

Re: HB 235 (North Star Medal)

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Brandy Johnson. I am testifying in support of HB 235 on behalf of surviving families of line of duty death law enforcement officers in the state of Alaska.

As many of you are well aware, my husband, Scott was murdered while in the performance of his job as a Sgt. with the Alaska State Troopers on May 1st, 2014.

After Scott was murdered, I received many great gifts. Some of these gifts were quite thoughtful. Some were very honorable and some were quite strange. I was perplexed. During the grieving, I initially thought, "How is this gift or item supposed to make me feel better?". My Mother reminded me to just say thank you. What I later came to realize, is that most of the gifts brought comfort to the givers and some brought comfort to my family. Once I came to this realization, I was more accepting, comfortable and happy to know that I was helping them with their grief.

On the mantle to the fireplace Scott and I built sits the urn of my best friend and father to our children. Atop this urn, stands the triangular shape of the Alaska state flag. These are some of the most cherished items nobody wants to have. However, there are a few gifts that are special and meaningful if not to me but to our daughters. They may not provide comfort initially but after the strong initial grief subsides, one realizes the thoughtfulness that went into the gifts and honors.

The most important act we can do is to take care of that officer's surviving family. That is our fiduciary duty after the ultimate sacrifice. If providing the surviving family and/or officer with a medal to recognize their oath and extraordinary efforts on behalf of the state of Alaska brings one miniscule of comfort then I support the idea. With that being said, I would like to recommend a process to the committee and/or Commissioner of Department of Public Safety on proper presentation to next of kin for the North Star Medal if this bill were to pass.

Sincerely,  
Brandy Johnson  
Surviving Spouse of Sgt. Scott Johnson



# Fairbanks International Airport

AeroNexus®

Alaska International Airport System  
Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport  
Fairbanks International Airport

6450 Airport Way, Suite 1  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709  
Main: 907.474.2500  
Fax: 907.474.2513

April 15, 2017

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
Room 411, Capital Building  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins:

Thank you for drafting legislation to create the North Star Medal for peace officers, firefighters, and other first responders killed or injured in the line of duty.

In my position as both a Police Chief and Fire Chief, I have been blessed to be able to work with so many of the professional and selfless men and women of the emergency responder family throughout Alaska. Sadly in recent years I have helped coordinate multiple processions as our wounded or fallen Alaskan heroes have traveled through the Fairbanks International Airport. There are no words to describe the enormity of the impact that these events have had on the responder's families, the responder's co-workers, and the community.

The community impact of these tragic events was never more evident as when I was the Marshal for Sergeant Allen Brandt's procession when he returned to Fairbanks after he gallantly gave his life protecting his community. Setting up for the procession, the Fairbanks Police Department officers and their vehicles were parked in such a way to allow privacy and respect their grieving process. Neighborhood residents wanting to show their respects began walking into the area. The pain and grief on the faces of the Fairbanks officers was obvious and the residents immediately realized that this was a hallowed time and place. I told them not to leave and directed them to huddle beside my patrol car, where they could pay their respects and respect the privacy of the grieving officers. Out of view, these wonderful members of the community grieved in silence with their officers. After the procession passed and the Fairbanks officers returned to their vehicles and fell in line, these families appeared from behind my vehicle walking towards me sobbing with their arms outstretched. Even though we were strangers, we all embraced and these beautiful people expressed their sincere thanks for all emergency responders in a way that will be etched in my memory forever.

I am writing this letter of support for the North Star Medal because the great people of the State of Alaska need the ability to bestow an award as a symbol of their deep respect for emergency responders injured or killed as they vigilantly and courageously protect the community in which they live and love. The North Star Medal is the perfect name.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sean J. Martines

Chief of Police and Fire, Fairbanks International Airport

*"Keep Alaska Flying and Thriving."*



**OFFICE OF THE MANAGER**

Telephone: (907) 586-5240; Fax: (907) 586-5385  
Rorie.Watt@juneau.org

April 14, 2017

The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
Alaska State House of Representatives  
Room 411, State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins:

I understand that you are working on legislation for an award for Alaska peace officers, firefighters, EMT, SAR and other first responders killed or injured in the line of duty, which will be called the **North Star Medal**. I understand that the idea would be that it would be an award for showing extraordinary valor.

