incentivize its development;

(8) monitor and report on the effects of climate change on existing infrastructure, ecosystems, geophysical features, and communities in the state;

(9) identify opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from instate sources, including the expanded use of alternative fuels, energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, land use management, and transportation planning; and

(10) recommend legislative and administrative action to implement the climate change response strategy.

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MS. GOINS continued with the sectional analysis of SB 120:

Sec. 44.19.667. Fees

Requires the commission to adopt regulations under AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act) to establish fees for grant writing or other assistance provided to a client. Fees must be based on a sliding scale considering the client's need. Government and tribal clients may not be charged a fee.

Sec. 44.19.669. Annual report and recommendations.

This commission must submit an annual report to the governor and legislature of activities for the previous calendar year including a list of threats identified by the commission, an assessment of progress in addressing the threats, an assessment of compliance with the strategic response plan, and any recommendations for legislative and administrative action. The commission shall submit a report under this section not later than February 1 of each year and shall deliver the report to the senate secretary and the chief clerk of the house of representatives and notify the legislature that the report is available.

Sec. 44.19.672. Definition.

In AS 44.19.651-44.19.672, "commission" means the Alaska climate Change Emergency Response commission.

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MS. GOINS continued with the sectional analysis of SB 120:

Section 3-Adds a new section to read:

TERMS OF INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE ALASKA CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMISSION. Notwithstanding AS 39.05.055, the governor shall appoint the initial members of the Alaska Climate change Emergency Response Commission under AS 44.19.653[©] to staggered terms as follows:

- (1) three members shall be appointed to serve three years;
- (2) three members shall be appointed to serve two years; and
- (3) three members shall be appointed to serve one year.

Section 4- Adds a new section to read:

TRANSITION: WRITTEN INFORMATION FROM CLIMATE CHANGE SUB-CABINET. The governor shall provide all written reports, recommendations, and research developed by the Climate Change Sub-cabinet established under Administrative Order No. 238 to the Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission established under AS 44.19.651 within 30 days after the effective date of this Act.

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CHAIR KAWASAKI announced invited testimony and opened public testimony on SB 120.

[4:00:57 PM](#)

LEILA PYLE, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of SB 120 and stated this legislation would help communities respond and adapt to climate impacts, such as erosion, permafrost melt, and changing food systems. She shared that while involved in her work with Alaska Youth for Environmental Action, young people across the state have expressed worry about the effect of climate change on infrastructure, livelihoods, and culture. Many communities, especially coastal and northern ones, are already facing severe challenges, including loss of subsistence foods like caribou. She urged the state to act now, calling SB 120 a vital step toward protecting Alaska's future.

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HAJO EISKEN, Director, International Arctic Research Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of SB 120 and emphasized that Alaska's valuable assets such as infrastructure, homes, livelihoods, and Department of Defense facilities are vulnerable to extreme weather and environmental changes. Protecting them requires planning, preparation, and adaptation, which can also create workforce and economic opportunities where Alaska could lead nationally. He encouraged legislators to draw on the University of Alaska's expertise, highlighting tools like the Northern Climate Reports and the Alaska Wildfire Explorer, which provide climate projections, preparedness guidance, and wildfire risk data. The university also supports tribes, collaborates with federal agencies, and develops resilience tools for both military and private sector infrastructure. The research center's work focuses on using research and data to help communities adapt, safeguard infrastructure, and keep people safe.

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BRENTWOOD HIGMAN, representing self, Seldovia, Alaska, testified in support of SB 120 and stated a few of his concerns including a slope above Portage Lake that could fail and trigger a tsunami, endangering lives and severing key transportation and utility links. He noted that permafrost melt is causing more slope failures along the Dalton Highway, which could cut off the highway or damage the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Another concern is the potential for a landslide-triggered tsunami in a fjord to strike a cruise ship or tour boat, causing major loss of life and harming the tourism industry. He stressed the need for proactive planning to prevent disasters instead of reacting after they occur.

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BEN BOETTGER, Energy Policy Analyst Specialist, Cook Inlet Keeper, Soldotna, Alaska, testified in support of SB 120 and noted that climate change will have complex and unpredictable effects on Alaska's infrastructure, landscape, economy, public health, and way of life. He recalled the record-breaking 2019 heat wave, when parts of the Kenai region hit 90-degrees Fahrenheit for the first time, triggering wildfires, road closures, power outages, drought, and threats to drinking water. A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) study found that human caused climate change greatly increased the likelihood of such heat waves, which could occur every other year under moderate emissions scenarios. He stressed the

importance of gathering and analyzing climate data and using it to help tribes and local governments prepare for future threats.

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MIKE COONS, representing self, Wasilla, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 120 and expressed strong skepticism about climate change, calling the change a "lie" and attributing extreme weather events to natural causes such as storms, lightning, and earthquakes rather than human activity. He doubted the value of creating a new climate commission, suggesting it would be ineffective and likely dismantled if political control shifts. He framed climate issues as natural weather patterns rather than a human-caused crisis.

