

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND
VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

February 27, 2001
3:38 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Mike Chenault, Chair
Representative Beverly Masek
Representative Joe Green
Representative Pete Kott
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Joe Hayes

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Lisa Murkowski

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Richard Foster

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 87

"An Act establishing the Alaska Veterans Advisory Council; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 87(MLV) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 137

"An Act relating to records of veterans of the armed forces; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 137 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS ACTION

BILL: HB 87

SHORT TITLE:ALASKA VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL

SPONSOR(S): RLS BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page		Action
01/24/01	0154	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/01	0154	(H)	MLV, STA, FIN

01/24/01	0154	(H)	FN1: (MVA)
01/24/01	0155	(H)	GOVERNOR'S TRANSMITTAL LETTER
01/24/01	0155	(H)	REFERRED TO MLV
02/20/01		(H)	MLV AT 3:30 PM CAPITOL 120
02/20/01		(H)	Bill Canceled
02/27/01		(H)	MLV AT 3:30 PM CAPITOL 120

BILL: HB 137

SHORT TITLE: RECORDS OF VETERANS

SPONSOR(S): SP CMTE ON MILITARY & VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page		Action
02/23/01	0410	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/23/01	0410	(H)	MLV, RES
02/27/01		(H)	MLV AT 3:30 PM CAPITOL 120

WITNESS REGISTER

CAROL CARROLL, Director
 Administrative Services Division
 Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
 400 Willoughby, Suite 500
 Juneau, Alaska 99811

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 87 on behalf of the DMVA and the administration.

PAT CAROTHERS, Chair
 Alaska Veterans Advisory Council (AVAC)
 P.O. Box 32926
 Juneau, Alaska 99803-2926

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained AVAC's twofold mission and testified in support of HB 87.

SHARON YOUNG, State Recorder
 State Recorder's Office
 Division of Support Services
 Department of Natural Resources
 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1210
 Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3564

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the need for HB 137 and answered questions.

AL ZANGRI, Chief
 Vital Statistics
 Division of Public Health
 Department of Health and Social Services

P.O. Box 110675
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0675
POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke briefly in support of HB 137.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 01-4, SIDE A
Number 0001

CHAIR MIKE CHENAULT called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 3:38 p.m. Members present at the call to order were Representatives Chenault, Masek, Green, and Hayes. Representatives Kott and Cissna arrived as the meeting was in progress. Representative Murkowski was excused, attending another meeting. Chair Chenault noted the presence of Representative Foster.

HB 87 - ALASKA VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL

CHAIR CHENAULT announced the first order of business, HOUSE BILL NO. 87, "An Act establishing the Alaska Veterans Advisory Council; and providing for an effective date."

Number 0266

CAROL CARROLL, Director, Administrative Services Division, Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), came forward to present HB 87 on behalf of the DMVA and the administration. She informed members that HB 87 establishes in statute the Alaska Veterans Advisory Council (AVAC). The council has assisted the DMVA since 1996 in identifying the needs of veterans and their families, and in addressing ways to recognize veterans in Alaska. The purpose of the council is to give recommendations to the DMVA and to the governor concerning those needs, as well as the development of public and private partnerships to meet those needs.

MS. CARROLL reported that AVAC members would serve without compensation other than per diem and travel [expenses]. The council would consist of 20 members appointed by the governor. Membership would include one or more persons affiliated with veterans organizations; one or more persons from a state agency that manages programs affecting veterans; and one or more members of the general public who are familiar with veterans' issues. She concluded by saying the council has done a real service to the DMVA and to the veterans of the state.

Number 0403

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES asked what the difference would be between AVAC and the American Legion, the DAV [Disabled American Veterans], or other veterans organizations currently in place.

Number 0446

PAT CAROTHERS, Chair, Alaska Veterans Advisory Council, answered by explaining AVAC's mission. He informed the committee that AVAC's mission statement succinctly says the council attacks problems of a general nature, not individual problems, for Alaska's veterans.

