

# Representative Grier Hopkins



## ALASKA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

### House Bill 144 – Alaska Military Affairs Commission Sponsor Statement

States across the country have established military affairs organizations focused on preserving and growing their defense sectors. In Alaska, the defense industry has long been a key part of our social and economic landscape. However, many gaps exist in our knowledge of how the military impacts Alaska's economy and in pursuing growth opportunities as our nation's defense priorities evolve. Alaska needs continuity across state administrations and legislatures to organize, plan and implement effective strategies around defense in Alaska, including infrastructure, workforce development and quality of life. House Bill 144 would establish the Alaska Military Affairs Commission to serve as the state's focal point in coordinating statewide efforts to support the military presence by engaging with policymakers, business leaders, defense communities and military installations.

The annual Department of Defense budget is \$700 billion, plus an additional \$230 billion for federal agencies such as Veteran Affairs, Homeland Security, and the State Department. DOD spending makes up \$3.5 billion of Alaska's annual GDP, representing 0.6% of DOD's annual budget and 6.4% of Alaska's economy. Given the awakening of the nation's strategic interests in the Arctic region, there is opportunity for Alaska.

Through HB 144, the Alaska Military Affairs Commission will provide Alaska with an outlet to carry out a variety of activities, including the following:

- Provide recommendations to maintain, expand and grow the presence of the armed forces in the state, including new bases, expanded missions, and increased training;
- Plan for state infrastructure needs to support military objectives;
- Recommend methods to improve private and public employment opportunities for the families of current and former members of the military who reside in the state;
- Assist communities in the design and execution of programs that enhance the community's relationship with military installations and defense-related businesses;
- Advocate for the state in matters related to military expansion decision making by emphasizing the state's strategic location on the globe and existing infrastructure and work to build community support in the state for the armed services;

Please join me in supporting HB 144 to help ensure the U.S. military remains a cornerstone of Alaska's economic foundation.

**Ester – Goldstream – Fox – Steese – Birch Hill**

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