

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

February 3, 2005

12:59 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Bob Lynn, Chair
Representative Nancy Dahlstrom
Representative Jim Elkins
Representative Lesil McGuire
Representative Bill Thomas
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Max Gruenberg

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 83

"An Act relating to the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission."

- MOVED CSHB 83(MLV) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 84

"An Act extending the termination date for the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD AND HELD

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL LEGISLATION

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 83

SHORT TITLE: SEISMIC HAZARDS SAFETY COMMISSION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) LEDOUX

01/19/05	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/05	(H)	MLV, STA, FIN
02/03/05	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 124

BILL: HB 84

SHORT TITLE: EXTEND SEISMIC HAZARDS SAFETY COMMISSION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) LEDOUX

01/19/05 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/05 (H) MLV, STA, FIN
02/03/05 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELE LEDOUX

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke as the sponsor of HB 83.

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID GUTTENBERG

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During discussion of HB 83 and HB 84, related the need for the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission.

PAT DAVIDSON, Legislative Auditor

Division of Legislative Audit

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During discussion of HB 83 and HB 84, explained the division's recommendation with regard to its sunset review of the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission.

ROD COMBELLICK, Acting Director

Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys

Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of [CSHB 83, Version G].

STEVE MCNUTT, Research Professor

in Volcano Seismology

Geophysical Institute

University of Alaska

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 83.

ROGER SMITH, Director

Geophysical Institute

University of Alaska Fairbanks

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During discussion of HB 83 and HB 84, related the work of the Geophysical Institute.

DR. GARY CARVER, Seismic Geologist
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Urged the committee to favorably consider HB 83 and HB 84, and CSHB 83, Version G.

JOANNE GOYNE, Alaska Emergency Language Resource Bank
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of [CSHB 83, Version G].

DAVID COLE, Geotechnical Engineer
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During discussion of HB 83 and HB 84, testified in support of the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR BOB LYNN called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at [1:05:01 PM](#). Representatives Lynn, Elkins, McGuire, Thomas, and Gruenberg were present at the call to order. Representatives Dahlstrom and Cissna arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CHAIR LYNN highlighted that everyone on this committee volunteered to be a member of this committee. He further highlighted that there are four veterans on this committee. Chair Lynn related that the gavel was given to him many years ago by his grandmother, who received the gavel for improved academics when receiving her high school diploma at age 70.

HB 83-SEISMIC HAZARDS SAFETY COMMISSION

HB 84-EXTEND SEISMIC HAZARDS SAFETY COMMISSION

CHAIR LYNN announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 83, "An Act relating to the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission." and HOUSE BILL NO. 84, "An Act extending the termination date for the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR LYNN informed the committee that the committee packet should include a proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 83, which combines both HB 83 and HB 84.

REPRESENTATIVE ELKINS moved to adopt CSHB 83, Version 24-LS0372\G, Bullock, 2/3/05, as the working document. There being no objection, Version G was before the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELE LEDOUX, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor, provided the following testimony:

This bill adds "tsunamis" to the scope of the work of the [Alaska] Seismic Hazards Safety Commission. Alaska has the longest coast in the United States, and there are experts who will be testifying who have provided support material about seismic activity and the potential for tsunamis in Alaska. So, I will not dwell on that aspect. The bill also extends the commission until June 30, 2010. Presently it is scheduled to sunset June 30, 2005. ... The Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission was established in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Department of Natural Resources is to provide staff support for the commission and members of the commission are to be appointed by the governor. The fiscal notes on these bills indicate that the commission and additional verbiage of tsunami will create no fiscal impact to DNR. The nine-member commission has represented us when the University of Alaska, local government, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs, an appropriate federal agency, the insurance industry, and three members of the public who are experts in the fields of geology, seismology, hydrology, geotechnical engineering, structural engineering, emergency services or planning.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX turned attention to the Legislative Audit Division's audit, and stated:

The division found it difficult to make the argument that there is a demonstrated public need for the commission's termination date to be extended since the commission has not been active since it was created in 2002. However, after the December 26th disaster in the Indian Ocean, I believe that when extended, the governor will appoint people to the commission. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) estimates that with the present infrastructure and policies, Alaska will have the second highest annualized

earthquake loss ratio, ratio of average annual losses to infrastructure, in the country. Reducing those losses requires public commitment to earthquake and tsunami conscious siting, design, and construction. Seismic hazards pose serious problems for our state; and the commission will focus on these loss-reduction goals. The Division of Legislative Audit recommended altering the commission or the board to provide more representation of local government. Of the nine-member board, there's now one seat assigned to local government. However, one of the three public seats is assigned to emergency services; and this would also be a local government avenue. However, if this committee would like a committee substitute to add another seat for local government or consider a conceptual amendment with respect to this, I would be amenable to that. ... There will probably be federal money available to better anticipate earthquakes and tsunamis and prepare for disasters. The commission will be ready to make suggestions how to best use these funds.

