

# Challenges and Solutions

## Operating a program created 40 years ago; it is time for adaptation and change

- **Solution:** Update and evaluate statutes and regulations to reduce burden on communities, increase support of officers
- Authorizing statute: AS § 18.65.670 Village public safety officers program
- Alaska Administrative Code: 13 AAC 96

## Recruitment/Retention: toughest job in Alaska; unlike AST no back up, no “off-duty”

- **Solution:** Fund recruitment activities and best practices
  - Increase pay or provide COLA
  - Allow sign-on bonus at the discretion of each Grantee— similar to Fairbanks PD and Anchorage PD with retention incentives
  - Increase morale with easy fixes - allow funding for better uniforms and hats
  - 13 AAC 96.040 limits communities to one VPSO – amend to allow “hub” communities, to allow rotating shifts within high needs communities or job sharing opportunities.

## Unfunded mandates

- **Solution:** Update regulations that place unfunded mandates on rural communities
- Allow funding to be used on housing, office space, jail cells, and communication needs
  - 13 AAC 96.040 amend by deleting section (A)
- Change the way the program is funded by legislature (positions to full operational costs)
- Provide training
  - 13 AAC 96.010(b)(6) amend to allow mandatory funding of training and equipment

## Inflexibility in management of program/ micromanaged by AST

- **Solution:** Compacting- allow Grantee to compact and provide public safety services that meet the needs of the rural communities; local control was an original selling point of the VPSO program.
- **Solution:** Examine possibly moving the VPSO program out from under the Alaska State Troopers; Current statute allows for a Regional Public Safety Officer (AS § 18.65.680) that could provide the oversight with a direct connection and equal footing as AST.
- Enable local decision making; Grantees with proven track record should have operational decision making authority.
- No statutory fix needed.

## Arming has been a slow process due to liability concerns; law has yet to be implemented

- VPSO's are not “public safety officers” and therefore not covered under the doctrine of qualified immunity.
- **Solution:** Alaska Attorney General opinion on whether or not the State of Alaska believes that VPSO's are covered as “public safety officers” within state law; and assist Grantees in lobbying for a change in federal law to include VPSO's as “public safety officers” – this would also allow VPSO's to qualify for death benefits.



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