

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

March 27, 2001

5:17 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Mike Chenault, Chair  
Representative Lisa Murkowski  
Representative Joe Green  
Representative Pete Kott  
Representative Sharon Cissna  
Representative Joe Hayes

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Beverly Masek

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 53

"An Act establishing the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission."

- MOVED CSHB 53(MLV) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 88

"An Act changing the name of the Alaska Pioneers' Home to the Alaska Pioneers' and Veterans' Home and of the Alaska Pioneers' Homes Advisory Board to the Alaska Pioneers' and Veterans' Home Advisory Board; relating to services for veterans in the home; relating to the advisory board for the home; making other amendments to the statutes relating to the home; making conforming amendments to other statutes; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 88 OUT OF COMMITTEE

CONFIRMATION HEARING:

AK Army National Guard, Brigadier General

- POSTPONED TO 4/3

**PREVIOUS ACTION**

BILL: HB 53

SHORT TITLE:SEISMIC HAZARDS SAFETY COMMISSION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S)DAVIES

| Jrn-Date | Jrn-Page |     | Action                             |
|----------|----------|-----|------------------------------------|
| 01/10/01 | 0054     | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME -<br>REFERRALS |
| 01/10/01 | 0054     | (H) | MLV, STA, FIN                      |
| 03/13/01 |          | (H) | MLV AT 3:30 PM CAPITOL 120         |
| 03/13/01 |          | (H) | -- Meeting Canceled --             |
| 03/27/01 |          | (H) | MLV AT 5:00 PM CAPITOL 120         |

BILL: HB 88

SHORT TITLE:PIONEERS' AND VETERANS' HOME/ADVISORY BD

SPONSOR(S): RLS BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

| Jrn-Date | Jrn-Page |     | Action                             |
|----------|----------|-----|------------------------------------|
| 01/24/01 | 0155     | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME -<br>REFERRALS |
| 01/24/01 | 0155     | (H) | MLV, STA, FIN                      |
| 01/24/01 | 0156     | (H) | FN1: ZERO(ADM)                     |
| 01/24/01 | 0156     | (H) | GOVERNOR'S TRANSMITTAL LETTER      |
| 03/20/01 |          | (H) | MLV AT 3:30 PM CAPITOL 120         |
| 03/20/01 |          | (H) | Heard & Held<br>MINUTE(MLV)        |
| 03/27/01 |          | (H) | MLV AT 5:00 PM CAPITOL 120         |

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN DAVIES

Alaska State Legislature

Capitol Building, Room

Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as sponsor of HB 53.

MILT WILTSE, Director

Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys

Department of Natural Resources

794 University Avenue, Suite 200

Fairbanks, Alaska 99707-3645

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified that the commission created in  
[CSHB 53] is a good idea.

SHELDON WINTERS, Lobbyist

State Farm Insurance Company

431 N Franklin Street, Suite 400

Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of [CSHB 53].

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of [CSHB 53].

LADDIE SHAW, Special Assistant  
Office of Veteran Affairs  
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs  
PO Box 5800  
Fort Richardson, Alaska 99505-0800

POSITION STATEMENT: Asked for the committee's support of HB 88.

MG PHILLIP OATES, Adjutant General/Commissioner  
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs  
PO Box 5800  
Fort Richardson, Alaska 99505-0800

POSITION STATEMENT: Urged the committee to forward HB 88.

JIM KOHN, Director  
Division of Alaska Longevity Programs  
Department of Administration  
PO Box 110211  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0211

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 88.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

TAPE 01-8, SIDE A  
Number 0001

CHAIR MIKE CHENAULT called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 5:17 p.m. Representatives Chenault, Green, Kott, Cissna, and Hayes were present at the call to order. Representative Murkowski arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### **HB 53 - SEISMIC HAZARDS SAFETY COMMISSION**

CHAIR CHENAULT announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 53, "An Act establishing the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission."

Number 0073

REPRESENTATIVE KOTT moved to adopt CSHB 52, Version 22-LS0278\F, Lauterbach, 3/24/01, as the working document before the committee. There being no objection, Version F was adopted.

