

February 16, 2024

Support for SB 189 – Re-authorizing of the Alaska Commission on Aging

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Committee Members:

I am Captain Bob Pawlowski, NOAA (Ret), a resident of Alaska since 1985 and proud to call Alaska the home for Paula and myself. I am writing to support SB 189 to extend the sunset date for the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA). Extending the date will allow to meet its mission and vision as required by Alaska Statute and the Older Americans Act. As a Senior, I appreciate the opportunities that Alaska offers in staying active in the community and volunteering. Currently, I serve as Chair, Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board, a statutory member of ACoA, and volunteer with Alaska's AARP.

As I enjoy the rewards that my active duty service and time in both the public and private sector has provided Paula and I, I also know that many of Alaska's Seniors are not having their needs met. Whether from limited lifetime income, hardships in life, health challenges, or any other of a myriad of reasons, they have chosen Alaska their lifetime home and continued to reside in our local communities and contribute to the state. But they need help to live day-to-day, given the costs of housing, the burden of inflation, the high costs of medication, local transportation options, and limits in senior services. This is where ACoA plays a critical role. This role includes:

- Collecting and analyzing year-to-year data on changes in Alaska's Senior population, trends are identified on the needs of the population versus the levels of services available. An annual Senior Snapshot is compiled by ACoA and distributed amongst Senior Services organizations and advocates.
- As the designated State Commission for the Older Americans Act (OAA), ACoA provides the conduit for identifying the steps Alaska is taking in meeting the mandates of the OAA and looking to the future on what federal resources are needed. By preparing the Alaska State Plan for Seniors every four (4) years, the Commission and its partners are able to provide a roadmap for addressing the issues facing Seniors. The current approved plan addresses needs and services for the Fiscal Years 2024-2027. Goals and Objectives are detailed to the Administration for Community Living that show how federal and state resources are working together to meet the needs of Alaska's Seniors and the direction of the OAA.
- Through quarterly meetings, ACoA facilitates dialog with partners in Senior Services. The Commissioners, each with their own diverse background, are able to highlight needs and pursue solutions with state and federal agencies and public and private partners. ACoA works with DHS Senior Disability Services, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and other state organizations to maximize the options for addressing these needs.

I will conclude by stating that the benefit ACoA brings to Alaska in advising federal, state and local senior programs continues to be significant. I ask you to support SB 189 and extend the tenure of ACoA.

Captain Bob Pawlowski, NOAA (Ret)