

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 220

An Act Relating to a Residency Requirement for Full-Time State Employees in the Classified, Exempt, or Partially Exempt Service; Relating to Allowable Absences for Permanent Fund Dividend Eligibility; and Providing for An Effective Date

There is no current law that requires State of Alaska employees to be residents of Alaska. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, accessibility to important technological resources accelerated rapidly, enabling many members of the state work force the ability to avoid the congregate office setting. But while the “remote work” options appeared necessary at that time, at least one negative consequence of those advancements may be a shift toward state employees moving to work from out-of-state, living away from the locales their work affects and spending their state-earned salaries Outside.

Senate Bill 220 would mandate that Alaska’s permanent, full-time state employees are residents of Alaska and would establish procedures to ensure that residency is maintained. Under this bill, employees who have maintained residency with a clear showing—to the extent that they qualify for a Permanent Fund Dividend—may continue state service. Using PFD eligibility automatically incorporates allowable absences that are already established in statute. Nonresidents could still be hired for state positions but would have to demonstrate residency through the next full calendar year, at the first instance of possible PFD eligibility.

The bill tasks the State Director of Personnel with annually verifying that employees are in good standing with the residency requirement by reviewing their PFD eligibility status or otherwise confirming that an employee—despite not applying for the Dividend—would meet the same eligibility criteria. The personnel director’s duties should be relatively easy to carry out; in most cases she can simply verify whether the Department of Revenue, Permanent Fund Dividend Division, approved the employee’s Dividend application.

If they live and work in the state they serve, our public employees will experience higher morale, better productivity, improved collaboration, and will have more care for the tasks over which they are entrusted. This bill in no way restricts the ability of departments or agencies to offer work-from-home arrangements within the state.

This legislation provides necessary, reasonable, and important safeguards against an exodus of our talented and valuable state employees. I ask for your support for this commonsense legislation ensuring that Alaska’s public employee services are performed by Alaskans.