Number 0212

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN DAVIES, Alaska State Legislature, testified as the sponsor of HB 53. Representative Davies noted that today is the [37th] anniversary of the 1964 earthquake, the second largest earthquake recorded in history. He also noted that there are more earthquakes, of a given magnitude, per day in Alaska than there are in California. Furthermore, Alaska sits on one of the major plate boundaries, the collision boundary between the Pacific Plate and the North American Plate, and thus a number of earthquakes are generated. Over the course of recorded history in Alaska, there have been five earthquakes of magnitude 7 or larger north of the Alaska Range. Representative Davies pointed out that the entire state is subject to some earthquake activity and thus it's important to understand [that fact and] keep it in mind when zoning and building.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES explained that this bill will create the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission, which would [reside] in the governor's office. The commission would have an "umbrella status" over various agencies in order to have a body that could coordinate a seismic hazard mitigation policy for the entire state. He noted that a number of agencies deal with various aspects of seismic hazards, especially the Division of Emergency Services, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), and the Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGS), Department of Natural Resources (DNR). However, there is no state-level agency that deals with reducing the effects of earthquakes. The primary manner to reduce the effects of earthquakes is through building codes. Although [the U.S.] enjoys some of the best designed buildings, "we can do better." For example, although the recent Seattle area earthquake didn't do much damage, it still managed billions of dollars' worth of damage. In moderate to large earthquakes, most of the damage, 80-90 percent, is cosmetic.

Number 0583

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES specified that this commission would survey what is being done in Alaska in order to stay up-to-date with modern building codes while making recommendations to executive and legislative branches as well as the various

agencies. He pointed out that the legislation recommends that the commission be composed of nine members. The CS [on page 2, lines 18 and 19] changed the membership such that the four public members was decreased to three and a representative of the insurance industry was included due to its involvement in such situations.

Number 0688

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN asked if every full number in increase in magnitude equates to approximately ten times the prior number.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES answered that the magnitude scale is an open-ended logarithmic scale. He explained that the factor of ten refers to the amplitude of the wave. Therefore, magnitude 8 has a wave amplitude that's ten times larger than magnitude 7, which corresponds in energy to about 32 times. So, moving from magnitude 5 to magnitude 7 equals an increase of about 1,000 times in energy. Representative Davies pointed out that [lower] magnitude [earthquakes] are ten times more frequent. Therefore, people experience earthquakes a lot, but they are smaller [magnitude] earthquakes. In regard to the earthquakes the magnitude of the 1964 earthquake, those occur around every 500 years. Therefore, although it isn't likely that one would experience an earthquake such as the 1964 earthquake, it is likely that one would experience a magnitude 7 earthquake. "So, we need to be ready," he said.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN asked if the fact that the state creates such an advisory committee, would create any liability to the state.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES replied, "I don't believe so."

Number 0867

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI inquired as to why this commission is placed under the auspices of the Office of the Governor.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES answered that he felt that the commission would need the ability to coordinate across state agencies.

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI turned to subparagraph (2) of the "FINDINGS" section of CSHB 53 and asked if there is "anything that kind of acts as an oversight."

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES said that each agency that deals with this takes some responsibility to try to perform some coordination. However, there is no focus in state government on coordination in regard to mitigation versus preparedness. He explained that preparedness is getting ready to respond to an event when it actually happens, while mitigation takes steps ahead of time in order to lessen the scale of damage. Therefore, Representative Davies introduced the bill because the state doesn't have mitigation in place. However, he emphasized that he isn't proposing that the commission develop changes in the building codes that are implemented retroactively. This is a long-term look at the problem.

Number 1148

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA informed the committee that her daughter was in a Seattle building that sustained earthquake damage. After viewing the area, she [realized] the importance of mitigation. She asked if this bill is different from the legislation in Washington State and if this bill included protections beyond those in the Washington State bill.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES answered that this bill is similar to Washington's legislation. He noted that Rod Combellick, Engineering Geology Chief, DGGs, DNR, surveyed what other states have done and that survey was used to design HB 53. However, Representative Davies said that this bill is patterned more after the California Seismic Safety Commission. He noted that the commissions in some states encompass all hazards, while others are strictly seismic. In this case, the legislation, and thus the commission it creates, focuses on the seismic issue in order to avoid becoming too cumbersome.