MR. CAROTHERS explained that the major service organizations all have service officers who, when they identify a specific problem at their convention, will make note of that, as will AVAC. The council listens to the reports of all the service officers at these conventions, because those service officers represent all of their posts statewide. If there is a common problem, or one that AVAC recognizes as potentially dangerous to the veteran community, that is where AVAC steps in. He noted that AVAC represents veterans from all over the state, regardless of whether that person is a member of an organization; nor does a veteran have to be a member in order to go to an organization's service officer.

MR. CAROTHERS reported that AVAC's other function is as a "listening post" for the governor, the commissioner of DMVA, and the legislature. He indicated AVAC brings forward problems that affect the total veteran community and, therefore, should interest the legislature; he offered the assistance of AVAC to answer legislators' questions or provide information, pointing out that both he and the state commander of the American Legion live in Juneau. Mr. Carothers also noted that he has been the chair of AVAC since it was reestablished six years ago. He requested favorable consideration of HB 87.

Number 0720

MS. CARROLL, in response to questions by Chair Chenault, explained that after Governor Knowles came into office, he recreated AVAC by Administrative Order [No. 164] in 1996. Regarding funding, [the DMVA] has been supporting AVAC out of the regular operating budget, with about \$5,000 in the "veterans affairs component" that funds travel; when the travel has exceeded that, the commissioner's office has been taking it out

of [DMVA's] travel budget to fund it. The fiscal note contains a request to the committee to fund the part that [DMVA] cannot fund out of the component, or which is over and above that amount.

Number 0819

MR. CAROTHERS reported that although four meetings [a year] are authorized, only three are being held; that reduction came in the first two years after he'd deemed it almost impossible to get a quorum during times of the year when people are fishing. Through his efforts, the original one face-to-face meeting [a year] was increased to two - one in Anchorage and one in Juneau - because 80 percent of the council's productivity came from the face-to-face meetings. In order to save money, the third meeting is held telephonically, which is fine to check back to see whether assignments have been accomplished, for example.

Number 0924

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK made a motion to adopt a conceptual amendment on page 1, line 9, or somewhere under the "purpose" section, to add the words "and legislators". She deferred to Representative Kott for comment.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT suggested it could be left to the drafters to include the legislature, members of the legislature, or - depending on the committee's preference - the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate.

Number 1006

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK mentioned a second amendment she would like, on page 2 where it says the council consists of twenty members who are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the governor. She specified that she would prefer four members to be appointed by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT proposed addressing the second amendment first. He pointed out that the duties of the council are merely to advise. He suggested that if the membership included members of the House and Senate, there should be some advisement or feedback [to the legislature] by virtue of that fact. He proposed that before addressing the amendment, however, there should be clarification about the meaning of "the council shall advise" and the mechanism used to do that.

Number 1094

MS. CARROLL responded that she believes the [council] makes recommendations in written form to the department and the governor.

MR. CAROTHERS added that in past sessions, AVAC had always provided the chair [of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs] with a copy of the minutes of the meetings. He offered to continue that practice.

CHAIR CHENAULT responded that he believes Representative Masek just wants to ensure that the legislature is involved in the process.

Number 1143

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK concurred. She restated her desire to have the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House appoint members to the advisory council.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT responded that as long as [the appointed members] were retired veterans, he would have no problem with it. He asked to hear from the department.

Number 1176

MS. CARROLL stated the department's intent to institute the existing membership in statute, so those people can continue to provide the department with the kind of advice it has been getting. She emphasized that the DMVA provides all of the information, including any recommendations, to the legislature; the department would continue to do that. Ms. Carroll added, however, that she didn't believe the department would have a problem saying the purpose is to advise the legislature, the department, and - through the governor - other agencies.

Number 1231

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT noted that under the bill, there seems to be a lot of discretion about who is appointed. For example, one person could be from a veterans' organization, one could be a member from the general public who is familiar with veterans' issues, and the remaining eighteen could be from state agencies.

MS. CARROLL said she would be frank: The people on the council now have done a very good job for the DMVA, and the department would recommend to the governor that they be reappointed.

