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Letter: Give village safety officers a break — let them carry guns

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VPSOs are “First Responders — Last Frontier” and don’t receive all of the training and tools necessary to accomplish their complicated jobs. A VPSO is usually the only person in a village trained to respond to crime reports, search and rescue, fire protection and, with health aides, assist in medical emergencies. In 2001 the state added probation and parole duties to VPSOs’ long list of responsibilities.

Village public safety officers and convicted felons are the only adult citizens who cannot carry a firearm in Alaska. We need to seriously rethink unarmed VPSOs. No police officers in the state would go to work without a firearm, much less respond to any call for assistance without one.

If the problem is potential liability to the state and employing regional corporations, get over it. The VPSOs have a constitutional right to be armed. Pay for training and insurance. Unarmed law enforcement in any day and age is asinine and a guarantee of further tragedies. If VPSO Thomas Madole had been armed, maybe he could have survived; we’ll never know. So many ifs.

— Patrick Hames

Nikiski

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