Number 1253

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN related his understanding that the DGGs, DNR, tracks seismic activity along with other services that deal with subsurface activities. Therefore, he asked if the division is already capable or doing what the commission would.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES explained that [DGGs] does work that supports the seismic networks used to monitor activity from both earthquakes and volcanoes. However, the primary research [from this division] has been geared towards understanding the long-term frequency of large earthquakes. Such research develops the scientific information that would allow public policy determinations. He clarified that the division is a scientific

agency, not a policy agency and thus isn't in a position to drive these concerns.

Number 1370

MILT WILTSE, Director, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys, Department of Natural Resources, testified via teleconference. Mr. Wiltse pointed out that when one is discussing disasters of the magnitude that could occur with earthquakes, the scope of the problem is staggering. It requires an amazing amount of coordination to be effective in dealing with such. As has been noted, Alaska has a long history of very effective preparation to respond to earthquake disasters. However, the state hasn't put forth the same effort to deal with the mitigation side of the issue.

MR. WILTSE turned to the Olympia, Washington, earthquake and noted that the seismic hazards committee in Washington had a program to inspect buildings in order to mitigate damage. During those inspections, someone noticed that there was a water tank on the top of one of the schools, which would pose a hazard. Therefore, the water tank was emptied. After the earthquake it was noted that the water tank did topple, but because it was empty no damage was done to the school. Mr. Wiltse remarked that there are probably countless examples of such that resulted from a committee [focused on mitigation].

MR. WILTSE emphasized that he strongly believes that a group of people dedicated to thinking and strategizing about this issue would pull all the scattered state elements into a coordinated effort. He remarked, "The true story of their effect will never be written because we can avoid disasters that we wouldn't otherwise step around." Mr. Wiltse said that he thinks the proposed commission is a good idea, although he wished DGGs could do more.

Number 1649

SHELDON WINTERS, Lobbyist, State Farm Insurance Company, voiced support of this legislation. He informed the committee that State Farm Insurance is involved in earthquake mitigation throughout the country and works hand-in-hand with all the other commissions in the other states. He has been told that the state commissions work wonders in the states where they are in place. Therefore, even if the bill passed without a representative from the insurance industry sitting on the commission, State Farm would still support the bill. Mr.

Winters noted that the insurance industry pays for a great majority of the losses, and because of their involvement, the insurance industry has the ability to tap other expertise in the areas of building and seismic activities. Therefore, the insurance industry representative could serve as a conduit for information for the commission.

Number 1746

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI inquired as to what [the insurance industry] does to help with the mitigation. She related her understanding that earthquake insurance is prohibitively expensive in Anchorage.

MR. WINTERS noted that he isn't an insurance expert or an earthquake expert. However, he cited building codes as the most obvious area in which the insurance companies can be involved. With respect to other state commissions, he has been told that the insurance industry is involved and can provide input, at least to tap the expertise available. With regard to coverage, Mr. Winters emphasized that such issues can be addressed by having an insurance representative on the commission.

Number 1898

CAROL CARROLL, Director, Administrative Services Division, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), echoed Representative Davies' comment that DMVA is heavily involved in the planning for and response to disasters. However, "we do believe that there is a place for bringing these issues and elevating these issues to a commission that could develop some policies, recommendations, and kind of move us forward in a direction of mitigation," she said. Ms. Carroll noted that although DMVA does perform some mitigation and does receive mitigation money when there is a disaster, more work can be done. Ms. Carroll testified to the department's support of the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI asked if the department would rather the commission be housed within DMVA.

MS. CARROLL replied, "There isn't any desire, on the part of the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs, to have the commission or not. In the governor's office is fine with us."

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI asked if the department merely wants the commission.

MS. CARROLL related the belief that the commission is valuable.

CHAIR CHENAULT asked if there was anyone else to testify. Hearing no one, Chair Chenault placed the bill before the committee.