Number 1302

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT requested a breakdown of the specific members. He emphasized the desire to ensure that the veterans organizations are well represented. He said he didn't want to leave it to the discretion of any governor.

MR. CAROTHERS responded that the current composition is approximately 85 percent veterans. There are representatives from the Alaska Housing [Finance Corporation], for example, because there are many problems with veterans' loans; he said that representative is responsive, and AVAC has no reason to believe that will change. A former legislator, Ed Willis, has been a member for the past six years and has done a fine job; there are former mayors who also are veterans; a member from Kotzebue sits on the council for the Tanana Chiefs Conference; and there are two members from Fairbanks, one a veteran and the other a veterans' auxiliary member.

MR. CAROTHERS spoke against having the legislature appoint members. He cautioned about the possibility that someone who is parochial could be appointed if the legislature appoints members. He also cautioned that any committee could be "loaded" with certain members; he emphasized his desire to keep the membership from the three service organizations even, for example. He suggested it is safer to have one person, the governor, doing the appointing because of the danger of loading the membership, resulting in divisiveness and the loss of effectiveness of the council as certain members "run shy." He expressed the need to have the playing field level, so that there is complete response and cooperation, particularly among the three largest service organizations.

Number 1558

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN asked Mr. Carothers whether he would object to putting in statute that 50 percent, or more, of the members must be veterans.

MR. CAROTHERS responded that it should be more than 50 percent, because then [AVAC] will be something that the organizations believe in. Currently the council is comprised of 80-85 percent veterans and only four AVAC members came to mind who aren't

veterans; that is healthy because veterans understand the language and the problems. He asked who would be better to advise the legislature and the governor how to help veterans.

Number 1616

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT asked what advice the council has provided to the department, the governor, or other affected state agencies. He further asked, as a consequence of that advice, whether there has been any legislation required to fulfill an objective stated in the advisory opinion.

MR. CAROTHERS answered by saying there are three bills before the House now that AVAC proposed to the governor in the past year; one involves a high school diploma [for World War II veterans], one puts AVAC in statute, and one relates to [changing the Pioneers' Homes to the Alaska Pioneers' and Veterans' Homes].

Number 1673

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT said he sees nothing wrong with having the Speaker of the House appoint only one member from the House, and having the Senate President appoint one member from the Senate to sit on [AVAC]; those members could be responsible for shepherding legislation through the process and could be the "eyes and ears" for the legislature regarding veterans.

MR. CAROTHERS said he would have no problem with that; right now AVAC's providing minutes to the chair [of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs] is the only way that the legislature has an ear.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT added that he wouldn't want to "stack the deck" by having six or eight members from the legislature. He restated that one from each house is plenty.

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK remarked that nothing in the bill would give legislators that ability [of appointment], however. She pointed out that the legislature makes the laws and controls appropriations, even if the governor proposes legislation. She stated the desire to have the Senate President and the Speaker of the House appoint one member [each], at least, from the legislative body.

Number 1805

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES said he agreed somewhat with Representative Masek, but that it seems the purpose would be skewed that way. He referred to the proposed amendment to page 1. He said he would be more comfortable if the entities specified to be advised were the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, the chair of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs, and [other departments and agencies] through the governor. In that way, the chair of the committee would be the conduit [to the legislature].

CHAIR CHENAULT said that may be true, but asked whether it is the chair's responsibility to propose the bills that the governor wants.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES said it would be the chair's call, he would think. He emphasized that it would just put the chair of the committee in the loop, providing a legislative connection.

Number 1870

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT suggested that the purpose section on page 1 is so loosely written that it would be sufficient just to say the council shall advise the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, the legislature, and, through the governor [other departments and agencies]. Therefore, the details could be worked out. He felt that it would be incumbent upon the member appointed by the Speaker of the House and the member appointed by the President of the Senate to bring to light to their respective body any substantive policy changes, which he felt would eventually trickle down to the chair of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

MS. CARROLL stated that the DMVA has no objection to a member, a veteran, being appointed to the advisory council by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

CHAIR CHENAULT asked if that member from both the House and the Senate would be a veteran.

