

Kendra Kloster

Subject: House Bill 6

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Sent: Friday, March 20, 2015 4:55 PM

To: Representative.Curt.Olson@akleg.gov

Cc: Rep. Chris Tuck; Sen. Mia Costello; Sen. Bill Wielechowski

Subject: House Bill 6

Representative Olson:

I am writing in support of House Bill 6 in encouraging the hiring of veterans by private employers.

First, I fully support encouraging private employers to employ veterans. Our state is great because of what our veterans are contributing in growing our state, with many serving in leadership in both the public and private sector. Encouraging further employment opportunities for those veterans choosing to make Alaska home is clearly in the best interest of the state.

However, my main concern with House Bill 6 is the continued use of the term "armed services" in defining "veteran". While the Alaska Statutes define veteran as "armed forces", the federal laws define veterans as "uniformed services" that allows all 7 uniformed services (Army, Navy Air Force, Marines Coast Guard, Public Health Service, & NOAA Corps) to be included. Titles 10 USC – Armed Forces, 37 USC – Pay and Allowances of the Uniformed Services, and 38 USC – Veterans Benefits define veterans as those who have completed "active duty" as it applies to "military service" in the "uniformed services". These Titles allows the US Public Health Service Officers and the NOAA Commissioned Officers to be recognized as veterans and qualify for veterans benefits. Except for the exclusion for these two uniformed services federally recognized as veterans, I fully support expanding the recognition of the other services that are valuable in the service to our state and nation.

While House Bill 6 and the accompanying Senate Bill 2 are not the vehicle to address the difference between the Alaska and Federal definitions of "veteran" as it applies to many of Alaska's residents, it is important to note that many federally recognized veterans of the US Public Health Service officers were deeply involved in the Indian Health Service programs in Alaska and supported USCG medical needs. NOAA officers served in monitoring our fisheries and charting our waters. After leaving service, many of us have continued to live in Alaska providing public service and growing successful companies.

After this session, I would be happy to assist your staff or a member that you recommend in drafting a bill to address the many statutory changes needed to bring the definition of "veteran" consistent with the federal definition. This would allow all of us federally recognized veterans to be recognized as Alaska veterans as well. It is simply a matter of pride for us as we have pride in being Alaskans.

Bob Pawlowski

Captain, NOAA (Ret)