

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE ETHICS  
NOVEMBER 12, 2024  
12:00 PM**

**FULL COMMITTEE MEETING**

[12:01:35 PM](#)

**1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:**

Chair Deb Fancher called together the Full Committee meeting of November 12, 2024, at 12:01 PM. She directed Administrator Kevin Reeve to conduct roll call.

**Roll Call**

Senator David Wilson  
Senator Donny Olson  
Representative Mike Prax  
Representative Sara Hannan  
Skip Cook  
Conner Thomas  
Chair Deb Fancher  
Jerry McBeath

With eight members present, there was a quorum to conduct business.

**Others**

Administrator Kevin Reeve  
Jacqueline Yeagle

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**2. UPDATE ON PUBLIC COMMITTEE MEMBER APPOINTMENTS**

Chair Deb Fancher said public members are appointed for a three year term by the chief justice of the Alaska Supreme Court. Conner Thomas's appointment expires in 2025, and he has expressed his willingness and desire to continue as a member of the Ethics Committee. Chair Fancher added there is an alternate public member vacancy, and she encouraged anyone interested to apply.

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### **3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Deb Fancher entertained a motion to approve the agenda.

Conner Thomas proposed moving items from the executive session agenda to the public agenda:

- b. Legislative changes update
- c. Election of officers at January meeting
- e. Public member announcement process changes
- f. Intern in office
- g. Engagement
- h. Electronic binders
- i. 2025 Committee appointments for the elected members

Chair Deb Fancher explained that executive session is intended for only two or three types of discussion as outlined in AS 25.60.160; Uniform Rule 22(b); and the Rules of Procedure Section 5. The items Conner Thomas proposed moving to public session do not qualify for executive session.

Chair Deb Fancher entertained discussion or objections to moving the items to public session.

Representative Sara Hannan asked where in the agenda the items would move.

Chair Deb Fancher replied that the items would go after item 6d in the staff report.

There was no other discussion and no objections. The committee approved the modified agenda.

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### **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- a. Chair Deb Fancher entertained approval of the February 16, 2024, Full committee meeting minutes. There were no objections. The committee approved the minutes.

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## **5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Deb Fancher opened the meeting to public comment.

After handing each of the committee members a document, Dr. Theresa Obermeyer said she is working on an initiative in support of Alaska electing the attorney general. Alaska is the only state that does not have an American Bar Association accredited law school and the only state that has no elected office holder who is required to be a member of the Alaska Bar Association. She asked the committee members to review the information she provided.

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## **6. CHAIR/STAFF REPORT**

### **a. Staff Reports of Informal Advice**

Administrator Kevin Reeve introduced the staff report and invited questions or comments about the report.

Committee members offered minor spelling and grammar edits.

Jerry McBeath inquired why it would not be a conflict of interest for a legislator to allow use of their government office in the filming of a documentary for a non-profit group. Jacqueline Yeagle replied using a legislative office in the manner described is not a conflict of interest. Senator David Wilson concurred. Representative Sara Hannan noted that the relevant facts were that the office was not used for campaign purposes and the film would not be released until after the election.

### **b. Revised Complaint Form**

Administrator Kevin Reeve noted the committee had requested the changes. He asked the committee to review the changes and offer comments or questions. There was no discussion. The revised complaint form was approved.

### **c. COGEL Conference Update**

Five individuals plan to attend the 2024 COGEL conference. Registration fees have been paid. All attendees should be making travel arrangements.

### **d. 2025 Ethics Training Update**

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Administrator Kevin Reeve reviewed the planned training dates, noting the date at the end of January coincides with a training opportunity for committee members. The January 17 training for continuing staff is in person only.

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**7. STATE BENEFIT AND LOAN PROGRAM REVIEW**

Chair Deb Fancher explained that every year the committee approves changes to the list of state benefit and loan programs that require disclosure. There are no additions or deletions proposed for 2025, however, the Department of Natural Resources moved eight of the programs from the Economic Development Division to the Division of Investments.

Conner Thomas confirmed his understanding that the programs would stay on the list, only listed under a different the division within the department. Chair Deb Fancher affirmed Conner Thomas's understanding.

Representative Sara Hannan suggested that Kevin Reeve alert legislators and staff to the division change during training to avoid copying and pasting incorrect information on disclosures.

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Chair Deb Fancher returned to the executive session agenda items that were moved to public session.

b. Legislative changes update

Senator David Wilson reported Senator Löki Tobin would take the lead on future ethics legislation changes. He predicted Dan Wayne's return to Legislative Legal will prove helpful in the legislation change process.

c. Election of officers at January meeting

Administrator Kevin Reeve reminded the committee that chair positions would rotate with the new session in January.

e. Public member announcement process changes

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Administrator Kevin Reeve proposed changes to the public member vacancy recruitment process in order to increase interest in serving. He directed the committee to the changes to the draft vacancy announcement, including a change that emphasizes how the alternate public member duties and functions differ from those of the regular public members.

Administrator Kevin Reeve added the current chief justice is retiring on January 14, 2025, and the office has been working with his successor, Susan Carney, to arrange for a committee appointment letter to be sent during the first week of next session.

Representative Sara Hannan asked, given the timing of Chief Justice Maassen's retirement and the start of Chief Justice Carney's term, if they could end up nominating different public members. Kevin Reeve replied that he is working with both chief justices to ensure an uncomplicated nomination process.

Senator David Wilson noted it is common for the chief justice to send the letter of nomination to the speaker of the house and the senate president in the first week of session.