CHAIR LYNN informed the committee that if CSHB 83 is reported from committee the fiscal notes for both HB 83 and HB 84 will accompany CSHB 83.

[1:12:31 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG inquired as to the [committee's and the sponsor's] thoughts on changing the name of the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission to the Alaska Seismic and Tsunami Hazards Safety Commission.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX said that she had no problem with such a change.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG asked if Representative LeDoux had any suggested language with regard to an additional seat for local government.

CHAIR LYNN asked if Representative Gruenberg was referring to a particular local government or any local government.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX recalled that the audit recommended having a position specifically for a local government member. This member would be chosen to represent local governments in general.

CHAIR LYNN inquired as to what this local government member would bring to the committee that it didn't have before.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG opined that the legislation already seems to include a local government member.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX reiterated that the Legislative Audit Division recommended a local government member. She said that she has no problem leaving the [membership] as it is now, in which there seems to already be a local government position, or in following the Legislative Audit Division's recommendation.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG turned attention to page 10 of the Legislative Audit Division's sunset review dated October 22, 2004. From the aforementioned sunset review he read the following: "The commission membership is currently defined as a nine-member commission with one representative of local government. If the legislature is considering continuation of the commission, we believe that a statutory revision or expansion to the commission membership should include at least three local government representatives from seismically different geographic areas of the state."

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX reiterated that she is amenable to either the current membership [in Version G] or adding a local government position.

[1:17:05 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID GUTTENBERG, Alaska State Legislature, informed the committee that when he was a staff member of the legislature he was involved in the passage of the original legislation [creating the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission]. He highlighted that the function of this commission is something that no other entity in the state performs, specifically no one in the state is identifying risks and implementing measures to reduce them. He highlighted that the committee packet should include a letter of support from the insurance industry. The commission is designed to make recommendations with regard to things that can mitigate damage and loss of life, although it cannot give orders. Representative Guttenberg opined that the fiscal note, in comparison to the potential savings for life and property, is insignificant.

PAT DAVIDSON, Legislative Auditor, Division of Legislative Audit, Alaska State Legislature, addressed the earlier comments regarding the division's recommendation related to local government officials. She said that one of the most tangible effects of this commission will be in building code changes. Most communities in the state [utilize] the International Building Code and while the commission's membership includes a great deal of talent, the local level is actually where the changes will have to be made. Ms. Davidson specified that the recommendation is based on bringing more local government involvement because often adapting the building code is a financial trade off in regard to how stringent a local area wants to develop its building codes. "That's the genesis of that recommendation, is looking who's really going to have to implement recommendations coming out of the commission. And we believe, for the most part, it's going to be local communities," she explained.

ROD COMBELLICK, Acting Director, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), testified in favor of [CSHB 83, Version G]. Mr. Combellick related that during his 27 years working as a geologist in Alaska, he has seen the evidence that large earthquakes have occurred on a nearly regular basis over the last several thousand years. In fact, in or near Alaska there is a magnitude 8 earthquake every 13-14 years; a magnitude 7 earthquake about every year; and a magnitude 6 earthquake occurs about 5 times a year. Therefore, [Alaska] has the highest earthquake exposure in the country. Historical records and geological evidence point to the fact that large earthquakes will continue to occur, and will eventually strike an urban area. The [state] needs to be better prepared for the aforementioned. Therefore, Mr. Combellick said he supports Version G as he believes it will help reduce the state's vulnerability from these hazards. With regard to the local government membership on the commission, Mr. Combellick said that he concurred. This commission can help keep these hazards in the "public eye" because there are only occasional reminders of the large, damaging earthquakes. Furthermore, it's more than just saying that the area has earthquakes or tsunamis, it's important to show how the risks vary across the state. In fact, it's just as important to know where the risks are low as where they are high because many areas, where it isn't necessary, can avoid costly construction measures meant for earthquake prone areas. Therefore, efforts could be concentrated in the high risk areas. Mr. Combellick pointed out that the aforementioned is important with regard to

implications with earthquake insurance and how the premiums are distributed throughout the state.