There was discussion regarding leaving the choice of a veteran or nonveteran member to the discretion of the body.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT recalled that 85 percent of the members are from the three veterans organizations.

MR. CAROTHERS clarified that 85 percent are veterans and not necessarily part of the organizations.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT inquired as to whether there would be a problem filling the positions with members of the veterans organizations. He asked if there could be consensus regarding a minimum number of positions that would be filled by veterans from the veterans organizations.

MR. CAROTHERS pointed out that the three [commanders of the three major service organizations: DVA, VFW, and American Legion] have been members since the beginning. In order to maintain continuity, each of the three organizations has one [permanent] representative. However, the department head of the American Legion was in Ketchikan and thus he couldn't make the meetings. Therefore, the head of the American Legion designated, per a letter, a person to represent him at the meetings. He also pointed out that the council is made up of veterans, many of which are members of one or more of the [three veterans] organizations.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT read the language on page 2, regarding the composition of the council and said there should be a minimum of three [veterans] if each of the commanders or designees are members of the council. He suggested that the word "one" should read "three." However, he wasn't sure how to address the other members.

MR. CAROTHERS said that the language should read that there should be a minimum of 15 members that are veterans.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN asked if there was an amendment before the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT recalled that Representative Masek made a motion for a conceptual amendment, which deals with this particular issue.

Number 2146

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN suggested a conceptual amendment that would read similar to the following:

Page 2, Sec. 44.35.130,
"(a) The council consists of 20 members, one of whom is appointed and serves at the pleasure of the Senate and one of whom is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Speaker of the House and 18 who are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the

governor. The council shall include [15] or more persons who are veterans, one or more persons from a state agency that manages programs affecting veterans, and one or more persons from the general public who are familiar with veterans' issues."

MR. CAROTHERS indicated his preference for 15 members from [veterans organizations] because it lends credibility to the three major veterans organizations [on the council].

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES turned to the language regarding the appointments from the House and the Senate. He asked, "Are you anticipating those appointments coming from the body or just anybody."

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN clarified that he was suggesting that one member would be appointed by the Speaker of the House and one member by the President of the Senate. He further clarified, "Not necessarily from this committee, but, certainly, from the body."

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT related his understanding that it would be a legislative member from the House and a legislative member from the Senate, to which Representatives Masek and Green indicated agreement. Representative Kott further related his understanding that there would be two [legislative] members and 15 additional members, of which three would come from the veterans organizations.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN agreed that could be said. However, he specified that he had merely intended to say that the 15 would have to be veterans.

MR. CAROTHERS echoed his earlier preference for the 15 as a means of maintaining credibility within the major service organizations.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT surmised then that Mr. Carothers wouldn't have a problem with the legislation not identifying a certain number of members coming from a veterans organization.

MR. CAROTHERS replied no and specified that he merely wants three from the organizations.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT pointed out that if "15" is inserted without language specifying that three will come from the veterans

organizations, then it would be left to the discretion of the governor.

MR. CAROTHERS remarked, "Well, if you're going to put it in the law, maybe you should."

Number 2298

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT suggested then that the language should relay that of the 15 members who are familiar with veterans' issues, there must be one member from each of the three major service organizations. After further discussion, Representative Kott clarified, "I think ... we want 15 members on this council who are familiar with veterans organizations, three of which we want to come from the service organizations - one each ... from the VFW, the American Legion, and DAV." Therefore, there would be 15 members of which 12, who are familiar with veterans issues, can be from anywhere and the remaining three, one each, from the three major service organizations. There would also be two members of the legislature. Thus there would be three additional members that the governor could appoint from the state agencies.

MR. CAROTHERS expressed the need to change Representative Kott's language to say "15 veterans" rather than "15 people" because "people" doesn't mean that they have to be veterans.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT said, "Okay."

Number 2395

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA inquired as to the possibility of inserting language referring to "veterans or veterans' spouses".

MR. CAROTHERS noted that the council already includes a member that is a veteran's wife.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA indicated that the spouse of a veteran would be very familiar with veterans' issues.

