

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

## **CSHB 23 (FIN) am Ver U.A Survivors' Medical Benefits – Sponsor Statement**

House Bill 23 would extend medical insurance coverage to the survivors of peace officers and firefighters who die from work-related injuries.

The need for this legislation became apparent in 2014 with the tragic loss of two Alaska State Troopers in a shooting in Tanana. These deaths highlighted a gap in medical benefit coverage to survivors of peace officers and firefighters whose deaths occur as a result of their jobs.

HB 23 establishes a peace officer and firefighter survivors' fund in the Department of Public Safety. Appropriations and donations to the fund will be used to pay the medical insurance premiums for eligible survivors.

Municipalities with populations of 10,000 or more are required to pay the full premium for survivors of municipal peace officers and firefighters. For municipalities with populations less than 10,000, money available in the fund will cover 50 percent of the premium.

Appropriations to the peace officer and firefighter survivors' fund will be based on the survivors who are eligible for premium coverage under the legislation. The legislature may appropriate to the fund the amount necessary to cover the premiums as part of the budget process.

The commissioner shall pay the premium for the level of medical coverage that applied at the time of the employee's death. A surviving spouse becomes ineligible for payments from the fund when the spouse becomes eligible for major medical insurance coverage by other means or is eligible for Medicare, whichever comes first. Except for a child who is totally and permanently disabled, a dependent child becomes ineligible when they become eligible for major medical insurance coverage by other means or reach 26 years of age, whichever comes first.

Please join me in supporting this measure. It is time we give substance to our appreciation for the invaluable work performed by the people who put themselves in danger in order to keep us safe.