MR. COMBELLICK informed the committee that all other western states and other states have similar seismic safety commissions and these entities have shown great success in reducing losses. Mr. Combellick then directed attention [to page 9 of the Legislative Audit Division's sunset review] and quoted the following: "Staff working with similar seismic mitigation agencies, in other western states we surveyed, often cited improvements to local planning requirements and building code restrictions as a major, if not primary, tangible benefit of their organization's accomplishments."

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MR. COMBELLICK highlighted the importance of the commission involving the participation of the private sector and local governments. The aforementioned would ensure that the loss reduction measures that are implemented would be consistent with industry practice, would be technically sound, and would carry public support. Mr. Combellick encouraged the committee to extend the commission and to include tsunamis in its purview. He opined that tsunamis often cause the greatest damage. In fact, tsunamis were responsible for 90 percent of the casualties during the 1964 earthquake. Regarding the fiscal note, he explained that because the commission has existed in statute over the last couple of years, it's already included in DNR's budget at about the \$10,000 level. Therefore, the passage of this legislation would result in no incremental cost increase.

REPRESENTATIVE ELKINS asked if Mr. Combellick is in favor of increasing the commission from nine members to eleven members.

MR. COMBELLICK replied yes, adding that it's important to have a variety of local government representation because the hazard varied across the state. Additional local government members on the commission will help, he opined, address their interest and ensure whatever measures are implemented are done on a reasonable basis.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG turned attention to the membership of the commission, which includes a representative from the insurance industry. However, the powers and duties under AS 44.37.067 don't appear to include the insurance industry, specifically with regard to what can and should be done to make earthquake and tsunami insurance coverage available and

affordable. He inquired as to Mr. Combellick's thoughts with regard to adding the aforementioned to the commission's powers and duties.

MR. COMBELLICK said that he would support adding such language. He informed the committee that one way the insurance industry can help reduce losses would be to provide reduced premiums to property owners who take measures that reduce their vulnerability.

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REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG directed attention to page 2, lines 20-21, which says that the commission may accept grants, although it doesn't say that it has the power or obligation to specify what to do with those grants, contributions, and appropriations. Therefore, he inquired as to Mr. Combellick's view of expanding the commission's powers and duties to make that explicit.

MR. COMBELLICK opined that the aforementioned would be a good idea. He said that he wasn't sure of the intent of the legislature when the language was originally inserted. He mentioned that there might be an opportunity to pass through funding from FEMA into local governments, although there are already channels to do that now. He noted that there is a possibility that the commission could apply for grants to do a particular project researching a particular earthquake hazard or risk issue. Mr. Combellick said that he would be in support of language to authorize the commission to do the aforementioned.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG clarified that the original intent of the language on [page 2, lines 20-21] was that there may be money available for the commission to function and perhaps perform research on a specific problem.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG inquired as to how Representative Guttenberg would view allowing the commission a role in recommending, not just for internal use of the [grants, contributions, and appropriations] but rather a broader role.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG recalled that the original [intent] was not to give this commission too much authority outside of making recommendations. He further recalled that the [intent] was to have a panel of experts making recommendations and the money would flow directly to the appropriate entities from the grantees.

STEVE MCNUTT, Research Professor in Volcano Seismology, Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska Fairbanks, informed the committee that prior to his 13 years in Alaska he worked for the State of California's geological survey. Therefore, he said he wanted to relate some examples of the topics the California Seismic Safety Commission covered and instances in which it had direct and indirect influence. Mr. McNutt informed the committee that some years ago California established a program for earthquake insurance, which led to determining how to decide whether a fault is active and where the seismic sources are located. The aforementioned would help judge the level of risk the insurance companies had been asked to take on. Based on the recommendations of California's seismic safety commission, California decided to use published, peer-reviewed results. The only problem with the aforementioned was that some of the studies were 20-30 years old, which led to the need to create a mechanism for new studies and promote studies where none existed. Mr. McNutt suggested that a parallel situation would exist in Alaska.

MR. MCNUTT then focused on earthquake prediction. He informed the committee that some years ago there was a formal earthquake prediction experiment in Parkfield, California. The California Seismic Safety Commission reviewed the aforementioned prediction experiment and decided to endorse it, which led to the State of California authorizing funds to help "beef up" the scientific instrumentation while watching for state interests. A commission such as [the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission] would seek to ensure that state and local concerns were addressed and there was a match between the research being done and the broad needs of the community. Mr. McNutt related that seismology and seismic data not only cause earthquakes themselves but are also precursors to volcanic eruptions, and furthermore earthquakes can cause tsunamis. The role of [California's] commission was to help plan and coordinate a government response because volcanic eruptions and earthquakes can cause effects far beyond the location of the event. In conclusion, Mr. McNutt stated that California's commission provided a needed forum, a systematic review, and a suite of recommendations to other bodies to help promote safety while tying together the research elements with the needs of local and state organizations.