CHAIR CHENAULT remarked, "We're not trying to specifically take it down to where we know exactly who it is that we're ... putting in this position."

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA expressed the need to be specific and include "veterans' spouses" because there are veterans' issues

that are family-related issues. Furthermore, the family often views itself as part of the service.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES remarked that there are many things that a veteran's spouse will not and cannot know.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA pointed out that it is also true that there are many things that the veteran won't know regarding the family situation.

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK remarked that she believes the committee is going astray and requested that the amendment be restated.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT commented that the issue mentioned by Representative Cissna deserves some attention because he understood that the intent of HB 87 is to codify the current members of the council, which includes a veteran's spouse. Therefore, that person would need to be included.

TAPE 01-4, SIDE B

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT pointed out that the public membership portion of AS 44.35.130 (a) is being deleted. He indicated that [the public membership] could be a way to address allowing a veteran's spouse to sit on the council. On the other hand, the composition language could [require] 15 veterans or their spouses.

MR. CAROTHERS said that he didn't want to see the spouses of veterans included in the number of veterans. He indicated that it would be "one thing" to allow veterans' spouses to be included in the public membership. Mr. Carothers informed the committee that he is very sensitive to what the three major service organizations will think of this. He didn't want to lose his credibility with those organizations.

Number 2455

MR. CAROTHERS confirmed that the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) member was desired because that person was an expert in that field as it relates to veterans.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA said that having a seat available for a veteran's spouse seems to be valid. In response to Mr. Carothers, Representative Cissna expressed her desire to have the [composition] such that there could be both the AHFC member

and a veteran's spouse member. She indicated that this is up to the maker of the conceptual amendment, Representative Masek.

Number 2395

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK said that the language "and one or more persons from the general public who are familiar with veterans' issues" should be left. She asked if that language would cover the veteran's spouse and other people.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN pointed out that Representative Masek's suggestion would work if all three of the major service organizations are included in the 15.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT remarked that he wasn't sure that would suffice. He explained that there are 15 members, of which there is one from each of the three major service organizations. There are two members from the legislature, which sums 17. There are three members left. Therefore, he inquired as to how many are desired from state agencies.

MR. CAROTHERS specified that he wanted one member from AHFC and one from the Pioneers' Home.

MS. CARROLL noted that the DMVA isn't on the council.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN pointed out that the language says that there will be "at least 15." He also pointed out that so far the membership would total 19.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT asked if any nonmilitary veterans' spouses currently serve on the council.

MR. CAROTHERS answered one. In further response to Representative Kott, Mr. Carothers said that currently the council consists of three state agency representatives.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT surmised then that the composition of the council is 15 veterans, 2 legislators, 3 state agency representatives, and 1 spouse.

MS. CARROLL pointed out that the two legislative members may be veterans.

CHAIR CHENAULT indicated the possibility of the state agency representatives being veterans as well.

MS. CARROLL indicated that was possible and pointed out that the council could consist of 21 members.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT related his belief that having a 21-member council would satisfy everyone.

MR. CAROTHERS pointed out that the AHFC member is also a veteran's spouse.

Number 2192

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES asked if a conceptual amendment specifying 20 or 21 members is necessary.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT answered that he believes that the membership will have to either be increased to 21 or the number of veterans will have to be decreased to 14.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN asked whether the 15 would include 15 veterans or veterans' spouses or is the desire to have no less than 15 veterans. Representative Green [upon an inaudible indication that the desire is to have 15 veterans] said that the membership will have to be increased to 21.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT agreed with an increase in the total members of the council to 21.

Number 2103

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN related his understanding of the conceptual amendment as follows:

The council consists of 21 members, one of whom is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the President of the Senate, one of whom is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Speaker of the House, 19 are appointed and serve at the pleasure of the governor. The governor shall include 15 or more persons who are veterans, ... one each from the veterans service organizations: DAV, VFW, and ... the American Legion.

Representative Green acknowledged that he didn't include veterans' spouses.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT pointed out the lack of language referring to "one or more persons from the general public who are familiar with veterans' issues".

