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Committee Approves Parnell's Fish and Game Pick



Cora Campbell, pictured second from left, waits to testify before the House Resources Committee, Friday, March 18th, 2011, in Juneau. (KTUU/Ted Land)

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By Ted Land
Channel 2 News
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JUNEAU, Alaska—

What started as a perceived weakness for Governor Sean Parnell's Fish and Game commissioner pick has turned into one of Cora Campbell's strengths; her age.

The House Resources Committee Friday voted to confirm Campbell, who many people initially criticized as too young and inexperienced for the job.

Lawmakers said they look forward to new ideas and energy that the 31-year-old commissioner-designee might bring to the table.

First, though they had some questions about her background.

"I'm getting calls from people who are concerned that your commercial fisheries background would possibly lead you to be biased in favor of commercial interests," said Rep. Berta Gardner (D-Anchorage).

"I've established relationships with sport fishing groups, with subsistence users and I'm comfortable working in a fair and balanced manner," responded Campbell.

Those talks appear to be working. Numerous sport and commercial fishing and wildlife organizations called in to show their support for Campbell.

"I'm just so stinking excited to support somebody who's so young," said a woman from Anchorage who called in to testify.

A few people from Homer called in urging a "no" vote, saying Campbell needs more experience on the research and science side of things.

"She has no scientific background, she has no research background, she has no conservation background," said one caller.

The concerns did not stop lawmakers on the panel from advancing the commissioner-designee to the next level; a floor vote before a gathering of both the House and Senate.

"She's fair and honest and I just trust that she'll be able to do a good job," said Rep. Peggy Wilson (R-Wrangell).

"That's really impressive to me that you were able to change a lot of people's minds," Rep. Alan Dick (R-Stony River) told Campbell.

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