CHAIR LYNN recalled that after the recent tsunami in Asia, there was much in the media discussing that animals actually predicted this. He asked if there has been any research on such

sensitivity in animals that could be replicated with scientific instruments.

MR. MCNUTT informed the committee that there was a fair amount of research on [the sensitivity of animals to natural disasters] in the late 1970s. The aforementioned research was prompted by an earthquake in China in 1975. Prior to that earthquake, hibernating snakes crawled out of their holes and fish propelled themselves out of the river. The scientific community attempted to determine what the animals were sensing. He recalled reading a study some years ago that proposed that there were very small earthquakes causing the ground to shake, but were making a wave audible to dogs. The difficulty [with the 1975 earthquake in China] was that most of the information was anecdotal and was difficult to duplicate. The thinking was that the scientific instruments designed to sense earthquakes were providing a better and more systematic answer than the occasional and highly variable animal effects.

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REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG asked if Mr. McNutt, based on his experience in California, would suggest any other changes in the language other than inserting "tsunami."

MR. MCNUTT related that his original instinct was to keep it simple and just call [the commission] seismic with the language to relate that [the commission] would include hazards that fall within the domain or influence of seismic events.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG clarified that he was asking whether Mr. McNutt felt that there should be any additional powers or duties other than those listed [under Section 1(a)].

MR. MCNUTT said that he didn't see anything that was glaringly missing.

ROGER SMITH, Director, Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska Fairbanks, informed the committee that part of the duties of the Geophysical Institute is to perform research and provide observations and data recording of earthquakes. He also informed the committee that the state, through the university's budget, provides about \$75,000 that is spent on the seismological laboratory. Mr. Smith related that it's one thing to know technically a lot of facts about earthquakes and how they occur and it's quite another to make that effective in providing protection of life and property. He said that he

supported the aforementioned as does the university and [has worked in coordination] with others in the state to produce a booklet regarding the actions that can be taken to reduce seismic hazards, for example. He noted that the university has also produced a video relating advice with regard to actions to take in the event a tsunami is likely to happen.

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MR. SMITH noted that [the Geophysical Institute] also runs the Alaska Earthquake Information Center, which collects data from about 400 seismometers and integrates the data to detail the seismic events that occur. Mr. Smith said that he is willing to work toward providing ways in which the public could benefit from the knowledge and expertise [of those at the Geophysical Institute].

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MR. SMITH turned to the Atwood Building, which has approximately 32 seismometers. Those seismometers are used to show how the building shakes in the event of an earthquake. Therefore, the main modes of oscillation for the Atwood Building are known and can be lengthened to the strength of the seismic fault. He surmised that a body [such as the commission] would want to make comments and urge that any validated information be made into public policy and advice to people using buildings. Therefore, research can develop into a group activity from which actions are taken. In response to Chair Lynn, Mr. Smith said that to his knowledge the Atwood Building is the only building in Alaska outfitted with such seismometers. He related that he has been told that the seismometers in the Atwood Building are the finest installation of its type because there is a vertical component near the foundation. He noted that Japan has similar installations.

DR. GARY CARVER, Seismic Geologist, informed the committee that he has been engaged in seismic geology activities for about 30 years. Dr. Carver urged the committee to favorably consider HB 83 and HB 84, and the combined version. The legislation is very important for the well being of the state. Alaska has high seismic exposure. In fact, over half of all earthquakes that occur in the United States, occur in Alaska. Furthermore, two of the five largest earthquakes to have occurred in the world in the last 100 years occurred in Alaska. Therefore, it would behoove the state to pay particular attention to this matter.

