

1/25/18

SUBJECT: HB-194 Public Comment for Tuesday 30 House Military & Veterans Affairs Committee hearing.

TO: Representative Matt Claman@akleg.gov
Representative Chris Tuck@akleg.gov
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux@akleg.gov
FROM: Paul T. (Tim) Steele,

As a retired NOAA Corps Officer I was surprised to find out that, in the eyes of the State, I was a second class Military Retiree.

I have in my pocket a military ID and on my vehicle a base sticker giving me base access to services. I shop at the Base, receive medical services from VA, and I receive a "small" retirement. If the Military and VA can provide Retired NOAA Corps Officers equal benefits why not the State?

I've made a commitment to Alaska! I was married here. My two children were born here. My wife is buried in Fort Richardson Army Base. I have owned our family home in West Anchorage since 1986. I have investment property in Homer. I always vote and I have been an active participant in local government.

When NOAA Corps Officers come to Alaska to increase public safety by collecting data to produce accurate Nautical & Aeronautical Charts and to collect data to produce accurate Tide and Current Tables, NOAA Officers are involved.

Look around: NOAA Corps Officers are at National Marine Fisheries Labs, at National Weather Service Facilities. We Command Oceanographic Research Ships, fly Hurricane Hunter Aircraft through hurricanes to obtain wind speed and direction of travel to protect life and property. We also free whales from the ice on the North Slope when we can.

WE ARE NOT SECOND CLASS OFFICERS. We don't need recognition or "Special Treatment" but we should be given equal treatment as a "Veteran".

Thank You!



LCDR Paul T. Steele NOAA Corps Retired
Aka Tim Steele

Personal testimony regarding HB-194

January 25, 2018

To: Representative Tuck and Representative LeDoux and committee members

I am a retired Commissioned Officer of the United States Public Health Service. My wife and I have lived in Anchorage, Alaska since September 1985. We came to Anchorage as I accepted a new assignment as Director of the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) and Service Unit Director for the Anchorage Service Unit. I was a young Commissioned Officer at that time and was just starting to envision a career as a Commissioned Officer.

Now, nearly 32 years later, Anchorage is still home and I am a retired officer. After I retired from the Commissioned Corps (after 20 years), I became an employee of the Southcentral Foundation and worked for several years as a pediatrician on the ANMC campus. From 2004-6, I served the state as Director of Public Health. Then in 2006, I moved to the Providence Alaska Medical Center (PAMC); first as director of the Children's Hospital at Providence and then as Chief executive of PAMC.

Now, I am nearing retirement from PAMC and find myself often reflecting on my time here in Alaska. I would not have "landed" here except for the Commissioned Corps. My commitment to public health and to service of the community at large was developed and grew while I was a Commissioned Officer. I have met so many health care professionals who have served our state as Commissioned Officers.

HB-194 will make Alaska's statutes consistent with the federal designation of a uniformed officer. Alaska will benefit by the retirement in state of more Commissioned Officers. Many retired officers continue to serve our state and encouraging retiring officers to continue to make Alaska their home, will serve Alaska well in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Richard Mandsager MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard Mandsager MD

Chief Executive, PAMC

Vice Admiral, Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service (retired)

LCDR Kathryn Jacques
Aurora Borealis Branch
Commissioned Officers Association

February 1, 2018

Representative Matt Claman
Room 118 Capitol Bldg.
Juneau, AK, 99801

Dear Representative Claman,

The Aurora Borealis Branch of the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) would like to propose the following resolution in support of House Bill 194:

Resolution supporting HB194 recognizing US Public Health Service and NOAA Commissioned Officers as Veterans in the State of Alaska.

Alaska is a vast state that since being acquired as a territory has looked to the federal government for assistance in supporting its population with health and safety, and

Whereas the US Public Health Service Commissioned Officers are integral to the treatment of almost 160,000 Alaska Native people through the Indian Health Service as established through the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Public Law 93-638, as amended, and

Whereas USPHS Commissioned Officers have worked in providing health and sanitary environmental water and sanitation projects in almost every rural native community in Alaska, ranging from Metlakatla to Kaktovik, and

Whereas, Alaska benefits from the technical and professional expertise that USPHS Commissioned Officers bring to Alaska, and

Whereas USPHS Commissioned Officers are assigned to Alaska's 400 duty stations under active duty military orders issued by the US Department of Health and Human Services, and

Whereas, the USPHS Commissioned Officers when assigned to Alaska bring their families and relocate to Alaska, contributing to the economy, community and social network and often workforce, and

Whereas, USPHS Commissioned Officers are paid with allowances, as are all commissioned active duty military officers, armed or uniformed, under Title 37 of the United States Code, and

Whereas, USPHS Commissioned Officers are recognized as Veterans, as are all commissioned active duty military officers, armed or uniformed, under Title 38 of the United States Code, and

Therefore, be it resolved that the USPHS Commissioned Officers of the Aurora Borealis Branch of the USPHS Commissioned Officers Association fully support the passage of HB194 and believe that all Commissioned Officers including the USPHS and NOAA who complete their active duty military service and reside in Alaska should be recognized by the state of Alaska as Veterans.

