

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Dale Eicher. I serve on the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly although I am writing in support of HB 286 today in my individual capacity, not on behalf of the Assembly. The Assembly has already formally expressed its support for this concept through Resolution 2026-005.

Back in 2017 and 2018, I was a volunteer firefighter. Obviously, no one enters volunteer service to make money. People volunteer because they care about their communities. That said, volunteer service carries real costs. It requires substantial time, ongoing training, and personal expense. In my case, I often drove 45 minutes one way to attend training or complete shifts at the station. That meant fuel costs, vehicle wear, and long hours away from family and work. Those realities are common across Alaska, particularly in geographically large service areas, such as the KPB.

Under current law, the exemption frequently results in approximately \$100 or less in annual property tax savings on the Kenai Peninsula Borough. While appreciated, that amount does not meaningfully offset the time and expense required to serve.

Volunteer firefighters and EMS providers are essential to maintaining effective emergency response while containing costs for taxpayers. In many communities, replacing volunteer staffing with fully paid personnel would significantly increase local tax burdens.

HB 286 does not impose a mandate and does not create state expense. It simply provides flexibility. If a municipality determines that a higher exemption would help with recruitment and retention, it would have the authority to make that decision locally.

Volunteers do not serve for financial incentive. However, when reasonable tools are available to help encourage and retain them, we should provide those tools to local governments.

For those reasons, I respectfully support HB 286.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dale Eicher



Central Emergency Services

Central Kenai Peninsula Fire & EMS Provider

Roy Browning
Fire Chief

Dear Members of the House Community & Regional Affairs Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 286, Firefighter/EMS Property Tax Exemption.

I serve as Fire Chief for Central Emergency Services in Soldotna, Alaska. We are a combination fire department with 30 volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel who serve alongside our career staff. These volunteers respond to fires, medical calls, rescues, and other emergencies at all hours. They serve because they care about their community.

Across the Kenai Peninsula Borough and throughout Alaska, fire departments rely heavily on volunteers to meet their daily mission. Many of Alaska's firefighters and EMTs serve in a volunteer capacity in their home communities. Without them, many departments would struggle to maintain adequate response coverage.

We are seeing growing challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters and EMS providers. This is a national issue, and Alaska is no exception. The training requirements, time commitment, and personal sacrifice required of volunteers are significant. HB 286 recognizes that commitment and provides a practical incentive that may help with both recruitment and retention. HB 286 also allows local municipalities to decide whether to adopt a property tax exemption and to determine the amount of that exemption. This approach gives local communities flexibility while placing no fiscal obligation on the State of Alaska. It allows each community to make the decision based on its own needs and resources.

A municipal tax exemption is a reasonable way to recognize the essential public safety role volunteers provide. It shows that the State of Alaska values their service and understands the importance of volunteer responders in protecting lives and property. On behalf of Central Emergency Services and the volunteer responders who serve the Kenai Peninsula Borough, I respectfully ask for your support of HB 286. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Roy Browning
Fire Chief
Central Emergency Services
Soldotna, Alaska

"Central Emergency Services is dedicated to protecting the lives and property of our community and visitors by providing professional emergency services through incident response, training, public education and fire prevention"

Teamwork-Integrity-Dedication-Pride

Fire Administration • 231 South Binkley St. • Soldotna, Alaska 99669
(907) 262-4792 • Fax (907) 262-5770