Number 1966

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN posed a situation in which a CEO of a "good-sized" corporation is going to build a 28-story building in Anchorage. If this commission is in existence, what would that company do differently.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES replied, "Virtually nothing."

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN inquired as to how this commission would help this situation.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES expressed the hope that in the time before the corporation wants to build a large building, the commission would have worked with building officials and incorporated the most current research into the building code. Therefore, the corporation would merely be following the building code. In his view, [the commission] wouldn't impact that corporation at all. Although the corporation would follow the uniform building code for earthquake hazards, the numbers may be slightly different. Most of the construction changes that result are almost negligible in cost when following the code upfront.

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN referred to the ARCO Tower, which he was told has rollers on Teflon in its structure in order to accommodate motion. He asked if that was part of the Anchorage building code or part of the ARCO design. He also asked if such [code] would be developed by this commission.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES said that when one is building something such as the ARCO towers, generally the best seismic hazards staff are hired. He noted that many buildings today are built with seismic shock absorbers in an attempt to decouple the shear motion from the building, which is a fairly proven technique. In further response to Representative Green, Representative Davies agreed that such construction methods may be instituted in the building code as a result of the commission's work. Representative Davies saw the [changes being instituted] mainly through building codes with some change in the land use planning.

Number 2120

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI inquired as to why [other states] have seismic hazards commissions and Alaska, the state with a large earthquake in its history, does not.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVIES answered that most of the other states adopted their commissions in response to Alaska's earthquake. He agreed with Representative Murkowski that many people probably felt that Alaska had its big earthquake and thus was off the hook. Although there is some truth to that, there is the possibility of a magnitude 7 earthquake in Anchorage and that is significant. Therefore, preparation is important.

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI referred to an article that discussed the faults that lie in Southeast Alaska.

CHAIR CHENAULT placed the bill before the committee.

Number 2227

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN moved to report CSHB 53, [Version 22-LS0278\F, Lauterbach, 3/24/01] out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 53(MLV) was reported from the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

HB 88 - PIONEERS' AND VETERANS' HOME/ADVISORY BD

CHAIR CHENAULT announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 88, "An Act changing the name of the Alaska Pioneers' Home to the Alaska Pioneers' and Veterans' Home and of the Alaska Pioneers' Homes Advisory Board to the Alaska Pioneers' and Veterans' Home Advisory Board; relating to services for veterans in the home; relating to the advisory board for the home; making other amendments to the statutes relating to the home; making conforming amendments to other statutes; and providing for an effective date."

Number 2344

LADDIE SHAW, Special Assistant, Office of Veteran Affairs, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), testified via teleconference. Mr. Shaw announced that the veterans truly need the Pioneers' and Veterans' Home project to move forward. He informed the committee that Alaska has one of the largest

veteran populations in the nation. However, the state provides the smallest amount of support. Presently, [DMVA] has a \$540,000 budget that supports in excess of 50,000 veterans in the state. In comparison, Mississippi - one of the poorest states in the nation - has four veterans' homes that are supported with over \$4 million in state general funds. Mr. Shaw requested the committee's support in moving this idea forward.

Number 2437

MG PHILLIP OATES, Adjutant General/Commissioner, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs, said that he wanted to begin by impressing upon the committee the weight of the decision that it's making. General Oates announced that not moving this bill forward is a vote against veterans.

TAPE 01-8, SIDE B

GENERAL OATES discussed the military presence in Alaska. For Alaska, the military has been and is currently the largest industry of the state. Furthermore, one in five Alaskans has some connection with the military. In regard to why the veterans haven't been more active in working with the legislature, General Oates explained: "That's because they know selfless service. And they depend on their elected representatives to do what's right for them."

GENERAL OATES stressed, "It's disgraceful that the state with the second highest per capita number of veterans in our nation does not have a veterans' home." He said that the congressional delegation and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) have indicated that they want to help, but can't until the state takes a move forward. "It's time to move forward," he charged. He remarked that this is the largest shortcoming during his time in office.

