

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## Senate State Affairs Committee



Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
Chair  
State Capitol Room 119  
Juneau AK 99801-1182  
(907) 465-6249

Sen. Jesse Bjorkman, Vice-Chair  
Sen. Bill Wielechowski  
Sen. Elvi Gray Jackson  
Sen. Cathy Tilton

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### Summary of Changes

#### Senate Bill 169

#### Welcoming Alaska Office

#### **SB 169 version G to SC SB 169 (STA) Version H**

Section 1 – Throughout AS 23.05.031, the phrase “new immigrant” is replaced with “immigrant.”

Page 1, Lines 6-7 – The location of the Welcoming Alaska Office is moved from within the “office of the commissioner” to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Version H adds a new purpose statement emphasizing economic integration and workforce security.

Page 1, Line 14 – Version H adds "information about how to access labor unions" to the duties of the Welcoming Alaska Office.

Page 2, Lines 3-4 – Updates subsection 2 to establish the Welcoming Alaska Office as the coordinating entity among stakeholders, including state agencies and local governments, to align strategies to reduce licensing and other barriers that hinder immigrants, refugees, and newcomers from gaining employment or starting a business.

Page 2, Line 13 – Version H adds language that reads “and to support immigrants, refugees, and newcomers in starting and scaling new businesses.”

Page 3, Lines 19-21 – Version H adds to the duties of the Welcoming Alaska Office that it shall “coordinate refugee programs, including education, training, employment, housing, and medical support and other services, for refugees who no longer receive federal assistance.”

Page 3, Lines 22-23 - Renumbers (17) as (18).

Page 3, Line 26 – Version H requires the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development to appoint the Executive Director of the Welcoming Alaska Office. Version G authorized the Governor to appoint the Executive Director.

Page 4, Line 15 – Changes the new AS 23.05.133 – Welcoming Alaska Advisory Committee to increase the size of the committee from nine members to thirteen members.

Page 4, Line 20 – Version H changes the number of governor-appointed voting members on the advisory committee from seven to eleven.

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Page 4, Lines 21-22 – Version H calls for the advisory committee to include a representative from a nonprofit organization that provides employment or language services to immigrants, refugees, and newcomers.

Page 4, Line 26 – Version H changes the business community representative on the advisory committee to a representative from the business and economic development community.

Page 4, Line 30 through Page 5, Line 5 – Version H adds four additional members to the advisory committee:

- (F) a representative of a refugee resettlement agency operating in the state
- (G) a representative of a refugee-led or immigrant-service community-based organization
- (H) a representative with expertise in workforce development or labor market analysis
- a representative from the health care delivery sector

Page 6, Line 12 – Changes AS 23.05.134 to require the Welcoming Alaska Center to coordinate services for immigrants, refugees, and newcomers.

Page 6, Line 14 – Version G called for the Welcoming Alaska Center to offer English and Alaska Native language instruction. Version H changes that to “language instruction.”

Page 6, Line 16 – Version H inserts a new paragraph to say, “immigrant” has the meaning given in 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15) (Immigration and Nationality Act)

Page 6, Lines 25-27 – Version H stipulates that “refugee” has the meaning given in 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(42) and includes individuals eligible for services under the federal Refugee Act of 1980 or any successor federal program.

Section 2 – Page 8, Line 29 through Page 9, Line 7 – Adds a new subsection 19 requiring the Welcoming Alaska Office to serve as the state's refugee services program under federal Refugee Act of 1980 and assume responsibilities previously carried out by the state's designee, including: providing or coordinating refugee resettlement services for long-term economic self-sufficiency; operating or overseeing refugee support services, including refugee cash and medical assistance as authorized; and collaborating with refugee resettlement agencies, community partners, and refugee-led organizations.

Page 7, Line 20 – Version H adds “and to support immigrants, refugees, and newcomers in starting and scaling new businesses” to the duties of the Welcoming Alaska Office.

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Section 3 – Version H adds a new section 3 to require the Welcoming Alaska Office to employ an individual to serve as the state refugee coordinator for the state’s refugee services program under the federal Refugee Act of 1980.

Subsection (f) requires the Commissioner of the Department of Health to designate an employee to serve as the coordinator of refugee health services under the state's refugee services program. The coordinator will work with public health agencies to coordinate the refugee health program, consistent with guidance from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Section 4 – Amends AS 39.25.120 to add the Executive Director of the Welcoming Alaska Office to the list of positions that are partially exempt. A person holding a position in the partially exempt service is not required to complete an assessment and is not eligible for a hearing before the personnel board in the event of dismissal, demotion, or suspension.

Section 7 – Provides for an effective date of July 1, 2027, for Sections 2 and 3.

Section 8 – Implements an effective date of July 1, 2026, except for Sections 2 and 3.