

Nancy Manly

From: Mike Coons <mcoons@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Sunday, February 09, 2014 11:34 AM
To: Nancy Manly
Subject: My first letter pertaining to HB 199.

Nancy, my latest letter on HB 199 is in the basis documents. My first letter and thus my verbal testimony is not however. Please add this to the Basis Documents so all my views are respresented. I will be testifying using the second letter on Tuesday morning. It would be nice for the representatives to know how my concerns have evolved prior to testimony.

Thanks so much.

Mike Coons
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My name is Mike Coons from Lazy Mountain, Palmer area.

I am former Alaska State Defense Force Constable, a retired Paramedic and former armed Security Officer with the USAF Security Forces at JBER. I have seen and worked with a VPSO and the Hooper Bay police. I worked in Allakaket as a Paramedic for the better part of a year and a half. As a Constable, I was at Hooper Bay for 3 months working with the Hooper Bay Police Department.

The concept of VPSO's and police in small villages like Hooper Bay has definite pro's and con's. While at Allekaket we had several cases of domestic violence situations with the criminal subject armed, mainly with a rifle, shooting up girl friends homes. In one occasion we had several people shooting up the village and specifically destroying HC Price equipment and property. In all cases the Alaska State Troopers were called in to stop the criminal activity and make the arrest. The VPSO at the time was unable to do much since he was unarmed and not allowed to use deadly force. Fortunately, nobody was seriously injured or died. Of a greater problem though was that the Fairbanks Judges kept letting these people out on bail, returned to the village and the same problem happened over and over again. We need to address criminal behavior and lenient Judges who put others in remote villages at increasing risk over that of just arming VPSO's. This same situation with the judges was the same at Hooper Bay as well.

At Hooper Bay, although we as Constables were armed when we went, we seldom carried at the request of the Police Chief. Good verbal skills defused all but one situation and the State Troopers were called in for a barricaded person with a firearm, resolved without injury. The Police Chief had an excellent department and with the proper training of this officers I believe those Officers would have done well being armed, mainly because of the excellent supervisory aspects of the Police Chief. This situation is different from single VPSO's without direct supervision like at Hooper Bay.

From what I saw and experienced of the culture, most of the issues were alcohol related with people wanting to fight occasionally. Anytime an Officer carries a firearm, it just isn't training, but a mindset and judgment that must come into play. Of paramount importance is the mindset that if the occasion were to arise that deadly force was necessary, does that Officer have the mental ability to do so. Some may, some may not. I agree that there are times where a VPSO needs to be armed to protect others as well as himself. However, the arming of VPSO's should be based on a host of factors and judgment by those State Troopers over-seeing the VPSO's. Those factors range from the village culture, size and past criminal problems to a solid subjective and objective review of each VPSO.

This should not be a blanket decision and the Commissioner must have the ability to determine on a case by case basis if and whom the VPSO's are to be armed and under what guidelines and circumstances. I do belief that HB

199 is taking this to a better level due to a need for the public and VPSO safety.

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