

St. Paul

St. George

Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc.

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August 21, 2013

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.

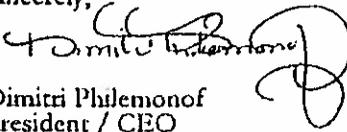
House Bill 199 eliminates the obstacles now in place that prevent the VPSO's from being armed, but it does little else. On behalf of our officers and constituents, we believe that any new regulations and or statute permitting arming of VPSO's will need to address the following questions and areas of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

Sincerely,


Dimitri Philemonof
President / CEO

Adam Berg

From: Jonathan Shivel <vpso.shivel@kawerak.org>
Sent: Monday, September 16, 2013 11:55 AM
To: Adam Berg
Subject: RE: Arming VPSO's Legislative Hearing

I will not be able to attend or listen in but would like my thoughts to be heard on this matter.

My thoughts on this subject, is that every VPSO that desires to be armed should be trained and armed.

Law Enforcement Officers all over the United States have lost their lives in the line of duty from being shot. But I know that every Officer will tell you that more lives of victims and Officers are saved due to the actions that they took using their firearm in their defense. Rather it be a round that was discharged to defeat a potential lethal threat or an Officer presenting his firearm to a threat causing that threat to stand down. An Officer with a firearm holstered in itself is a show of force and in most all cases is a major deterrence to anyone who may want to harm that Officer. If you were to ask anyone that may want to harm a Police Officer if they had a choice to go up against an armed Officer or an unarmed Officer who would they choose. Well that would be a no brainer..... Everyone in each Village knows that VPSO's are unarmed and in many Villages with a lot of criminal activity a VPSO goes through more @#\$\$% than what his Trooper counterpart will go through when he/she is in the Village. Not only that as you know we VPSO's are the "First Responders" and we respond to some of the most violent crimes (Domestic Violence) by ourselves, no back up, no Troopers. In these situations, upon arrival we are going into the "UNKNOWN" where we will confront people who are in an unpredictable mindset.

House Bill 24 which passed and has become law, gives the right to each Citizen in the State to defend him/herself using deadly force against an armed person anywhere a Citizen has a legal right to be. But a VPSO does not have that right or ability under current State law to defend him/herself against an armed aggressor in the line of duty. Something is seriously wrong with that.....

With that said, I feel that arming VPSO's is not only the right thing to do, but it's the most logical thing to do. A VPSO should have the right to defend him/herself against an armed aggressor.

Thank you for listening.
VPSO Jon Shivel
PO Box 383
Unalakleet, AK 99684
Office 907-624-3055
Fax 907-624-3059

From: Adam Berg [Adam.Berg@akleg.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 11, 2013 11:18 AM
To: lhscaab+kawerakvpsolist@legis.state.ak.us
Subject: Arming VPSO's Legislative Hearing

Hello Kawerak VPSO's –

I'm emailing to let you know we are having a meeting on the idea of allowing VPSO's to be armed on September 26th, from 10 AM to 3 PM. The meeting will be at the Anchorage LIO, but we will have a toll-free number for any of you that would like to listen in and / or testify on the issue.

My boss, Rep. Bryce Edgmon, introduced a bill (HB199 is attached) near the end of the last legislative session that would prohibit DPS from saying you can't carry firearms. This meeting is being held to find out how VPSO's and their

Adam Berg

From: Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Sent: Friday, September 20, 2013 9:40 AM
To: Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Timothy Clark; Adam Berg
Subject: Fwd: Arming VPSO

Sent from the iJonathan; please excuse brevity.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ron & Joan Leighton <akdilligas@starband.net>
Date: September 20, 2013, 9:29:54 AM AKDT
To: <Rep.Jonathan.Kreiss-Tomkins@akleg.gov>
Subject: Arming VPSO

Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, I'm a retired law enforcement officer who retired in 1987. I also after retiring held a VPSO position in Kasaan. I feel that if the State of Alaska can afford to most all of their other law enforcers than they can easily train and arm Village Public Safety officers. Although during my two plus years of in my VPSO position did not pack a firearm, I always thought that should a situation arise that I would need one what would I do? I would probably retreat and arm until back up arrives which back then could be a day or two as we had no road into Kasaan.

After I left this position a lady who was doing a study through the university of Alaska Anchorage contacted me and one of the questions she asked me, if some one was doing something violent and you needed him to stop what would you do. I told her there were many scenarios, but I could yell halt or my wife will shoot you and you would like it as she's the village health aid and would have to treat you!

This is a serious situation and has to be properly addressed through legislation. I'm in favor of training and arming all VPSO's in the state. I know not only human intervention, but wild animal intervention would warrant a need for being armed. If during your debate opposition dictates' that they shall remain unarmed then the same would justify unarming all law enforcement officers in the state. All law enforcements number one roll is to protect life and property, this includes all VPSO's. Jonathan I'm going to be in Ketchikan attending the federal subsistence hearings which end on Friday the 26th, if you need to contact me you may email me or phone me at 907 617 2089!

I hope this goes well and a decision to arm them is reached!

Warm regards

Ron

MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL TRIBAL COUNCILS
 FROM: CAROL J. BROWN, AVCP GENERAL COUNSEL/TRIBAL ADVOCATE *CB*
 SUBJECT: TRIBAL COUNCILS REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON HOUSE BILL 199
 DATE: AUGUST 12, 2013

The purpose of this memorandum is to request your Tribal Council's review and comment on the recent House Bill 199 that was introduced by Representative Bryce Edgmon in April, 2013.

This HB 199 is "An Act relating to Department of Public Safety regulations allowing village public safety officers to carry firearms." As you know, VPSOs are currently not allowed, by state law, to carry firearms, and this bill would change that.

We appreciate your Tribal Council's opinion and comments by September 16, 2013, 4:30 p.m. Rep. Edgmon is holding a hearing on this bill shortly thereafter, so we want to ensure we have input from our Tribes prior to then. Please direct your comments on the proposed bill, rather than providing an opinion on whether or not the person who is currently serving as a VPSO in your village is capable of being armed during duty. If this bill is passed, there will be thorough testing and training to make sure that whomever is allowed to carry a handgun is competent and fully trained.

If you have any questions, please contact Carol Brown, at 800.478.3521 ext: 7305.

Quyana.

no! From Nunapitahuk.

** Jimmy R Stevens Sr.
 President*

We are opposed to the bill for we think the weapon could be taken away from the officers and more village member people get killed.

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