[4:15:59 PM](#)

Senator Bjorkman joined the meeting.

[4:16:57 PM](#)

CISCO MERCADO, Policy Director, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 120 and expressed that Alaska and the Arctic are warming four times faster than the global average, causing sea ice loss, melting permafrost, infrastructure damage, and community displacement. He described how storms like Typhoon Merbok in 2022 devastated western Alaska, destroying homes, utilities, and coastal land, while wildfires and flooding are also increasing in frequency and severity. He shared his experience with Hurricane Katrina and stressed that even well-connected cities can suffer catastrophic consequences without proper planning and Alaska's remote, roadless communities face even greater risks. He said with "once-in-a-generation" storms now occurring more often, he questioned how the state would protect isolated populations when travel by road, air, or sea is impossible. He urged support for creating a climate change commission to develop a comprehensive strategy for protecting vulnerable communities and preparing for inevitable future disasters.

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KEN GRIFFIN, representing self, Wasilla, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 120 and argued that while the climate will always change, spending vast sums on climate initiatives would destroy Alaska's economy without making measurable progress. He highlighted the state's \$1.7 billion deficit, declining federal funds, and lack of new revenue, warning that projected income from future projects like the gas pipeline is years away and insufficient. He criticized the idea of burdening taxpayers with costly climate programs when Alaska is "out of money" and oil

revenues are falling. He stressed that lawmakers have a fiduciary duty to protect taxpayer funds and should focus on economic realities rather than emotions. He concluded that the state cannot afford such measures and that the private sector, not government, creates the wealth being spent.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that according to research studies 97 percent of scientists agree humans are causing global warming and climate change.

[4:26:08 PM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN answered that there is a lot of data on the web. He said the EPA released a study showing the Earth isn't heating up overall, with most warming detected only in urban areas due to human activity and infrastructure. He argued that peer-reviewed studies have disproven climate models related to CO2, stating that increased CO2 benefits plants by helping them absorb more carbon. He concluded that the data disproving mainstream climate change theories is available for anyone to see.

[4:26:59 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI commented that according to the EPA website human activities have clearly caused global warming since the industrial era, affecting the intensity, frequency, and duration of extreme weather and climate events.

[4:27:49 PM](#)

BRITTANI ROBBINS, representing self, Wrangell, Alaska, testified in support of SB 120 and shared their personal experience living in Southeast Alaska for over 40 years, noting dramatic changes due to climate change. She recalled snowy winters with deep snow and frozen lakes perfect for skating, but now their children rarely see snow or ice. She described a deadly 2023 landslide caused by unprecedented rain and winds that destroyed homes, a highway, and emergency access roads, highlighting increased landslide risks across the island. She recounted a powerful 2021 windstorm that knocked out power for miles by toppling trees and poles. These events illustrate the serious and ongoing impacts of climate change on the community and daily life.

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MADELEINE BASS, Alaska Youth for the Environmental Action, Juneau, Alaska, testified in support of SB 120 and emphasized Alaska's urgent need for funding to address environmental and community challenges caused by climate change. She cited SB 120, which declares a state of emergency due to climate threats

impacting communities, the economy, traditional ways of life, and ecosystems. She said many rural areas face food insecurity, unreliable transportation, and loss of wildlife that threatens subsistence and commercial fishing livelihoods. Homes are at risk from flooding and erosion, and much of Alaska's infrastructure is deteriorating. SB 120 proposes a climate commission with experts and representatives from all regions and key departments to develop science-based solutions.

[CHAIR KAWASAKI held SB 120 in committee.]

[4:35:19 PM](#)

At ease.

SB 107-ALASKA SUNSET COMMISSION

[4:36:23 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 107 "An Act establishing a violation for hindering the Alaska Sunset Commission; establishing the Alaska Sunset Commission to review, audit, and make recommendations on discontinuation of or changes to state entities; and relating to the powers and duties of the Alaska Sunset Commission."

[4:36:45 PM](#)

SENATOR SHELLY HUGHES, District M, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, as sponsor of SB 107 she offered brief remarks and stating the bill would establish a sunset commission, an independent, unpaid panel with budget and efficiency expertise to review state agencies through finance and performance audits. This commission would submit recommended bills to the legislature to decide whether to continue or end ("sunset") an agency's operations. The commission's recommendations aim to help the governor and legislature create a more efficient budget and ensure taxpayers get better value. Similar commissions in other states have saved hundreds of millions of dollars by improving agency operations. SB 107 is designed to help control spending and contribute to Alaska's overall fiscal stability.

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MEAD TREADWELL, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 107 and stated three points:

- The current sunseting process is disorganized, driven by frustration and deficits, but SB 107 offers a more structured approach with healthy debate.