GENERAL OATES described a recent meeting with a Dr. Cohen(ph), a former paratrooper in the Israeli Army who now lives in the U.S., in the Anchorage Pioneers' Home. Dr. Cohen and his wife have expertise in designing homes to help those in severe medical need in the Alzheimer's category. General Oates described the medical model in which the medical needs are met, but the human needs are not. He recalled that Dr. Cohen contrasted the medical model with the Pioneers' Home system and how something such as a Pioneers' or Veterans' Wall of Honor in the home could make things better. In Alaska there are six regional Pioneers' Homes across the state and thus Alaska has

the opportunity to go beyond Mississippi with its four homes. He pointed out that if Alaska builds veterans' homes, there will be fewer beds, it will cost more, and will result in the medical model. In conclusion, General Oates said, "So, when you think about what you owe to the veterans, I would ask you to think of what they've done for Alaska. ... And if we say, as a state, we can't afford to assist our veterans, it's not a state that I'd want to stay in as a military member."

Number 2280

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI referred to General Oates testimony at the prior hearing that she understood to mean that Alaska's one-year residency requirement precludes the state from obtaining federal VA money.

GENERAL OATES pointed out that the state has the opportunity to earn veterans' benefits that were earned through the [Pioneers' Home] system. However, since it's a nontraditional veterans' care system, the state cannot receive the per diem that is available. There is great interest from Secretary Principi to make this a pilot project and thus make the per diem available. When Secretary Principi visited two of Alaska's [Pioneers'] homes, he said that Alaska's homes compare very well with other veterans' homes and have a better approach to long-term care than in other homes around the nation. However, the concern is in regard to the homes meeting basic needs such as fire protection, health, sanitation, safety, and handicap access. General Oates related his confidence, after visiting the homes himself, that when the state commits to going forward and the federal VA comes down, those federal VA benefits for [veteran] residents will come. General Oates reiterated his testimony from the prior hearing that this is the best idea that has been presented and thus if it isn't acceptable, he requested help developing another idea.

Number 2159

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI related her understanding that the "hitch" in not being able to obtain federal dollars is because the Pioneers' Home System is a nontraditional facility. However, it isn't necessarily tied into the one-year residency requirement.

GENERAL OATES said her understanding seems to be correct.

MR. SHAW pointed out that presently there are no requirements in the system because veterans aren't acknowledged as a part of the VA's entitlement programs because they don't have their own bed space. If this legislation moves forward and there is a Pioneers' and Veterans' Home, then the VA will potentially move forward the entitlements to those veterans in those beds. Those per diem entitlements would range between \$39-\$52 a day.

Number 2108

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI recalled General Oates eloquent testimony regarding the debt we owe veterans. However, in conversations with less supportive people, she has discovered concern that by having a combination home, "we" are taking respect from the Pioneers' of Alaska. There is fear that there will be change [if the veterans move in]. She asked whether the name is that critical.

GENERAL OATES remarked that the more "we" talk to groups, the more their concerns are alleviated. When talking with the residents and watching them embrace the veterans, he didn't think that they have such concern. Also, this is important to the veterans, who view this as a right and something they have earned. Therefore, General Oates said that he would be opposed to not changing the name.

Number 1944

REPRESENTATIVE GREEN recalled that when he first came to the state in 1977, he felt that the Pioneers' Home concept was fantastic. Although litigation changed that [concept] significantly, the home remained wonderful. Then, about 10-15 years ago the residents of the Pioneers' Homes changed from the average elderly person to persons with various forms of dementia. When he visited the Pioneers' Home [in Anchorage] two or three years ago, it was demoralizing because of the state of the residents, although the care was still there. Therefore, he asked whether a healthy, aging veteran in that environment would appreciate being placed in such a situation.

GENERAL OATES said that as [the state] becomes more involved with long-term care, he has found that [residents of homes] migrate to the more extreme end. From his perspective, there are just more people in that population and there is also a change in the way people view healthcare. That's another reason why the veterans' home system is in crisis around the U.S.; it's not the same home once envisioned.

