

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Josh Revak

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## SPONSOR STATEMENT

### SB 40

*"An Act relating to veterans' benefits services and veterans' benefits appeal services."*

When a veteran needs legal representation, medical supplies, or other services, many are not aware that a Veteran Service Organization (VSO) provides many services free of charge. Instead, they pay hefty fees to other providers and take on debt without being fully informed about their free options.

SB 40 seeks to stop veterans from being taken advantage of by requiring these individuals and businesses who offer compensated veterans services to provide veterans a written disclosure form listing the free alternatives prior to taking them on as a client. Additionally, any advertisement for veteran benefit services will be required to include a disclosure that indicates that a Veteran Service Organization offers these services free of charge. Should the veteran not receive the disclosure, the individual or business responsible can be fined \$1,000 dollars for each violation.

Currently, there are 18 Veteran Service Officers in Alaska who work under organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), and the Director of Veterans Affairs. These organizations are responsible for aiding and advising veterans free of charge.

The passage of SB 40 ensures that veterans and their families who are looking for assistance with veterans benefit services are fully informed about the free services offered by Veteran Service Organizations before they pay for assistance. After making so many sacrifices to serve our country, veterans are being taken advantage of—SB 40 seeks to change this reality and help connect veterans to the affordable services they deserve.

I hope you will join me in supporting SB 40.