- It's important to review federal authority delegation, as some agencies bring decision-making closer to Alaskans even if costly.
- The legislators should address duplicated efforts and use technology to improve efficiency, like cloud computing, to reduce costs.

MR. TREADWELL said overall, SB 107 promotes a clearer, more organized way to review government operations.

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EIELIA PRESTON, Staff, Senator Shelly Hughes, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented an overview of SB 107 and moved to slide 2, Alaska Would be in Good Company. She said 10 states have Sunset Commissions and Alaska can learn from the experiences and methods of those states to be successful.

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MS. PRESTON moved to slide 3, What Would Alaska's Sunset Commission Do:

[Original punctuation provided.]

- Audits of all performance and finance of all departments (divisions, sections, offices, etc.) on a rotating basis
- Determine whether each entity should be continued, modified, consolidated with another entity, terminated, or enhanced
- Recommends efficiency and cost-saving improvements to entities that are to be continued, modified, or consolidated in a bill draft submitted to legislature

[4:45:22 PM](#)

MS. PRESTON moved to slide 4, Composition of Commission. She stated that the commission would be a team of seven that must have a combination of credentials:

[Original punctuation provided.]

- Financial management
- Budgeting
- Economics

- Business operations
- Process improvement
- Government efficiency

MS. PRESTON noted that each person must hold qualifications in at least one or more areas.

[4:45:54 PM](#)

MS. PRESTON moved to slide 5, Sunset Commission; How it Would Work, and stated that SB 107 allows the Sunset Commission to hire expert staff, present recommendations in bill form, and involve the public twice in the review process. Agencies would either continue with improvements or be abolished, with functions transferred to the commissioner's office for up to a year.

[4:47:14 PM](#)

MS. PRESTON moved to slide 6, Impact of Sunset Commission, and stated that in Texas, the sunset process has streamlined government by abolishing or consolidating nearly 100 agencies and programs, saving \$1 billion and generating an \$18 return for every \$1 spent since 1985. Since 2001, 80 percent of the recommendations from its 570 agency reviews have become state law.

[4:48:00 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES moved to slide 7, The Impact of a Sunset Commission, and read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

- Higher level of government accountability and performance
- Dissolved state entities that are redundant, ineffective, or inefficient
- Improved policies and procedures for public services
- Millions of dollars in savings that can be reallocated toward other budget areas where needed
- Targeted revenue resources to ensure efficient and effective government services
- Encourage greater participation and public input

SENATOR HUGHES stated that the Sunset Commission audit process includes two opportunities for public input and, while housed in

the executive branch for constitutional reasons, operates independently from the governor's authority.

[4:49:52 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced invited testimony on SB 107.

[4:51:06 PM](#)

ERIK BEVERLY, Executive Director, Texas Sunset Commission, Austin, Texas, testified by invitation on SB 107 and stated that the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission is a legislative agency that reviews state agencies to determine if they are still needed and how well they serve the public. Unless lawmakers vote to continue an agency, it will be abolished. He said the Commission is made up of legislators and public members, supported by professional staff. The commission operates in three phases: evaluation (research and public input), deliberation (public hearings and decision meetings), and legislative action (passing bills based on recommendations). He said since 1977, the process has saved taxpayers over \$1 billion, eliminated or consolidated dozens of agencies, and improved government efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Most agencies are reviewed every 12 years, with about 22 reviews conducted each year. He stated that in the current session, they have identified \$147 million in potential additional savings.

[4:57:19 PM](#)

DENNIS HULL, State Affairs Manager, Americans for Tax Reform, Washington, D.C., testified by invitation on SB 107 and stated Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), founded in 1985 at President Reagan's request, advocates for lower taxes and smaller, accountable government and is best achieved by removing government from "autopilot." He argued that agencies often request and receive budget increases without adequate scrutiny due to a lack of financial transparency. SB 107 addresses that gap by creating a Sunset Commission that reviews agencies, drafts recommendations directly into bill form, holds public hearings, and sunsets agencies if action isn't taken. ATR supports SB 107 as a serious, well-structured reform with expert input and real accountability, unlike many similar efforts in other states.

[5:01:32 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES stated her belief that SB 107 is the piece of the puzzle that will put the state of Alaska back in order.

[5:01:56 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SB 107 in committee.

SJR 13-APPOINTMENT OF STATE JUDGES

[5:02:03 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13 Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to the appointment of state judges by the governor.

[5:03:03 PM](#)

TREG TAYLOR, Attorney General, State of Alaska, presented SJR 13 and stated that the Governor's proposal aims to restore public trust in Alaska's judicial system by shifting some authority from the Alaska Judicial Council to the legislature and Governor. The legislature would set detailed qualifications for judges, and the Governor could choose from all qualified candidates, adjusting the checks and balances between branches to increase confidence in the judiciary.

[5:07:37 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SJR 13 in committee.

[5:08:27 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 5:08 p.m.