



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Division of Legislative Finance

P.O. Box 113200
Juneau, AK 99811-3200
(907) 465-3795
FAX (907) 465-1327

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 1, 2021

TO: Senator Bert Stedman, Senate Finance Co-Chair
Senator Click Bishop, Senate Finance Co-Chair
Helen Phillips, House Finance Assistant

FROM: Alexei Painter 
Director of Legislative Finance Division

SUBJECT: Agency Responses to FY21 Legislative Intent Language

This memorandum restates FY21 legislative intent (*italics*) for each agency and provides agency responses (indented) to our request for status reports. Responses indicating non-compliance, partial compliance, and indeterminate compliance have been identified using bold font and yellow highlighting.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Department of Public Safety

Operating/Capital Budget (CCS HB 205)

It is the intent of the legislature that the Department of Public Safety work to implement the recommendations of the 2019-2020 Village Public Safety Officer Working Group and report to the Legislative Finance Division by January 1, 2021 as to what efforts have been taken by the Department of Public Safety to meet those recommendations.

The Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) Working Group recommendations and findings were released on January 24, 2020. The Department of Public Safety (DPS) continues to work towards implementing these findings with a goal of revamping and structurally improving the VPSO program. While many of the recommendations exceed the Department's current statutory authority, DPS has taken steps towards honoring the spirit of the recommendations where possible. The Department looks forward to continued collaboration with the Legislature and stakeholders to fully realize the working group's goal of improving the VPSO program, working in partnership to better address the public safety needs of our communities.

DPS believes in the importance of rural law enforcement and believes alternative solutions to the current structure of the VPSO program may provide better services, with more oversight, and at a reduced cost. DPS welcomes an open and objective dialogue to look at all solutions to ensure adequate and sustainable law enforcement services exist for rural communities.

DPS will submit a report to the Legislative Finance Division by January 1, 2021 addressing the working group's recommendations in detail.

<p>Legislative Fiscal Analyst Comment: The Department provided a timely and comprehensive report, detailing the recommendations of the VPSO working group, and any efforts to address them. The report noted that the majority of the recommendations require statutory changes.</p>

It is the intent of the legislature that the Department of Public Safety, prioritize the deployment of law enforcement resources to non-urbanized areas that lack organized governments, and when placing added trooper positions, prioritize adding a second trooper to existing one-trooper posts.

DPS was provided 15 additional trooper positions for FY2021. As proposed, placement of those positions will be prioritized for rural areas and the new positions are in the process of being established; however, there is significant delay between establishing positions and filling the new positions in understaffed or new posts. Existing vacant positions must be filled before the Department can fill new positions, as pulling from existing posts to fill new

positions could lead to critical staffing shortages at existing posts. It takes two to three years to hire and train new troopers.

DPS is partnering with experts to conduct research to aid the Department in making data-driven decisions, specifically around staffing level needs and housing needs. DPS partnered with the University of Alaska's Justice Center to conduct two staffing studies, one completed in 2018 for the B Detachment, and one completed in July 2020 for the C Detachment. The Justice Center recommended a staffing increase of 58% and 22%, respectively. That is an increase of 40 troopers just in those two detachments to staff existing posts. These studies do not include calculations to significantly decrease caseloads to meet appropriate levels placed on a single trooper. For perspective, an Anchorage Police Department Special Victims Unit detective carries a caseload of under 20 sexual assault cases. Troopers in the Department's Violent Offenders team in Bethel carry caseloads of as much as 100 cases. Additionally, existing housing options preclude DPS from significantly increasing staffing in many rural locations. To get a comprehensive understanding of the housing needs for troopers around the state, DPS is partnering with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation to conduct a housing needs assessment. The assessment will assess existing housing in current communities with DPS posts, as well as what future housing projects may be needed to adequately staff existing or new posts.

Considering the staffing needs of DPS, it will be important for the policy discussions to also include a comprehensive evaluation of where and how resources (troopers) are deployed. Specifically, DPS is charged with provided public safety services to communities without other law enforcement resources. DPS is looking forward to continuing discussion with the Legislature on future funding prioritization.

Alaska State Troopers

Operating/Capital Budget (CCS HB 205)

It is the intent of the legislature that no funds should be moved outside of the personal services line of any allocation within the Alaska State Troopers appropriation.

PARTIAL COMPLIANCE

DPS makes effort to ensure that expenditures on personal services align with the budgeted amount and has complied with the intent of the Legislature.

Legislative Fiscal Analyst Comment: Three Line Item Transfers moved a total of \$89.1 out of Personal Services in various allocations, but the agency also moved \$2,771.6 in to the Personal Services line, with only the Alaska Wildlife Troopers Marine Enforcement allocation having a net negative effect of (\$10.1) for Personal Services. While this didn't meet the word of the intent, it does by and large meet the spirit of the intent. The largest LIT occurred in Alaska State Trooper Detachments, where a total of \$2,100.0 was transferred to Personal Services from the Travel and Services lines.

Ultimately, a final compliance determination cannot be made until the receipt of FY21 Actuals in late 2021.

Alaska State Troopers / Alaska State Trooper Detachments

Operating/Capital Budget (CCS HB 205)

It is the intent of the legislature that the Department of Public Safety seek to fill vacant positions within the Alaska State Troopers appropriation, and reduce overtime in order to better manage within the authorized budget. The Department should provide a report to the Legislative Finance Division by January 1, 2021 that details monthly hiring and attrition, as well as overtime costs by category, and describes any contributing factors.

Legislative Fiscal Analyst Comment: The Department submitted a timely and effective report, detailing monthly hiring and attrition as well as categories of premium pay by fund source and month of expenditure.

Statewide Support/ Information Systems

Operating/Capital Budget (CCS HB 205)

It is the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Public Safety not implement a new Anchorage Emergency Communications Center without legislative approval.

The 9-1-1 and Dispatch Consolidation Working Group, of which DPS is a voting member, is tasked with developing recommendations for public safety communications policy regarding 9-1-1 and Dispatch Consolidation. The work group will be putting forth its recommendation in a report on December 1, 2020.

DPS looks forward to reviewing the work group's final recommendations and developing a plan for implementation in conjunction with the Legislature.

INDETERMINATE COMPLIANCE

Legislative Fiscal Analyst Comment: Inconclusive. The 9-1-1 and Dispatch Consolidation Working Group submitted a report outlining concerns and requirements for effective implementation of this program. It is unclear how the Department will proceed, given those recommendations.