

Kathie Wasserman

February 3, 2014

Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Representative Ben Nageak
House C&RA Committee

Dear Committee Members,

RE: HB 199

I am writing this letter as a private citizen and NOT as the Executive Director of the Alaska Municipal League. My organization has not taken a formal stand on this bill, as of yet. However, it is something I feel very strongly about.

I have served a number of terms as Mayor in two different remote, small communities which were active in the VPSO program. While serving in the first community, my husband worked with the VPSO program, which included working at the Alaska Law Enforcement Academy in Sitka and training VPSOs.

There has been a certain reluctance to spend the extra training time and insurance money to see that VPSOs are armed. However, there has not been a reluctance to send these people to a gun fight armed with a stick.

Public safety is one of the unarguable tenets of government. To think that we would attempt to save money by requiring VPSOs, serving alone and far from back-up help, into dangerous situations, is deplorable.

I have heard the argument that VPSOs don't have the proper training. Then, we need to give them the proper training.

VPSOs are expected to respond to state felonies. They should, therefore, expect the State to do as much as possible to see that they do not become one of the victims.

The VPSO program is a wonderful concept. But, it has been broken for many years as VPSOs have been required to do their job with less and less equipment and training. It is time for us to change that.

I would ask that you pass HB 199 out of committee. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathie Wasserman

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