

From: [Nathaniel Craig](#)
To: [Senate Resources](#); [Sen. Jesse Bjorkman](#)
Cc: [Nathaniel Craig](#); [Jill Craig](#)
Subject: SB 164, Public Testimony
Date: Friday, March 15, 2024 3:19:03 PM

Senator Jesse, Bjorkman, good afternoon. Sir, I was requested to testify during today's hearing for public testimony on Senate bill 164. After reading through the bill and understanding, its intent, and applicability, I would like to offer a few suggestions for potential amendments.

While the intent of the bill is to support disabled the veterans such as myself, I'd like to say that I am extremely grateful that the state of Alaska would recognize me for my service. That said, I think that one of the main items that should be addressed is the term or length of the permit, it should be only for a few years rather than a lifetime applicability. Veterans understand we all have an expiration date, with that being said, there would be no checks and balances for a lifetime membership of ensuring that a permit placed on a vehicle would not be accidentally or unintentionally passed on to a non- disabled veteran, thereby potential misuse or abuse of this program.

Furthermore, upon reviewing the financial risk/rewards, I see that in its current state, it would cost the Alaskan taxpayers approximately \$250,000 per year. As I understand, there is a current program already stood up and administered to support disabled veterans on an annual basis. This additional cost I would not want for my neighbors to support through their tax dollars. It would be helpful to know what the existing program cost without this requested change. My hope is that you can find a way to improve the bill with preferably no cost impact to the overall budget and one that has a limited timeframe to avoid abuse, and or misuse.

Lastly, while I do not partake in this program, I did want to say thank you for the existing program and its current status. My hope is that it could be used by those in true need. Thank you again for your time, and I wish you and your families the best.

Very Respectfully,

Nate Craig
Disabled Veteran
Mobile/Text: [REDACTED]

Anne Rittgers

From: Nathaniel Craig <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2024 10:38 PM
To: Anne Rittgers; Senate Resources; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Sen. Scott Kawasaki; Sen. James Kaufman; Sen. Forrest Dunbar; Sen. Matt Claman
Cc: Nathaniel Craig; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman; Jill Craig
Subject: Re: SB 164, Public Testimony
Attachments: SB 164 DNR Follow Up to 03.11.24 Hearing.pdf

Mrs. Anne Rittgers, Good Evening.

Ma'am, it was a pleasure speaking with you today about my written public testimony that was submitted last week. Thank you again for your time today to discuss with me "how" and "when" public testimony is handled when submitted in writing. You also identified the approved methods/means for how public testimony can be submitted, let me summarize below to avoid any future confusion; (however, these are not written rules, policy, just considered to be best practice.)

"How" & "When" can Public Testimony is Submitted

- Flying to Juneau to testify in person (this is a bit costly; I'd have to estimate at least \$1,000.00 to make that trip).
- Calling in through the operator board, must be achieved same day, only achievable for those that are not working during committee hearing hours.
- Utilizing web-based methods, Microsoft Teams or Zoom, only achievable for those that are not working during the committee hearing hours.
- Through Writing, Snail Mail or Email; must be provided 24-Hrs prior to meeting start. (Note: This is a best practice, not a written rule or policy).

Also noteworthy, the email account "Senate.Resources@akleg.gov" is not an email distro account that allows communications to be sent to all resource committee members, rather this is only communicated to the Chair and Co-Chair, in which their staffers are typically the individuals to receive such communications and are charged with providing such communications.

Please advise when this and future communications can be uploaded to the SB 164 "Documents" section can be uploaded for the Senate Resources Committee members and the general public as well. Thank you again for your time today and have a great evening.

Senators of the Resources Committee, Good Evening.

