



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of Public Safety**

ALASKA POLICE STANDARDS COUNCIL

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February 6, 2018

The Honorable Kevin Meyer  
Chair, Senate State Affairs Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Bill 148 – Supplemental Information for the Committee

Dear Senator Meyer,

Please accept my thanks to you and the Committee for taking the time to consider SB 148. As you know, this bill will make the statutory changes necessary to allow the Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC) to conduct fingerprint based national criminal history background checks for training and certification of police officers. Such background checks are important to verify the identity of aspiring police officers, and to help ensure agencies hire only applicants of good moral character.

The information below was compiled in response to three questions that arose during hearings on HB 293 (the companion to SB 148), and I am passing it on in anticipation that your committee may have similar questions.

- 1) What is the number of police officers in Alaska and what trends in the numbers of police officers have we seen over time?

Attached, you will find a chart and an associated graph demonstrating the number of police officers working for each Alaska police department on July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, from 2013 through 2017. This is based on the records maintained by APSC and is subject to the reporting of each agency. Our numbers may differ slightly from those provided by our member agencies, due to the timeliness of their reporting employment actions to us and the dynamic nature of the workforce.

It is notable that, while the number of Alaska State Troopers declined by about 45 officers from 2013 to 2017, the Anchorage Police Department added about 74 officers during the same period. This contributed to a statewide net increase of 32 police officers. If the Anchorage Police Department were removed from the chart we would see that the statewide number of police officers outside Anchorage dropped by 42 officers in the five-year period.

- 2) How many small rural municipal, or 'village' police officers are there in Alaska?

Long ago, APSC recognized that rural and urban law enforcement varied greatly. To provide for these differences, and the unique challenges of recruiting, hiring, training and retaining rural police officers, the council adopted two sets of regulations; one set for more urban police officers and

another for "Village Police Officers" from incorporated communities, off the road system, with less than 1000 in population (13 AAC 89).

Presently, APSC has official records of eleven village police officers in seven different rural communities. We know that there are over 123 other incorporated rural Alaskan communities who are eligible to hire village police officers. Unfortunately, we do not know how many of them may have already done so and simply failed to report it to the council. One of the fundamental reasons for this requested legislation is to support APSC as we try to reach out to train and help these rural communities come into compliance with state hiring standards and reporting regulations.

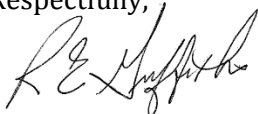
- 3) Could a statutory change empower these small municipalities with the authority to send fingerprints directly to the Department of Public Safety for Criminal History Background checks?

No statutory change would be required to allow municipalities to submit fingerprints to the Department of Public Safety as they already have this authority. However, in order to exercise this authority, a municipality must also have the resources and infrastructure, including adequately trained staff, to maintain state and federal requirements for this access. Some of these requirements include:

- a. An agreement to abide by AS 12.62 and AS 12.64, the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact;
- b. Compliance with the appropriate security policies and regulations pertaining the receipt, storage and dissemination of criminal justice information. These requirements can be quite complex, particularly so when the data is stored electronically. An agency must ensure that only authorized recipients are permitted to view this information and that it is stored securely.
- c. A formal User Agreement with the Department of Public Safety Records and Identification section (DPS/R&I) and the national Interstate Identification Index system (or "triple I", III) must be established. Once the agreement is in place, DPS/R&I is required by state law and national policy to audit participating the municipality biannually. Audits, of course, come with a cost to both DPS and the participating agency. Misuse of criminal justice information can result in civil and criminal liability to the entities receiving the information.

SB 148 will allow the APSC to request state and national fingerprint based background checks on behalf of municipalities who do not have the means to establish the infrastructure required to directly request these checks from DPS/R&I. APSC's background checks will be completed in a manner similar to any other licensing entity, such as the Department of Education, the Alaska Bar, or the Division of Insurance.

Respectfully,



R.E. 'Bob' Griffiths  
Executive Director

Attachment: APSC Officer Count

This is a snapshot of the number of officers at each department on July 1 of each year.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Anchorage Police Department	354	362	371	392	428
Alaska State Troopers	324	333	321	294	279
Alaska Wildlife Troopers	85	83	83	88	87
Anchorage Airport Police/Fire	57	50	48	53	57
Fairbanks Police Department	48	46	43	41	39
Juneau Police Department	47	44	48	51	50
North Slope Borough PD	39	39	40	44	45
Ketchikan Police Department	26	24	24	24	23
Fairbanks Airport Police/Fire	22	24	23	22	22
Wasilla Poice Department	22	22	23	25	23
Kenai Police Department	19	17	17	18	18
Kodiak Police Department	17	17	16	15	18
Palmer Police Department	16	14	13	14	14
Sitka Police Department	15	13	17	15	14
University of Alaska/Anchorage	15	16	13	11	13
North Pole Police Department	14	13	13	13	14
Unalaska DPS	13	13	13	12	12
Soldotna Police Department	12	12	13	14	13
Homer Police Department	11	12	11	11	13
Valdez Police Department	11	11	11	11	12
Bethel Police Department	10	12	10	9	8
Petersburg Police Department	10	9	8	10	11
Seward Police Department	10	9	10	10	9
Nome Police Department	9	9	10	10	10
University of Alaska/Fairbanks	9	9	9	8	6
Kotzebue Poice Department	8	8	10	12	11
Wrangell Police Department	7	7	7	6	6
Cordova Police Department	6	6	6	6	4
Dillingham DPS	6	8	7	8	6
Metlakatla Police Department	5	5	4	6	4
Fire, Life, and Safety	4	7	5	3	4
Haines Police Department	4	5	3	3	4
King Cove Police Department	4	4	4	4	5
Saint Paul Police Department	4	4	3	3	
Sand Point Police Department	4	4	3	3	5
Skagway Police Department	4	4	5	5	5
Whittier Police Department	4	4	2	4	5
Bristol Bay Borough PD	3	5	5	3	5
Craig Police Department	3	5	5	5	5
Yakutat Police Department	3	4	3	5	3
Hoonah Police Department	2	4	5	4	4
Klawock Police Department	2	4	4	4	3
Adak	1	1	1		
Chickaloon	1	3	2	2	2
Fort Yukon Police Department	1	2	2	2	3
Galena Police Department	1	1	1	2	
Ketchikan Airport Police	1	2	2	1	2
Seldovia Police Department	1	1	1		1
Cops on Call					1
Total	1294	1311	1298	1306	1326

Tracking only

## Alaska Police Officers Per Agency as of July 1