DR. CARVER informed the committee that he worked in California until 1998 and served as a member of the California Seismic Safety Commission subcommittee for several years. The Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission, as presently constituted in the legislation before the committee, is modeled, in large part, after commissions such as that in California. Dr. Carver highlighted that [Alaska's commission] is charged with acting in the area of earthquake hazard mitigation, which provides expertise to the state and local government in order to prevent damage from earthquakes by taking actions prior to an earthquake. The aforementioned isn't emphasized in any branch of state government in any widespread coherent way. Dr. Carver provided an example of how this [organization] might work by virtue of a recent experience. On November 3, 2002, the Denali fault, which runs through a largely unpopulated part of the Interior, produced a 7.9 magnitude earthquake. The aforementioned is the largest earthquake in a continental interior region to occur in North America in the last 150 years. The Denali fault broke the surface and moved about 18 feet at a point where it transects the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). Much to the credit of the developers of the pipeline and the operator, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, pre-planning had been done for such an event. The pipeline sustained very little damage and was operating in a very short time. However, had the pre-planning and mitigation not been performed, it's likely that the pipeline would've been severely damaged and would've been shut down for an extended period of time. The aforementioned could result in a large financial loss for the state as well as a large oil spill.

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DR. CARVER posed another example in the Kodiak area. Because of the advice and perception of some local engineers and geologists, Kodiak perceived that there may be significant hazards with regard to some schools. To that end, Kodiak voters passed a bond issue to provide funds to perform a seismic hazard survey of [the area's] schools. The aforementioned is complicated and difficult to work through. Furthermore, there hasn't been the benefit of a state entity, such as the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission, to provide technical expertise with this. Should this commission be empowered, others may experience the benefits of having such a body available to address local concerns. In conclusion, Dr. Carver urged the committee to act favorably on this legislation. He further concluded by noting his support, specifically for

extending the commission, adding the "tsunami" language, and the additional local membership to the commission.

JOANNE GOYNE, Alaska Emergency Language Resource Bank (Language Resource Bank), informed the committee that the Language Resource Bank is a nonprofit statewide interpreter core comprised of volunteer and professional interpreters who represent over 100 or so languages that are spoken in Alaska. Ms. Goyne related the Alaska Emergency Language Resource Bank's support of [CSHB 83]. However, the organization was disappointed when the commission wasn't established. The Alaska Language Bank envisioned that the commission would help Alaska enact a safety and prevention mitigation mechanism that has been identified as a high priority. Ms. Goyne opined that the commission would be a great resource for the private sector. Prior to [the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001] and at the request of the Red Cross, the Language Resource Bank met with officials from the Red Cross, FEMA, and various state, federal, and private safety and emergency managers for the Municipality of Anchorage, the Alaska Railroad, the [Ted Stevens International] Airport, Providence Hospital, the US Coast Guard, insurance carriers, and office building property managers. During the meeting there was discussion of the state's severe shortage of trained Alaskans who can provide assistance in a natural disaster and emergency first aid, and therefore could assist first responders in times of disasters.

MS. GOYNE clarified that the primary reason the Red Cross contacted the Language Resource Bank was that in reviewing the after action reports from the 2001 Special Olympics held in Anchorage, it was revealed that the bilingual Alaskans who had helped the over 80 countries participating in the events, 97 percent of all volunteers were present at every event scheduled during the two-week event. Therefore, the Red Cross felt that this phenomena should be tapped into and used as a method to solve the shortage of those trained in mitigating disasters. The Language Resource Bank estimates that Alaska has an untapped resource of about 900 experts and advanced bilingual Alaskans with varying professions. The grass roots private sector program enables bilingual Alaskans the opportunity to use their skills. When [the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001] brought this project to the forefront with regard to man-made as well as natural disasters, an aggressive three-year mitigation project was created that could recruit and train this bilingual workforce to help [Alaska] be prepared for the unexpected.

[2:02:12 PM](#)

MS. GOYNE envisioned translated text advising individuals what to do in the case of an earthquake. She estimated that in the three-year timeframe there would be a 60,000 person resource of self-reliant Alaskans who could help Alaska's first responders. The earthquake and natural disaster component of this effort is assembled and ready for funding. However, the commission created in 2002 was never established. At the same time, the state Office of Intergovernmental Coordination was resolved. Ms. Goyne stressed that the massive project is ready to proceed, it just needs support and assistance in securing federal funding. Ms. Goyne concluded by relating that the Language Resource Bank believes the commission would be a very good resource.

CHAIR LYNN requested that Ms. Goyne submit any information on this matter to the committee.

DAVID COLE, Geotechnical Engineer, informed the committee that he has been practicing in Anchorage for 30 years. He related that much of his work is related to earthquake engineering in Anchorage and throughout the state as well as research regarding local earthquake hazards. Mr. Cole informed the committee that he has also been on the mayor's geotechnical advisory commission in Anchorage, which has been in existence for about 28 years of which he said he has been on the commission for about 25 of those years. [Anchorage's] local geotechnical advisory commission is very similar to the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission in that the functions of both seem very similar.

