

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON SENATE BILL 301

May 10, 2004

9:30 p.m.

TAPE(S) 04-01

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Richard Foster, Chair
Representative Max Gruenberg
Representative Peggy Wilson

Senator Con Bunde, Chair
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Donny Olson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFERENCE CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 301

"An Act relating to the Alaska Pioneers' Home and the Alaska Veterans' Home; relating to eligibility for admission to the Alaska Pioneers' Home and Alaska Veterans' Home; relating to the eligibility of residents for the Alaska Pioneers' Home and the Alaska Veterans' Home for general relief assistance; relating to state veterans' home facilities; making conforming amendments; and providing for an effective date."

MOVED CCS SB 301 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 301

SHORT TITLE: PIONEERS' HOMES/VETERANS' HOMES

SPONSOR(S): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

02/06/04	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/06/04	(S)	HES, FIN
02/20/04	(S)	HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/20/04	(S)	-- Meeting Canceled --
02/25/04	(S)	HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/25/04	(S)	Heard & Held
02/25/04	(S)	MINUTE(HES)

03/01/04 (S) HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 03/01/04 (S) Moved CSSB 301(HES) Out of Committee
 03/01/04 (S) MINUTE(HES)
 03/02/04 (S) HES RPT CS 2DP 1NR NEW TITLE
 03/02/04 (S) LETTER OF INTENT WITH HES REPORT
 03/02/04 (S) DP: DYSON, GREEN; NR: GUESS
 03/26/04 (S) FIN RPT CS 5DP 1NR NEW TITLE
 03/26/04 (S) HES LETTER OF INTENT WITH FIN REPORT
 03/26/04 (S) DP: GREEN, WILKEN, BUNDE, STEVENS B,
 03/26/04 (S) DYSON; NR: OLSON
 03/26/04 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 03/26/04 (S) Moved CSSB 301(FIN) Out of Committee
 03/26/04 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 04/01/04 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 04/01/04 (S) VERSION: CSSB 301(FIN)
 04/05/04 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 04/05/04 (H) MLV, HES, FIN
 04/05/04 (H) SENATE LETTER OF INTENT
 04/07/04 (H) MLV REFERRAL WAIVED
 04/07/04 (H) HES REFERRAL WAIVED
 04/07/04 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519
 04/07/04 (H) Moved HCSCSSB 301(FIN) Out of Committee
 04/07/04 (H) MINUTE(FIN)
 04/13/04 (H) FIN AT 3:00 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519
 04/13/04 (H) Moved letter of intent Out of Committee
 04/13/04 (H) MINUTE(FIN)
 04/14/04 (H) FIN RPT HCS(FIN) 8DP
 04/14/04 (H) DP: MEYER, STOLTZE, JOULE, CROFT,
 04/14/04 (H) FOSTER, FATE, HARRIS, WILLIAMS
 04/14/04 (H) SENATE LETTER OF INTENT WITH FIN REPORT
 04/15/04 (H) VERSION: HCS CSSB 301(FIN) AM H
 04/16/04 (S) CONCURRENCE MESSAGE READ AND HELD
 05/09/04 (H) CONFERENCE COMMITTEE APPOINTED
 05/09/04 (H) FOSTER, CHAIR; WILSON, GRUENBERG
 05/09/04 (H) LIMITED POWERS FREE CONFERENCE GRANTED
 05/10/04 (S) 301 AT 9:00 PM FAHRENKAMP 203

WITNESS REGISTER

Ms. Karen McCarthy
 Staff to Senator Con Bunde
 Alaska State Capitol
 Juneau, AK 99801-1182
POSITION STATEMENT: Commented on SB 301.

Mr. Dennis DeWitt, Special Assistant
 Office of the Governor

PO Box 110001
Juneau AK 99811-0001
POSITION STATEMENT: Commented on SB 301.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 04-01, SIDE A
^#SB301

SB 301-PIONEERS' HOMES/VETERANS' HOMES

CHAIR CON BUNDE called the CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON SENATE BILL 301 meeting to order at 9:30 p.m. All members were present. He noted that the Senate is agreeable to items 1 & 2, proposed by Representative Gruenberg, which amend AS 15.05.020 as follows:

1. on page 3, line 3, change "by the voter notifying" to "if the voter notifies"
2. on page 6, line 31, and page 7, lines 2 and 5, add "and operate" after "maintain"
3. on page 7 list "Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan Palmer" after "Sitka" to indicate the places where Pioneers' Homes are operated
4. on page 8 add lines 12 - 14 to read: "(f) The department shall conduct, at least annually, an unannounced inspection of each site of the Alaska Pioneers' Homes and the Alaska Veterans' Homes to determine compliance of the facilities with all applicable laws and regulations."