MS. CARROLL commented that she didn't see the need to name the veterans organizations. Therefore, the language could read, "one each from three recognized veterans service organization".

MR. CAROTHERS, in response to Representative Green, said that he didn't care which three recognized veterans service organizations were members of the council.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN surmised then that Mr. Carothers wanted the three members to represent three different recognized veterans service organizations.

Number 1995

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA posed a situation in which there is a decision to not have the AHFC member and have someone from another agency. In such a situation, "can you have a spouse as well," she asked.

MR. CAROTHERS noted that the governor can pull the plug on anyone, except the two legislative members. Therefore, one state agency could be deleted and another put in its place.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES pointed out that someone on this council will probably have to be taken off because the council currently consists of 20 members and now two members will be legislative members.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN interjected that now there are only 19 members required.

MR. CAROTHERS confirmed that there are currently 19 members.

Number 1889

CHAIR CHENAULT asked if the committee is in agreement on the [conceptual] amendment. No objection was stated and thus the [conceptual] amendment was adopted.

Number 1890

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT announced that the only other conceptual amendment was to include "the legislature" on page 1, line 9,

after "Veterans' Affairs". Representative Kott moved the aforementioned as Representative Masek's conceptual amendment. There being no objection, that conceptual amendment was adopted.

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES pointed out that the fiscal note states that one annual meeting will be held in Juneau and one in Anchorage. Representative Hayes expressed his desire to make [the meeting places] less specific in order to allow other areas to host meetings.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN noted that the fiscal note was based on those assumptions, and therefore the location probably wouldn't matter.

Number 1793

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT moved to report HB 87 as amended out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being no objection, CSHB 87(MLV) was reported from the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

Number 1799

CHAIR CHENAULT called an at-ease at 4:43 p.m. [The remainder of Tape 01-4, Side B is blank because a new tape was inserted.]

TAPE 01-5, SIDE A
Number 0001

CHAIR CHENAULT brought the meeting back to order at 4:52 p.m.

HB 137 - RECORDS OF VETERANS

Number 0064

CHAIR CHENAULT announced the final order of business, HOUSE BILL NO. 137, "An Act relating to records of veterans of the armed forces; and providing for an effective date."

Number 0102

SHARON YOUNG, State Recorder, State Recorder's Office, Division of Support Services, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), testified via teleconference regarding the need for HB 137. She characterized the bill as an efficient, time-saving measure; it would streamline one small segment of her office's work that now

requires a cumbersome manual process. Ms. Young noted that her office is continuing to look at streamlining processes and eliminating manual time-intensive systems, where possible.

MS. YOUNG informed members that AS 26.10.070 now assigns to two separate agencies the task of maintaining the same records regarding veterans. This seems merely duplicative. Ms. Young pointed out that there is a zero fiscal note for HB 137; however, time saved - perhaps 200 hours a year in the manual preparation of reports and copies currently provided to Vital Statistics [Department of Health and Social Services] - could be used for her office's other priorities that are established by statute. Ms. Young concluded by stating support for HB 137.

Number 0253

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK made a motion to move HB 137 out of committee with individual recommendations and the attached zero fiscal note; she asked for unanimous consent.

Number 0293

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT asked Ms. Young how her office acquires the DD214 forms.

MS. YOUNG answered that recording of DD214s is not mandatory. When veterans separate from military service, however, it is usually recommended by the military that veterans record those - either with a clerk and recorder, if they are in another state, or with the State Recorder's Office, if they are in Alaska. If they do so, veterans always will be able to get a certified copy of an official government record of that document for pursuing veterans' benefits or other matters. Ms. Young added that this "highly preventive recording" is done by the hundreds every year.

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT recalled that [recording of the DD214 form] is on the retirement checklist as something a veteran should think about doing.

Number 0465

AL ZANGRI, Chief, Vital Statistics, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, came forward. He stated simply that the department supports the bill wholeheartedly, and offered to answer questions.

Number 0486

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK renewed her motion to move HB 137 from committee with individual recommendations and the attached zero fiscal note; she asked for unanimous consent. There being no objection, HB 137 was moved from the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.