



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Office of the Commissioner

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The Honorable Chris Tuck
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol Room 204
Juneau AK, 99801

February 28, 2017

Dear Representative Tuck:

Thank you for introducing House Bill 126, which aims to correct a long-standing deficit in laws governing Alaska's organized militia.

Presently, all Members of the organized militia, including the Alaska National Guard (AKNG) and the Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF), are rightly afforded workers' compensation protection when ordered into active state service. Appropriately, AKNG Members are covered by the federal government during training exercises and also when traveling to or from such exercises. ASDF Members do not enjoy similar coverage when training or traveling to and from training, i.e., preparing themselves for the eventuality of being called into active state service. HB 126 would extend this protection to the ASDF, which would benefit not only the volunteer Members, but the State of Alaska as well.

The practical value to Alaska and Alaskans is readily apparent, but the potential financial benefit to the state is not merely conjectural. In a past incident, an ASDF Soldier injured in a training exercise had little recourse to recover expenses incurred due to the injury. In light of pending litigation, the state settled. If the ASDF volunteer had been covered by workers' compensation, the state would have incurred substantially less expense.

I'm sure you will hear separately from the Division of Risk Management within the Alaska Department of Administration to confirm our understanding that ASDF forces could be added to the state's existing workers' compensation policy for no additional cost. We can protect ASDF Soldiers and the State of Alaska for nothing more than a simple change in statute.

ASDF Soldiers are dedicated volunteers, contributing valuable skills to the benefit of their fellow Alaskans out of their own personal commitments to public service. The least we can do for them is to provide them with no-additional-cost workers' compensation coverage for the times when they are making themselves ready to perform in active state service.

Our department is happy to support this bill. We stand ready to assist you in securing its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie Hummel". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Laurie Hummel

The Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard

Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs