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Representative Bryce Edgmon
Capitol Room 410
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Edgmon

RE: House Bill 199 "...allowing village public safety officers to carry firearms."

I am a retired Alaskan law enforcement officer with 25 years of combined experience in Oregon and Alaska and hold a Master's Degree in Administration of Criminal Justice. I retired from the Kodiak City Police Department in 1997. I was employed as a North Slope Borough Public Safety Officer from 1987 to 1989. During that time I was assigned to work in all but two of the North Slope Borough villages. I have seen first hand some of the worst things that one person can do to another human being.

Recently, I visited with retired Kodiak Police Chief T.C. Kamai, who just took on the job of Coordinator of Village Public Safety Officers for the Kodiak Area Native Association in Kodiak. We discussed House Bill 199 and the arming of VPSO's. He related to me that some Village Public Safety Officers do not want to be armed because it will change the relationship the individual officer has with his or her village population. I understand that reluctance to be armed, but as I see it, the Bill offers the option to be lawfully armed, provided the sponsoring Native Corporation agrees to certain training standards for its Village Public Safety Officers.

The mere presence of an armed Village Public Safety Officer is often enough to diffuse a situation without the tool of deadly force being deployed. Given that the presence of drugs and/or alcohol are usually the fuel for domestic violence and that assaults on law enforcement officers has increased in recent times it is only reasonable to allow the arming of Village Public Safety Officers. I fully support HB 199.

Sincerely,

Michael McCarthy