

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
**SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

February 1, 2001  
3:35 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Gene Therriault, Chair  
Senator Randy Phillips, Vice Chair  
Senator Rick Halford  
Senator Bettye Davis

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Drue Pearce

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 8(STA)  
Relating to supporting polling places at military installations.

MOVED CSSJR 8(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action

**WITNESS REGISTER**

Senator Loren Leman  
State Capitol, Room 115  
Juneau, AK 99801

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Bill sponsor

Shelly Growden, Election Supervisor  
Region III Election Office  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports the resolution

Carol Thompson, Election Supervisor  
Region II Election Office  
Anchorage, AK 99513

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports the resolution

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

**TAPE 01-2, SIDE A**

Number 001

#SJR 8

**CHAIRMAN GENE THERRIAULT** called the Senate State Affairs Committee meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. Present were Senators Davis, Phillips and Chairman Therriault. There was one item on the agenda, SJR 8. There is a proposed committee substitute, version F.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked Senator Leman to discuss the issue.

SENATOR LEMAN represents Elmendorf Air Force Base and parts of northwest and east Anchorage in the Alaska Senate. SJR 8 deals with a December 1999 directive from the Department of Defense (DoD) advising military installation commanders not to allow their installation facilities to be used for polling or voting sites. For years military bases, posts, armories, and other base facilities have been available to election officials for voting sites. This has been a good situation since it provides men and women, living on base, the opportunity to vote in their own neighborhoods just like those who live off base. It is convenient and encourages voting.

Number 246

SENATOR LEMAN said that Alaska state law "requires a polling place to be located within a precinct, unless a more suitable or convenient location to the voter is identified". The DoD directive does neither. It moves the location outside the precinct because military bases and posts are wholly contained precincts with only people living on site voting there. In moving voting to off base locations voting becomes less convenient.

There are two ways to remedy the impacts of the DoD:

1. Have DoD rescind the directive
2. Congressional intervention

SJR 8 does the first and Congress is working on a bill making it legal to vote on military installations and leaving it to the discretion of base or post commanders.

SENATOR LEMAN said that it was fortunate that the negative impact of the DoD directive was temporarily avoided and did not significantly affect polling places during the last election. Senator Ted Stevens joined several other senators adding language to an appropriations bill postponing the effective date of the DoD directive until December 31, 2000.

That date has passed and it is unclear whether election officials will be able to set up polling places for this year's municipal elections. Military men and women should be allowed to exercise the

same right that they defend for each American, the right to vote.

Number 432

SENATOR LEMAN spoke briefly to the committee substitute. The original bill language included reserve facilities such as armories, and the Coast Guard. Reserve facilities are under the direction of the state and therefore are not covered by the DoD directive. The Coast Guard is under the Department of Transportation and is not affected either. The resolution was made more accurate by deleting reference to those facilities. Fort Richardson, Fort Wainwright, Elmendorf Air Force Base, and Eielson Air Force Base are the four Alaskan bases affected rather than the 12 places originally listed.

SENATOR LEMAN said that Shelly Growden, Region III Election Supervisor, and Carol Thompson, Region II Election Supervisor were online and ready to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked Senator Leman to remain for possible questions and moved to Shelly Growden in Fairbanks.

Number 544

MS SHELLY GROWDEN said she is very supportive of the resolution. The 2001 municipal elections are of current concern. There is a low voter turn out among military voters in local and state elections during the best of times. Despite her best efforts, presidential election years are the only times that turn out increases. If a polling facility had to be found off base, transportation difficulties, combined with the added inconvenience, would adversely affect voter turn out. She would like a resolution of this issue before the 2001 municipal elections so that military members are afforded the same opportunity to vote in a convenient polling location as the rest of the voters in Alaska.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked whether Fort Wainwright was affected similarly to Eielson Air Force Base.

Number 718

MS GROWDEN said that the difficulties would have been similar, but that they had received information early enough to submit for preclearance to move the polling place and notify the voters. The base commander said that the polling place could be moved to the state owned school on base from the post library, which worked very well.

Number 764

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked if it was in 1994 that Moose Creek, a small bedroom community adjacent to Eielson, had been separated from the base polling station.

MS GROWDEN said yes, it was in 1994, that only voters registered on Eielson vote there now.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked for additional questions. Seeing none, he moved to Carol Thompson asking her to outline how she would have handled the elections had it not been for the congressional delay.

Number 810

MS CAROL THOMPSON said that Region II had less difficulty than Region III. They had been asked to move the Elmendorf polling location from the theatre to the school for reasons unrelated to the DoD directive and, in fact, before it was issued. She heard about the DoD directive after the changes had been made at Eielson so she was not affected. However, she is concerned that military personnel be able to vote on base. Transportation to off base polling stations is difficult and inconvenient. This is particularly true in Fort Richardson. She would like to see this resolved by the municipal elections in April 2001.

SENATOR BETTYE DAVIS asked what would happen for the April elections if this were not changed.

MS THOMPSON said that another location must be provided and that she has contacted the Municipality of Anchorage and learned that they are in the process of recruiting polling places. She has a meeting with them to cover this issue again.

SENATOR DAVIS asked how many people vote in an election on Elmendorf.

MS THOMPSON has the total number of registered voters but not the turn out figures. She thought that between 800 and 1,000 people voted during the last presidential election. There are usually less than that at Fort Richardson.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked Senator Leman whether the Congressional Delegation anticipates a reversal of the directive or are they going to have to revert to legislation.

SENATOR LEMAN said that Lt. General Norton Schwartz said that he believes it prudent for Congress to take the action to direct DoD

in the matter. In the short term, Senator Leman believes that voting on military bases will be allowed but that, for a long-term solution, congressional action is probably best.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT wanted the record to reflect that Senator Halford arrived.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked for proposed amendments.

SENATOR PHILLIPS moved that the committee substitute be adopted. There were no objections.

SENATOR PHILLIPS moved that CS SJR 8 (STA) move from committee with individual recommendations.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT asked for objections. There were none. He then announced the schedule for the following week.

CHAIRMAN THERRIAULT adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

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