In reviewing additional supporting documentation for SB 164, I noticed an email titled "RE: SRES Follow up: SB 164, 3/11", that Joe Byrnes stated there would be a fee enforcement (ticket) if the someone was found to be using a Park Pass fraudulently. While that's a worthwhile attempt to regulate this program, I believe that there is the evidence of proof that must be validated to substantiate if an individual is truly a disabled veteran and must satisfy 11AAC 12.250(a). Unfortunately, Veterans Affairs (VA) only has one

method/means to provide proof that they are disabled. It is a formal letter that a veterans must request from the VA and it would show if they are disabled from 10% (the lowest percentage) to 100% (the highest). As you may imagine, it is "not" a common practice for a Veteran to carry this letter (8.5" x 11" sheet) on their person for an everyday occasion as say you would a driver's license, badge or ID for work. That said, when an individual is asked to validate the validity of their lifetime pass (in a parking area, camp site or other occasion), the Veteran would not typically be able to show proof in that moment and as such would find themselves subject to. It should be noted that a Veterans Card from the VA can be acquired by any veteran that has served and discharged under honorable conditions, this does not mean that they are automatically disabled. Below I have provided you to links for this information for your review and further consideration. Lastly, a Veteran can lose their disability rating for a number of reasons, unless found to be 100% and totally/permanently disabled (meaning that they could not recover).

Finally, in my original email sent last week, I would like to re-iterate that my concern about this bill in its current state is that (a) there is a program in place for Alaskan Disabled Veterans to receive an annual park pass, this benefit already exists, (b) there is no effective means to regulate this program, a lifetime pass would unfortunately would be a risky policy to put in place, (c) the cost impact of approx. \$250,000.00 on annual basis for the next 5-Years totaling \$1,500,000.00 would be an unwise expenditure of funds in my opinion to pass along to my neighbors/friends/Alaskans. There are numerous programs that Veterans can take advantage of already, passing this bill in its current state for "lifetime" with no safe-guards would be a risky choice and for the reasons stated herein.

Again, thank you for all you do and support us with, I request that this information be taken into further consideration in the future as this bill is discussed. Thank you for your time and have a wonderful day.

Very Respectfully,

Nate Craig
Disabled Veteran
Mobile/Text: [REDACTED]

Veteran ID Card: [https://www.va.gov/records/get-veteran-id-cards/#:~:text=You%20may%20be%20eligible%20if%20you%20meet%20both%20of%20the,general%20discharge%20\(under%20honorable%20conditions\)](https://www.va.gov/records/get-veteran-id-cards/#:~:text=You%20may%20be%20eligible%20if%20you%20meet%20both%20of%20the,general%20discharge%20(under%20honorable%20conditions))

Veteran Proof of Disability: <https://www.va.gov/records/download-va-letters/>



Download VA benefit letters | Veterans Affairs

To receive some benefits, Veterans need a letter proving their status. Access and download your VA Benefit Summary Letter (sometimes called a VA award letter) and other benefit letters and documents online.

www.va.gov

National Parks Pass for Disabled Veterans: <https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/veterans-and-gold-star-families-free-access.htm>



Free Entrance to National Parks for Current Military, Veterans, and Gold Star Families (U.S. National Park Service)

The National Park Service in partnership with Operation Live Well would like to thank military personnel and their families for their service and invite them to enjoy their national parks.

www.nps.gov

DAV Park Pass, Alaska: <https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/asp/vetpass.htm>

Disabled Veteran's Annual Camping Pass

Alaska State Parks Disabled Veteran's Annual Camping Pass

<http://dnr.alaska.gov>

From: Anne Rittgers <Anne.Rittgers@akleg.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 15, 2024 4:47 PM
To: Nathaniel Craig <[REDACTED]>
Cc: jill.craig@outlook.com <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: SB 164, Public Testimony

Greetings Mr. Craig,

First, thank you for your service.

Thank you for writing to Senate Resources; your testimony will be included in the bill packet and available to the public on BASIS the next time the bill is before the committee.

Thank you,

Anne

Anne Rittgers

Office of Senator Click Bishop
907-465-2327 (main)
907-465-3887 (direct)

From: Nathaniel Craig <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, March 15, 2024 3:19 PM

To: Senate Resources <SenateResources@akleg.gov>; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman <Sen.Jesse.Bjorkman@akleg.gov>

Cc: Nathaniel Craig <nathaniel.craig@outlook.com>; Jill Craig <jill.craig@outlook.com>

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