GENERAL OATES, in regard to whether this [combination] home meets all the needs, responded no. He remarked that maybe those veterans [with dementia] are the ones that we should reach out to the most. As Dr. Cohen related, "we" have a responsibility to help their quality of life. He also recalled Dr. Cohen saying that the veterans cannot recall the short term, but can remember the "spark," military service, of the past.

GENERAL OATES stated: "If we are unsuccessful in a committee that has military and veterans in its title and its job description, I don't give much hope for the rest of our ... prospects. Don't sit on this bill, pass it forward."

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI inquired as to the percentage of the veterans in the [Pioneers' Homes] that meet the 70 percent disability requirement.

Number 1647

JIM KOHN, Director, Division of Alaska Longevity Programs, Department of Administration, informed the committee that presently there are about 90 veterans in the [Pioneers' Homes]. Of those 90 veterans, about six receive monthly veterans payments due to their injuries in service. However, that group of six is known because they utilize the payment assistance program. Only those utilizing the payment assistance program are asked about their income and assets. Mr. Kohn noted that half the residents in the homes utilize the payment assistance program and thus he guessed that as many as a dozen [veterans in total] actually receive monthly veterans payments due to injuries incurred during service.

Number 1590

REPRESENTATIVE HAYES noted his support of this legislation, but pointed out that it will have a difficult time in its next committee of referral.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA recalled testimony from last week regarding what was perceived as inadequate funding for this program.

MR. KOHN explained that the present staffing in the Pioneers' Homes are based on the levels of care, of which there are five. There is the coordinated services, which is the old residential care for which there are no direct care services unless there is

an emergency. The basic assisted living level provides sporadic services. There is the enhanced assisted living services, which tends to have people who are more in need of medical help while the Alzheimer Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) residents are in need of help with their dementia and have less medical problems. However, the ADRD residents need 24-hour assistance. There are also the comprehensive services for those that need help with all tasks of daily living. Mr. Kohn informed the committee that 4.9 hours of care per resident per day is provided to those in the enhanced assisted living, the ADRD, and the comprehensive services levels. That average time is systemwide.

MR. KOHN turned to the national figures in regard to the number of hours provided in nursing home facilities in the Lower 48, which struggle to provide 2.5 hours per resident per day. Therefore, Mr. Kohn felt that the staffing for the Pioneers' Homes is good. He mentioned that a lady who performs accreditation for assisted living visited the Anchorage Pioneers' Home during dinnertime and this lady said that the building looks good all the way through. Mr. Kohn acknowledged that people have testified that there isn't enough staff at the Pioneers' Homes. However, as a nurse he has worked in hospitals in long-term care settings where he felt that there was never enough staff, as far as he was concerned, because one can always do more. Adding more staff is attempted through volunteers, from which there is much support throughout the state. Furthermore, there is a nursing shortage and thus if nursing staff is necessary for safety reasons, the nurses on staff are required to come in because although the position is empty, the work has to be done. From that situation, the staff says that there isn't enough staff and although that is true, it doesn't mean that the residents are suffering. More help is necessary so that staff can return to more reasonable hours.

Number 1120

MR. KOHN noted that he has been the director of the Pioneers' Homes for eight years and the staffing is very adequate. However, for the staff doing the work, they feel overworked and under supported. This is very difficult work.

CHAIR CHENAULT placed the legislation before the committee and announced that he would entertain a motion.

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI expressed hope that the committee would move HB 88 out of committee and recognize the comments of

General Oates. She noted that the legislation has the following committee referrals: the House State Affairs Standing Committee and the House Finance Committee, respectively. Representative Murkowski related her strong feeling that "we" have an obligation to provide some facility for Alaska's veterans. This is an area in which [the state] has failed its veterans. She informed the committee that she had the opportunity to speak with Secretary Principi when he was in town. From that conversation, she had the impression that Secretary Principi wanted to make something happen in Alaska, but the state has to take the first step. Therefore, if the full deal, as encompassed in HB 88, can't be done, then perhaps a pilot project could be started.

Number 0938

REPRESENTATIVE MURKOWSKI moved to report HB 88 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being no objection, HB 88 was reported 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 6:38 p.m.