I am wholeheartedly supportive of this idea. I am prepared to support this type of legislation. Thank you for your contributions to the citizens of Alaska, and thank you for your efforts to recognize the personal risks that our first responders face.

Sincerely,

Duncan Rorie Watt  
City and Borough Manager

# JUNEAU POLICE DEPARTMENT

6255 ALAWAY AVE. • JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801

BRYCE JOHNSON  
CHIEF OF POLICE

*Alaska's Capital City*

BUSINESS (907) 586-0600  
FAX (907) 586-4030

April 17, 2017

The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
Alaska State House of Representatives  
Room 411, State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins:

I am writing in support of the Act creating the North Star Medal. As the Chief of Police for the City and Borough of Juneau, it is my honor to interact with brave police officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and search and rescue personnel. I see firsthand how these dedicated professionals risk their own lives in the service of others.

I have seen police officers move towards danger, even gunfire, to protect the innocent. I have seen police officers climb over the railing of a bridge to pull a citizen to safety. I watched a firefighter don a ballistic vest and run to assist the police officers who were in harm's way. These brave individuals show extraordinary valor, and all efforts on our part to recognize their heroic contributions to our society are appropriate and greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Bryce Johnson  
Chief of Police





# ALASKA CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

*"Walking Alaska's Toughest Beat"*

April 17, 2017

The Honorable Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
State of Alaska  
Room 411 Capitol Building  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Letter of Support for HB 235

Representative Kreiss-Tomkins,

The Alaska Correctional Officers Association supports your proposed amendment of AS 44.09.095, to recognize Correctional Officers, other Peace Officers, Firefighters, First Responders, or members of a volunteer search and rescue group who die or are seriously injured in the line of duty and who have displayed exceptional bravery or heroism while performing their duties. As Peace Officers, Alaska's Correctional Officers place their lives on the line 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Unfortunately, at times Correctional Officers and other Law Enforcement Officers around the State are seriously injured on duty, and in rare instances, lose their lives while performing their jobs. While nothing can replace a brave life lost or one that has been forever altered significantly by substantial on-the-job injuries, public recognition of the sacrifice that they have made will provide some consolation to surviving relatives and the injured workers who are recipients of the North Star Medal.

We appreciate the steps this legislation takes to recognize our brave and selfless women and men who work in public safety.

Sincerely,

Sgt. Randy McLellan  
ACOA President



*Ethan Berkowitz,  
Mayor*

# ANCHORAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Headquarters  
4501 Elmore Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99507-1599  
Telephone (907) 786-8500 / Fax (907) 786-8638



*Chris Tolley  
Chief*

Representative Kreiss-Tomkins

The Anchorage Police Department would like to voice our support for the North Star Medal. Alaska's first responders place themselves in harm's way on a daily basis, which occasionally results in injury or death. Recognizing these heroes for their courage serving their community is a meaningful show of appreciation for their sacrifice. I have the privilege to work with several officers that have been seriously injured in the line of duty - many of whom tirelessly fight to return to work where they continue placing others above themselves. In every case, these heroic officers do not expect, or even want recognition for their work. Thank you for taking the time to formally recognize these men and woman.

Sincerely,

Acting Deputy Chief Sean Case  
Anchorage Police Department



500 W. International Airport Road  
P.O. Box 230330, Anchorage, AK 99523  
907-561-7500 | [www.apdea.net](http://www.apdea.net)

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
Alaska State House of Representatives  
Room 411, State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins-

I am writing this letter on behalf of the more than 500 members of the Anchorage Police Department Employees Association in support of HB235. These are men and women who come to work each day with the desire and expectation to make Anchorage a better place to live, work and play. During the commission of their duties, they are sometimes placed in grave danger in an effort to save a life. In the last ten years, we have had three Officers shot, several other Officers shot at, and yet more Officers stabbed; fortunately, all have survived and continue to work in their capacity as a Police Officer.

