

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE DAN SADDLER

SPONSOR STATEMENT

House Bill 46

“An Act relating to membership in the Alaska Workforce Investment Board.”

House Bill 46 will improve the Alaska Workforce Investment Board’s ability to improve employment prospects for an important and growing segment of the state’s workforce, by adding a seat to represent veterans.

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) is a 25-member board charged with helping unemployed Alaskans find jobs, and helping current workers upgrade skills find better jobs. Board members represent business, industry, education, organized labor, state government and community-based service organizations.

However, there is no representation specifically for veterans, who represent a significant and growing segment of Alaska’s population. Alaska is home to more than 73,000 veterans, and boasts the highest per-capita veteran population in the nation. Each month about 320 service members separate from service at Alaska’s three main military facilities: Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Eielson Air Force Base, and Ft. Wainwright.

Polls show 80 percent of these new veterans would love to remain in Alaska, but only 20 percent do. The inability to find a good job plays a significant part in the state’s loss of these highly trained, civic-minded individuals and their families.

Having a veterans’ seat on the AWIB will help the board develop workforce development policies to meet this group’s significant needs. It will help provide a pool of well-trained employees for Alaskan employers. And it will help veterans transition from uniformed service, close any skills gap, find work and remain in Alaska as productive citizens.

I would appreciate your support for House Bill 46.