

Alaska Legislature

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House Bill 66 Sponsor Statement

In the spring of 2014, two Alaska State Troopers, Sgt. Scott Johnson and Gabe Rich, were shot and killed in the line of duty after a standoff in Tanana. Their families were subsequently faced with not only the immeasurable loss of a loved one, but also a definite termination of their health care coverage. They are simply one example of the many Alaskan families who face hardship beyond just the sacrifice of a loved one.

The State of Alaska asks their employees, not only those in public safety, but across all fields, to provide for the health and safety of our communities. It is only fair that when our employees give their lives in the service of the state that we continue to serve the family they have left behind.

House Bill 66 provides spouses and children of state employees who have been killed in the line of duty with secure, stable health coverage within the PERS/TERS health plan. By providing families with the PERS/TERS health plan, we ensure coverage that is common to all departments and positions and allow families to benefit from low deductibles and pharmacy costs. Families would be subject to all policies associated with the plan, and would be able to elect additional coverage available to plan members.

This approach not only provides a level of comfort for families, but also provides clarity in the state's budget. Currently, the Department of Public Safety, through executive direction, covers the cost of health care premiums for the families of fallen employees. This presents a significant and uncertain budgeting hurdle every year, in anticipating and funding the costs of health plans, which would be solved with the passage of House Bill 66, and the placement of affected persons in the PERS/TERS plan.

For families coping with the loss of a loved one, their last concern should be losing their state medical coverage. House Bill 66 provides security for families and clarity for the state when approaching a line of duty death of a state employee.