

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

Although I agreed with many of the State Troopers who testified at the last committee hearing about training and accountability, I had two concerns.

First concern was the push for VPSO's to be full fledged Police Officers.
There are two problems with that:

One is that it could be construed as an attempt by the Police Union to increase their size at the expense of the State, villages and the taxpayers.

Two, is if that were so, who would pay them? I'm sure the native corporations would be hard pressed to meet the unions demands for pay and benefits.

Both the two concerns would have the unintended problems of less law enforcement in the villages, not more, much less the same.

My final concern is that with arming and added responsibilities, and being employed by the corporations, who will make the determination to continue employment, give reprimands or to fire the VPSO in the event of a weapons use? Understand that "use" can be drawing the weapon to stop an act, to firing the weapon.

The native corporations administrative staff do not have the knowledge nor training to make valued decisions when it comes to the VPSO doing his job. I have seen that first hand while at Hooper Bay where a "complaint" was lodged against us and our support came only from the Commander of the Alaska State Defense Force, Gen Westall. So, whom will support the VPSO and whom can that VPSO turn to if fired for doing their job?

In closing, I fully agree that the cost of the VPSO program, since it directly impacts the Alaska native community should be born by the Native Corporations vs the State. As it is now, the State is spending funds for the training and with the funding situation as is, the State cannot afford to take on a major expense. However, there must be a mechanism to not only train, certify the VPSO but to protect them in their job from wrongful employment actions by non-law enforcement, while protecting the population from a potential "good old boy" situation.

Thank you

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