CHAIR BUNDE wondered why, in item 4, inspections would be unannounced.

REPRESENTATIVE MAX GRUENBERG explained that Representative Bob Lynn suggested that change because of a problem Marty Margeson's father had with a Pioneer Home. He explained, "They weren't doing such a good job, at least in that case." The amendment was offered on the House floor and overwhelmingly adopted.

CHAIR BUNDE stated the committee concurred with item 4. He suggested the committee discuss changes to section 16 - Admission to a Home - next. The language on page 10, line 8, increases the value of personal property that a subsidized resident may keep from \$5,000 to \$10,000. He indicated there were no objections to that. The language on page 8, line 27, increases the amount of income that an individual whose care is being subsidized can keep from \$100 to \$150. He noted the Senate has a problem with that because of the fiscal impact.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG said he understood and suggested that increase will help seniors because it applies to all Pioneers' Homes, not just the Veterans' Homes. He commented, "It's not a lot of money. You're on the Finance Committee. Can we find that money for these guys? They would really appreciate it."

CHAIR BUNDE reminded him that this change meant a \$2,000 to \$2,500 subsidy per month for all the people staying there. He maintained, "They're getting a pretty good deal from the state right now and I just can't go for that additional money."

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG countered that he would normally agree with him, but the difference between \$100 and \$150 for each person to spend in a whole month is huge. "That's all they can spend in a whole month." He asked if they would consider \$125.

SENATOR BERT STEDMAN commented that he lives a block from the Pioneer Home in Sitka and doesn't believe those seniors spend a lot of money. "They don't get out," he maintained. He said he would be more comfortable with \$110, recognizing that the \$5,000 an individual would get to keep would be bumped up to \$10,000.

REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON asked where the money was going to come from. "Don't we have to somehow balance the budget?"

CHAIR BUNDE said he thought the money would be saved internally through reduced nursing assistance.

They get to have a little more spending money, but they don't get quite the level of care. If they are indigent, we are going to give them a room that costs almost \$4,600 per month.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said she would rather see the \$25 per person spent on more nursing aides than spending money.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG tried hard to explain that he didn't want to cut the number of nursing aides but was only trying to give the seniors additional funds.

CHAIR BUNDE emphasized that the aides were going to be cut.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG argued that if the stipend is cut to \$125, another \$80,000 could be found in the budget.

SENATOR STEDMAN stated that the Pioneer Homes don't have a lot of room in their budgets.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG said he wanted to find the money outside of the Pioneer Homes budget.

CHAIR BUNDE said increasing residents' spending limit to \$150 would cost the equivalent of four nursing assistants, and an increase to \$125 would cost two. He asked Representative Gruenberg if he could live with that compromise.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG countered by asking if they could short-fund the aides and add that cost to the supplemental budget next year.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said the commissioner has made it clear that no matter what, they would not have a supplemental budget.

CHAIR BUNDE called for a roll call vote on the question of increasing personal holdings from \$100 to \$125. Representatives Gruenberg and Senator Olson voted yea: Senator Stedman and Representatives Foster and Wilson, and Chair Bunde voted nay and the amendment failed.

CHAIR BUNDE announced that personal holdings would stay at \$100.

MS. KAREN MCCARTHY, staff to Senator Bunde, mentioned that the language, "except as otherwise provided in this subsection" on page 6, line 30, needed to be considered for adoption.

CHAIR BUNDE asked if that phrase makes a substantial change.

MR. DENNIS DEWITT, Special Assistant to the Governor, said it does make a substantial change. He explained:

The reason we put the 'except as otherwise [provided] in this subsection' is when we listed Palmer as a Pioneer Home and then later in the section it was changed to a Veteran's Home. That keeps it consistent. It's otherwise noted that the Palmer Home will be a Veterans' Home.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG moved to add the phrase, "except as otherwise provided in this subsection." There were no objections. He indicated there were no further issues to resolve and CCS SB 301 was moved from committee. There being no further

business to come before the committee, he adjourned the meeting
at 9:45 p.m.
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