Jerry McBeath asked how the vacancy positions are advertised. Deb Fancher replied that the vacancy announcements were sent to all legislators and legislative staff. Legislators are asked to share the vacancy notice in their own newsletters.

Representative Sara Hannan suggested re-sending the request to legislators as they may have not sent newsletters during the campaign period. Chair Deb Fancher added that the vacancy announcement might also be included in the next Ethics Committee Advisor. In addition to the vacancy announcement, she also advised including planned training dates and updates to the state benefit and loan programs.

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f. Intern in office

Administrator Kevin Reeve addressed the backlog of work in the office. He recommended hiring an intern to help the office catch up with filing, records keeping, and other

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office tasks. An intern would benefit by getting exposure to the legislature and the Ethics Committee in particular.

Senator David Wilson moved to allow Kevin Reeve to explore the intern option. Chair Deb Fancher entertained discussion.

Jerry McBeath expressed concern about the nature of the work the intern would do, given the confidentiality aspects of the work, the qualifications required that would be required of the intern, and what the compensation would be in terms of [school] credit. He proposed Kevin Reeve consider the committee's questions and report his findings to the committee in January.

Representative Sara Hannan wondered if the office has capacity to teach an intern or if it would be more beneficial to temporarily hire or contract with someone.

Chair Deb Fancher asked if there were objections to the administrator's exploration for an additional person in the office. There were no objections.

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g. Engagement

Administrator Kevin Reeve noted there were a number of misconceptions about the committee. He proposed increasing public engagement to educate the public and also working with media outlets to support their journalistic integrity. He reported he had recently worked with a media outlet for that purpose and his efforts seem to have been fruitful. He asked the committee if they wanted him to continue his pursuits in this area.

Representative Sara Hannan cautioned that general public engagement may be contradictory at the same time as legislators are considering changes to the Ethics Act. Deb Fancher generally agreed and added that educating the legislators and legislative employees about the committee still has value. She added she and Joyce Anderson had presented to a couple of community groups and those presentations were well received.

Representative Mike Prax advised designing the ethics webpage for a public audience.

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Senator David Wilson agreed with Representative Sara Hannan that public education about the committee will happen naturally as the ethics legislation changes work their way through the legislative bodies. He noted that the Office of Victim Advocacy also struggles with public perception issues and he suggested working together with them may prove valuable.

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Jerry McBeath opined it is a civic education problem and he agrees with Representative Sara Hannan that public education about the committee needs to be focused and in a way that makes sense.

Chair Deb Fancher entertained committee discussion about offering a lunch and learn.

Conner Thomas wondered if there would be interest in a lunch and learn given time constraints in Juneau.

Representative Sara Hannan stated that lunch and learns are restricted from promoting legislation and would have to be scheduled prior to the introduction of new legislation.

Representative Mike Prax urged the committee to make the web page the priority. He argued it should be a one-stop shop for a viewer to glean what the committee is about.

Chair Deb Fancher suggested the possibility of expanding ethics training to include information from the existing lunch and learn power point along with some of the answers to questions asked about the committee.

Senator David Wilson suggested exploring options at KTOO for raising the profile of community organizations.

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h. Electronic binders

Administrator Kevin Reeve proposed sending preliminary meeting packets electronically to committee members and having paper copies of the documents at the meeting.

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Senator David Wilson indicated he was fine with the idea but cautioned using password protection.

Deb Fancher asked if using password protection would require public members to use a legislative email address.

Administrator Kevin Reeve offered to get more information about password protection and speculated Deb Fancher's concern was surmountable.

Representative Sara Hannan asked Senator David Wilson if he proposed only password protecting executive session documents.

Jerry McBeath protested the cost of printing his own packet.

Skip Cook suggested going to the local LIO to print it out.

Representative Sara Hannan asked if some members could still receive a packet in the mail.

Administrator Kevin Reeve said he will inquire how members want to receive their packets for each meeting.

i. 2025 Committee appointments for the elected members

Administrator Kevin Reeve reminded legislators of the importance that legislative member appointments occur prior to the January 30 meeting. He reported he would be contacting the senate president and the house speaker with a reminder.

Representative Sara Hannan asked if legislators serve until a replacement is appointed. She said all committee assignments are generally done at the same time if the bodies are organized

Administrator Kevin Reeve asked if there is anything to do to move along the process.

Representative Sara Hannan replied that it all depends on whether both bodies are organized. Internal dynamics have delayed organizing the house in recent past years

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8. Chair Deb Fancher entertained a motion to go into **EXECUTIVE SESSION** to discuss matters which by law must remain confidential under AS 24.60.160, Uniform Rule 22(b) regarding executive sessions, and Rules of Procedure Section 5: Executive Sessions and discussion of matters, the immediate knowledge of which would adversely affect the finances of a governmental unit, and discussion of subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of a person.

Senator David Wilson so moved. There were no objections. The committee moved into executive session.

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**9. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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**10. PUBLIC SESSION**

Chair Deb Fancher re-opened public session and entertained a motion to draft a letter to Ombudsman Kate Burkhart regarding a complaint.

Representative Sara Hannan so moved. Chair Deb Fancher entertained objections. There were none. The motion passed.

**11. OTHER BUSINESS**

**12. ADJOURN**

Chair Deb Fancher entertained a motion to adjourn. Skip Cook so moved. There were no objections. The meeting adjourned at 2:23 PM.

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**ADJOURN**