Thank you for your time and for considering our request.

Very respectfully,

LCDR Kathryn Jacques
President, Aurora Borealis Commissioned Officers Association

LT Christopher Chong
Fireweed Branch
Commissioned Officers Association
1001 Knik Goose Bay Rd
Wasilla, AK 99654

February 2, 2018

Representative Matt Claman
Room 118 Capitol Bldg.
Juneau, AK, 99801

Dear Representative Claman,

The Fireweed Branch of the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) would like to propose the following resolution in support of House Bill 194:

Resolution supporting HB 194 recognizing the USPHS and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officers as Veterans in the State of Alaska.

Alaska, the largest state in the United States, has looked to the federal government for assistance in supporting its population with protecting and promoting health and safety, and

Whereas the USPHS Commissioned Officers have been an integral part in providing assistance to almost 160,000 Alaska Native people through the Indian Health Service as established through the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Public Law 93-638, as amended, and

Whereas USPHS Commissioned Officers have provided direct health care services and environmental health services, including water and sanitation projects, in almost every rural Native community spanning from the North Slope to the Aleutian Islands, and

Whereas, the state of Alaska benefits from the technical and professional expertise that USPHS Commissioned Officers bring to Alaska, and

Whereas USPHS Commissioned Officers are assigned to 400 duty stations throughout the state under active duty orders issued by the US Department of Health and Human Services, and

Whereas, USPHS Commissioned Officers are paid with allowances, as are all commissioned active duty military officers, armed or uniformed, under Title 37 of the United States Code, and

Whereas, USPHS Commissioned Officers are recognized as Veterans, as are all commissioned active duty military officers, armed or uniformed, under Title 38 of the United States Code, and

Whereas, USPHS Commissioned Officers provide direct health care services for over 1,500 veterans living in the Matanuska-Susitna area, and

Therefore, be it resolved that the USPHS Commissioned Officers of the Fireweed Branch of the USPHS Commissioned Officers Association fully support the passage of HB 194 and believe that all Commissioned Officers including the USPHS and NOAA who complete their active duty service and reside in Alaska should be recognized by the state of Alaska as Veterans.

Thank you for your time and for considering our request.

Very respectfully,



LT Christopher Chong
President, Fireweed Branch Commissioned Officers Association

Testimony of Captain Bob Pawlowski, NOAA (Ret)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am Captain Bob Pawlowski, a retired NOAA Officer living in Anchorage with my wife Paula. We came to Anchorage originally in 1984 and finished my NOAA Career in 1999 after commanding NOAA's fishery research vessels that worked in Alaska and spearheading the Alaska navigation opportunities for NOAA's Coast Survey. After leaving NOAA, I continued to contribute to Alaska both in my professional work, including in staffing to the legislature and working in the private sector, non-profit sector and finished with the Alaska Division of Oil and Gas. During this time, I also expanded the coastal engineering curriculum at UAA and advised to both UAA and UAF in engineering. I continue to volunteer with the Port Commission for the Port of Alaska and with other Cook Inlet interest. I share this, like many other officers from both the USPHS and NOAA, as we continue to contribute to the state and would like be recognized as "veterans" for our previous service time.

HB 194 is a simple bill to bring alignment between the federal definition of "veteran" under Title 38 – Veterans Benefits and the state definition of "veteran" as it applies to those members who provided active duty service in the uniformed services of the United States. Currently, the state consistently defines "veteran" as service in the armed services only. This does not recognize the full-time active duty military service of the USPHS Commissioned Officer Corps and the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps, which are defined as a uniform service by US Code Titles 10, 37 and 38 and entitled to Veterans Benefits.

Officers from the USPHS and NOAA (previously the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey) have served throughout Alaska since the early 1900's. Each serving officer has deployed by orders to the needed mission. Today, approximately 400 USPHS Officers currently serve from Ketchikan to Kotzebue providing health care and water and sanitation engineering to Alaska's native communities. 11 of those officers are detailed to the US Coast Guard in support of their health programs. NOAA Officers, stationed on ships, two homeported in Alaska, and ashore, lead surveying and mapping operations throughout Alaska, improving the navigation over the coastal waters and into the Arctic, as well as operating the vessels conducting fishery research and assessment in state and federal waters. Each officer, regardless of service, is on orders directing the nature of their deployment and their duty stations. While serving they are subject to comparable commitment to duty as members of the armed forces.

