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**Representative Bryce Edgmon**  
**State Capitol**  
**Room 410**  
**Juneau AK, 99801**

**Re: House Bill NO. 199 / Arming of VPSO's**

**Dear Honorable Representative Edgmon:**

On behalf of the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association and the tribal communities we serve, I want to thank you for allowing us comment on House Bill 199 / Arming of VPSO's.

House Bill 199 eliminates the obstacles now in place that prevent the VPSO's from being armed, but it does little else. On behalf of our officers and constituents, we believe that any new regulations and or statute permitting arming of VPSO's will need to address the following questions and areas of concern:

- What criteria will be in place to decide who is a viable candidate for arming i.e. polygraph, additional background check, physiological testing, etc.?
- Liability, what does insurance really pay for, who pays in the end? Complete hold harmless liability for the community and contracting agency?
- Furthermore arming the VPSO's will change the image of the officers and program. They will no longer be seen as Public Safety Officer, they will be seen as Law Enforcement Officers.
- Precautionary policies, put policies in place to make officers safer, i.e. make it clear to the officer, that they are not required to respond to calls where guns are a threat and or present.
- Put officer safety first, minimize likelihood of dangerous encounters. (Troopers rarely respond to a dangerous situation without backup, sometimes waiting many hours for additional Troopers to arrive before proceeding)
- Arming the VPSO's should be on a voluntary basis, for the officer, community, and contractor. For a number of reasons, some officers do not want to be armed and there are officers in all departments (throughout the country) that should not be armed.
- Further discussions will be essential, between communities, contractors, legislature, and DPS, to arrive at a resolution to this issue.

We have conducted a poll of all of our VPSO's (6) and our officer's support the arming of the program on a voluntary basis. However our agency is undecided and has concerns yet to be addressed.

Officers suggested for testimony: FSgt. Nemeth and Sgt. Parker. Contact Mr. Michael Nemeth at 222-4220 or [michaeln@apjai.org](mailto:michaeln@apjai.org).

Sincerely,

**Dimitri Philemonof**  
President / CEO