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MEMBER

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE,
MEMBER

HOUSE MILITARY & VETERANS'
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, MEMBER

JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE,
MEMBER



REPRESENTATIVE CLIFF GROH

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HB 249 Sponsor Statement

This legislation would create a service within the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs (DMVA) for a Military and Veterans' Family Help Desk. This help desk would be a dedicated point of contact for military families to learn more about services offered by the State of Alaska. It is intended to directly meet State Policy priorities outlined by the Department of Defense to assist military families and open an avenue to address other priorities in the future. This legislation is similar to bills that have recently passed in Virginia and Washington.

In Alaska there are approximately 23,065 total members in the Department of Defense—although our total military community in Alaska is much larger. If you consider the families, the size of this community grows to 51,297—or about 7% of our total population. The impact of military members in Alaska cannot be overstated, and they come with unique needs. By creating a clear link between the State of Alaska and our military communities, we can connect service members and their families to services the State of Alaska currently provides and open a clear channel of communication to find out what services are still needed.

This service will help recent military in-migrants integrate to Alaska. Each state offers different services, has different laws, and may require different professional certifications. Military families are highly transient. For military members who have just recently relocated to Alaska, this help desk can be their first point of contact to learn about what their state government can do for them.

A key feature of this legislation is prioritizing military spouse employment. Dual incomes are critical to military families. Yet, a disconnect between experience and obtaining profession certifications in a new state has contributed to high rates of unemployment among military spouses, a concern that has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This legislation also takes the concept further by expanding to include military families and their children. For example, this help desk could assist children of military families in applying to the University of Alaska, or help those children learn about a trade or obtain a job in the state. The bill is intended to be inclusive of other family structures, such as military members who may have dependent siblings or parents in their care.

Passing this legislation will help the State of Alaska better serve those in our community who have served.