



February 26, 2026

The Honorable Andy Josephson
Chair, House Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 505
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Josephson,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of Public Safety's FY2027 budget overview on February 17, 2026. During the hearing, several members requested additional information. The department provides the following responses.

1. Representative Allard requested the department's overtime costs over the last four fiscal years.

	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026 Year to Date
Budgeted Overtime	\$7,163.3	\$7,441.3	\$8,455.8	\$11,622.5
Overtime Expenditures	\$9,965.5	\$10,829.5	\$11,391.8	\$7,068.5

From FY2023 through FY2025, actual overtime expenditures exceeded the budgeted authority. The FY2026 figure reflects the expenditures as of February 6, 2026, and does not represent full-year costs.

Overtime within Alaska State Troopers and Alaska Wildlife Troopers is driven by both structural and operational factors. Structural drivers include vacancies, minimum staffing requirements in rural posts, court appearances outside normal duty hours, and prisoner transport. Operational drivers include major investigations, emergency response events, tactical team activations, and other time-sensitive enforcement actions. Crime and emergency response are not confined to standard business hours, and incident-based events cannot be deferred.

Although the Legislature provided an additional \$1,000.0 in overtime funding rather than the full \$2,348.0 requested, overtime demand remains tied to operational realities. When overtime expenditures exceed authorized levels, the department must absorb the difference within existing operating authority, typically reallocating funds from travel, training, equipment, or services. This limits operational flexibility and can delay planned investments.

2. Representative Moore requested a breakdown of the FY2027 Governor's requested budget for the Village Public Safety Operations division.

The FY2027 Governor's proposed budget for the Village Public Safety Operations allocation totals \$26,097.3 (\$ in thousands) and is structured as follows:

Personal Services: \$783.0
Travel: \$267.2
Services: \$804.2
Commodities: \$319.9
Capital Outlay: \$0.0
Grants: \$23,923.0

The division operations primarily provide funding and support to the ten native organizations which operate regional Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) programs, and as a result most of the funding appears in the Grants line. VPSOs are employed by these regional entities, while the division provides oversight, training support, equipment coordination, and administrative management.

3. Representative Bynum requested information regarding drug interdiction efforts, the department's involvement, and steps being taken to address the problem.

The department's Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit (SDEU) leads statewide narcotics interdiction and investigation efforts in partnership with local, State, and federal agencies. As reflected in the department's 2025 Annual Drug Report,¹ SDEU and its partners seized over 516,000 grams of illegal drugs in 2025.

Methamphetamine, fentanyl, and cocaine continue to pose the greatest drug threats to Alaska. The report shows that most large-scale seizures occur in the Municipality of Anchorage, which serves as the primary entry point into the state.

The department conducts interdiction efforts through coordinated multi-agency teams operating in Southcentral, Interior, Southeast, and Western Alaska. These teams work closely with federal partners to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations and to pursue federal prosecution where appropriate.

The report also highlights ongoing challenges. Alaska does not produce illegal drugs; substances are predominantly imported and then distributed statewide. Price disparities between Alaska and the contiguous United States continue to incentivize trafficking. The presence of fentanyl in both powder and counterfeit pill form further complicates enforcement efforts.

4. Representative Hannan requested a history of trooper post closures and related impacts during the FY2016–FY2017 budget reductions.

During the FY2016 and FY2017 budget cycles, the department absorbed significant general fund reductions as part of broader statewide fiscal actions. Within the Alaska State Troopers (AST)

¹ Alaska Department of Public Safety, *Annual Drug Report 2025* (January 2026), available at <https://www.legfin.akleg.gov/BudgetBackupDocuments/FY2027/LegReports/Report164.pdf>

and Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) components, these reductions resulted in workforce losses, consolidation of coverage areas, and closure or consolidation of several trooper posts.

During that period, the department eliminated at least nine sworn enforcement positions, including five State Troopers, two investigator positions within the Bureau of Investigation, and two Alaska Wildlife Troopers. In addition, a captain position and multiple administrative and support positions were deleted. These reductions affected patrol, investigations, supervision, and rural support functions. The cumulative effect was not limited to a single detachment or region but instead represented a statewide contraction of enforcement capacity.

The reductions were accompanied by closure or consolidation of multiple trooper posts across both the AST and AWT components. In some communities, both AST and AWT positions were affected. Impacted locations included Girdwood, Talkeetna, Ninilchik, McGrath, Cooper Landing, Wrangell, Yakutat, Galena, and St. Mary's. In several cases, vacant posts were eliminated and rural trooper housing leases were discontinued. Personnel were reassigned to neighboring detachments, and coverage areas were expanded to maintain statewide service with fewer resources.

Operational impacts extended beyond post closures. The Department discontinued enhanced law enforcement presence at large-scale events such as Arctic Man in the Paxson area due to reduced staffing capacity. Dedicated trooper positions that previously supported the Village Public Safety Officer program were also eliminated, reducing the department's ability to provide direct field support and oversight to VPSO communities. Patrol areas grew larger, travel time between communities increased, and the margin for surge response narrowed.

Although law enforcement service did not cease in the affected regions, the department's operational footprint was reduced. Rebuilding sworn staffing capacity is a multi-year process that requires recruitment, academy training, field training, and rural deployment. The cumulative impact of the FY2016–FY2017 reductions continues to influence staffing levels, overtime demands, and coverage challenges today.

Sincerely,

Dianna L. Thornton

Dianna L. Thornton
Administrative Services Director

cc: Lacey Sanders, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Jordan Shilling, Director, Governor's Legislative Office
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