Thank you for putting forth a bill to honor first responders who show their dedication in extraordinary ways and desire nothing more than to help the Citizens of Alaska.

Sincerely,

**Brian Wilson** | APDEA President  
[president@apdea.org](mailto:president@apdea.org) | [www.apdea.net](http://www.apdea.net)  
PO Box 230330, Anchorage AK 99523



# ALASKA SEARCH and RESCUE ASSOCIATION

ASARA • PO Box 233276 Anchorage, Alaska 99523 • [alaskasar@gmail.com](mailto:alaskasar@gmail.com)

On the Internet: [www.alaskasar.org](http://www.alaskasar.org)

April 18, 2017

## HB 235 - Act to Create the North Star Medal Letter of Support

Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
Alaska State House of Representatives  
Room 411, State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins:

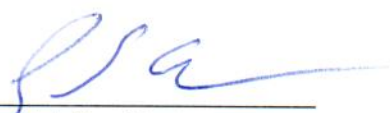
**On behalf of over 750 search and rescue volunteers across the state of Alaska, the Alaska Search and Rescue Association supports HB235 and the creation of the North Star Medal.**

Alaska is home to some of the world's most unforgiving and harsh environments. This week there was someone lost or missing somewhere in Alaska. Last week was the same and next week will be as well.

Whether these lost or missing individuals are hunters, trappers, fisherman, recreationists, or travelers, there are volunteers in every region of Alaska who step up and help our Alaska State Troopers and local authorities search miles and miles of waterways, wilderness areas, avalanches, and urban areas. Although safety practices and precautions are followed rigorously, these volunteers are put at additional risk of injury and harm by the nature of the activity, search and rescue.

SAR volunteers leave their families, their jobs, their lives behind when called upon and they do so without hesitation. At the same time, most SAR volunteers are not looking for recognition for their efforts or time. Yet, it seems appropriate that this award be available should the most awful event occur, and an accident or tragic event takes the life of one of our SAR volunteers. This form or recognition would help honor the sacrifice and loss of loved ones who gave their lives "*so... others may live.*"

Sincerely,

  
Corey Aist, President  
Alaska Search and Rescue Association





**Public Safety Employees Association, Inc.**  
*"Representing Alaska's Finest"*  
**A.F.S.C.M.E. Local 803**



Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
Chair, House State Affairs Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska 99802

Re: Support for North Star Medal legislation

Dear Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins:

I am writing you on behalf of PSEA/AFSCME's 800 state and municipal police employee members working throughout Alaska. Our membership includes Alaska State Troopers, Anchorage and Fairbanks Airport Police Officers and Firefighters, Alaska Court Service Officers, Alaska Deputy Fire Marshalls, and Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, Fairbanks, Soldotna, Dillingham and Unalaska police department employees. Many of our members are also trained search and rescue professionals.

In the last four years alone, PSEA tragically lost four members in acts of valor and heroism. In March 2013, Alaska State Trooper Tage Toll died in helicopter accident rescuing a stranded Alaskan. In May of 2014, Alaska State Trooper Scott Johnson and Trooper Gabe Rich were murdered protecting the people of Tanana, Alaska. In October of 2016, responding to a citizen call for help, Fairbanks Police Department Sgt. Alan Brandt was ambushed, shot multiple times and eventually died due to his injuries. Prior to 2013, we lost many other members in similar situations. These are only the most recent losses. Over time, Alaska has lost too many heroes.

The North Star Medal you propose will recognize the bravery and valor of our lost heroes. Troopers Toll, Johnson, Rich, and Officer Brandt share one important fact in common: they all ran towards danger to help and protect Alaskans. Other Alaskan peace officers, firefighters, EMTs and Search and Rescue professionals do the same every day. Their acts of bravery and valor in the service of their fellow citizens deserve recognition and honor. This award is a lasting way for Alaska to show that honor to the surviving spouse, survivors, co-workers and the citizens helped by Alaska's fallen heroes.

Thank you very much for proposing this legislation. We hope that the Alaska State Legislature passes this bill quickly. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Jake Metcalfe  
Executive Director  
PSEA/AFSCME Local 803