Upon leaving the service, whether by resigning the commission or retiring in grade, the officers have earned their federal veterans benefit. Many of these officers that have had duty in Alaska have chosen to stay, contributing to our work force and economy by building businesses, providing medical services, leading environmental engineering and sanitation projects across the state, and continuing to offer their expertise in public service to federal, state and local governments. This bill offers the opportunity for the state of Alaska to recognize their previous service and the "Veteran" they have earned. Simply stated, it is a pride of service bill for those who have accepted their commission and served their country in other than the armed forces.

This bill is supported by the Captain Cook Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America. MOAA represents the 7 uniformed services and has over 1200 national members living in Alaska. The bill is also supported by the USPHS Commissioned Officers Association, representing the USPHS Commissioned Officers with 262 members active in Alaska, including the Aurora Borealis and Fireweed Branches.

In addition, we are in support of amending HB-194 to include the National Guard and Reservists who have served 20+years and retired without being called to active duty. This reflects on those members who have served the state in times of emergency and crisis, but never activated to federal military service. This is particularly relevant to the Alaska Army National Guard members that handled statewide issues, while many in the Alaska Air National Guard assisted in various national defense operations. Those Alaskan's are primarily from the period of 1975 to 2001, a generation that served in the National Guard during peacetime.

Federal References

The term "uniformed services" means the Armed Forces, the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard when engaged in active duty for training, inactive duty training, or full-time National Guard duty, the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service, and any other category of persons designated by the President in time of war or national emergency.

Title 10 – Armed Forces

10 USC 101 – Definitions

(a) In General.— The following definitions apply in this title:

(4) The term “armed forces” means the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

(5) The term “uniformed services” means—

(A) the armed forces;

(B) the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and

(C) the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service.

(d) Duty Status.— The following definitions relating to duty status apply in this title:

(1) The term “active duty” means full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. Such term includes full-time training duty, annual training duty, and attendance, while in the active military service, at a school designated as a service school by law or by the Secretary of the military department concerned. Such term does not include full-time National Guard duty.

Title 37 – Pay and Allowances of the Uniformed Services

37 USC 101 - Definitions

(3) The term “uniformed services” means the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Public Health Service.

(4) The term “armed forces” means the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

(5) The term “Secretary concerned” means—

(A) the Secretary of the Army, with respect to matters concerning the Army;

(B) the Secretary of the Navy, with respect to matters concerning the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard when it is operating as a service in the Navy;

(C) the Secretary of the Air Force, with respect to matters concerning the Air Force;

(D) the Secretary of Homeland Security, with respect to matters concerning the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy;

(E) the Secretary of Commerce, with respect to matters concerning the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and

(F) the Secretary of Health and Human Services, with respect to matters concerning the Public Health Service.

Title 38 – Veterans Benefits

38 USC 101 Definitions

21) The term “active duty” means—

- (A) full-time duty in the Armed Forces, other than active duty for training;
- (B) full-time duty (other than for training purposes) as a commissioned officer of the Regular or Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service (i) on or after July 29, 1945, or (ii) before that date under circumstances affording entitlement to “full military benefits” or (iii) at any time, for the purposes of chapter 13 of this title;
- (C) full-time duty as a commissioned officer of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its predecessor organization the Coast and Geodetic Survey (i) on or after July 29, 1945, or (ii) before that date (I) while on transfer to one of the Armed Forces, or (II) while, in time of war or national emergency declared by the President, assigned to duty on a project for one of the Armed Forces in an area determined by the Secretary of Defense to be of immediate military hazard, or (III) in the Philippine Islands on December 7, 1941, and continuously in such islands thereafter, or (iii) at any time, for the purposes of chapter 13 of this title;
- (D) service as a cadet at the United States Military, Air Force, or Coast Guard Academy, or as a midshipman at the United States Naval Academy; and
- (E) authorized travel to or from such duty or Service.

38 USC 4303 - Definitions

13) The term "service in the uniformed services" means the performance of duty on a voluntary or involuntary basis in a uniformed service under competent authority and includes active duty, active duty for training, initial active duty for training, inactive duty training, full-time National Guard duty, a period for which a person is absent from a position of employment for the purpose of an examination to determine the fitness of the person to any such duty, and a period for which a person is absent from employment for the purpose of performing funeral honors duty as authorized by section 12503 of title 10 or section 115 of title 32.