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MR. COLE related that Anchorage's local commission reviews the technical aspects of projects for the local building/safety agency and suggests studies that should be done in the Anchorage area in order to identify local geological hazards, specifically seismic hazards. He recalled a 1979 study which reported the lands in Anchorage that are susceptible to land sliding during earthquakes, and those lands were identified and mapped. Those maps have become part of the local amendments to the building code and can be used by the technical and nontechnical community in evaluating siting of structures. Mr. Cole said that he is a supporter of the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission. He suggested the commission be weighted with technical membership such that the commission would recommend studies that would identify seismic and tsunami hazards throughout the state as well as recommending mitigation measures.

2:09:10 PM

MR. COLE specified that geotechnical types that deal with construction of seismically resistant buildings, engineers that deal with the lifelines of water, sewer, transportation, and electrical systems should be on the commission in order to ensure that the information being gathered and disseminated is the best technical information that can be obtained.

CHAIR LYNN closed public testimony. He then inquired as to the wishes of the committee.

[2:11:09]

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG moved that the committee adopt [Amendment 1], which would change AS 44.37.065(2), which currently reads: "(2) a representative from local government;" to read as follows: "(2) three representatives from local government;".

There being no objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG mentioned the possibility of an amendment dealing with the insurance aspect of this matter.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA moved to report CSHB 83, Version 24-LS0372\G, Bullock, 2/3/05] out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 83(CRA) was reported from the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL LEGISLATION

CHAIR LYNN announced that the final order of business would be the committee discussion of potential legislation. He related his hope that the committee would be reactive to legislation assigned to the committee as well as proactive such that the committee would sponsor legislation [that it deems appropriate]. He then turned attention to an unnumbered bill, labeled 24-LS0448\F, Bullock, 2/3/05.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG explained that the unnumbered legislation provides several different amendments to current law to help veterans and some of the residents of the pioneers' homes. The first Section is modeled after an Arizona statute in which the death certificate for a deceased veteran is free.

Section 2 of the legislation defines the eligible recipient. Section 2 is modeled on a federal law by which a veteran's death certificate is signed by the President of the US. This legislation establishes a similar program whereby the adjutant general obtains [death] certificates printed bearing the governor's signature and thanking the veteran for his or her service, all of which goes to the family. Section 3 specifies that those individuals who receive multiple Purple Hearts can obtain a special license plate for free. Section 4, he explained, is a conforming amendment that makes it clear that the tax is paid, although the initial \$30 fee for the special license plate isn't charged.

CHAIR LYNN inquired as to the sentiments of the committee regarding whether the legislation should include all of the aforementioned issues or whether there should be separate legislation for each matter.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG continued his explanation by turning attention to Section 5, which would allow those in the pioneers'/veterans' homes to keep \$150 a month of outside income. Section 6 specified that [residents of a pioneers'/veterans' home who are without money] "shall" be paid \$150 a month by the state. Section 7 increases the amount of outside income one can have to \$150.

[2:21:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DAHLSTROM opined that the first two issues [sections] could go together very well, while the other issues seem to need to be addressed separately. With regard to veterans who have received Purple Hearts, Representative Dahlstrom inquired as to how many people in the state have received Purple Hearts. She questioned whether [the legislature] would want to say that a person receiving one Purple Heart has to pay for a special license plate while an individual receiving multiple Purple Hearts wouldn't. Receiving a Purple Heart is a big deal, and therefore she suggested that all Purple Heart recipients should be eligible to receive a free special license plate.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG said that he didn't have the answers to Representative Dahlstrom's questions.

CHAIR LYNN informed the committee that a situation came to light in which he learned that members of the National Guard can count their active duty pay toward retirement while [the duty doesn't

count toward retirement] for those who are on active duty and retire, which is of concern.

REPRESENTATIVE DAHLSTROM agreed that legislation addressing the aforementioned is a good idea.

CHAIR LYNN related his understanding that the National Guard provide a certain amount of money, of which there is a finite amount, for tuition and recruitment occurs on that basis. If too many enter the organization at once, there may not be enough money to provide everyone. Therefore, he suggested providing free tuition to National Guard members, at least to those who serve in a combat zone.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG characterized the aforementioned as a mini GI bill, and therefore he suggested the need for a sunset clause.

REPRESENTATIVE ELKINS informed the committee that in Sitka there is a veterans' cemetery. Although the cemetery is a federal [cemetery], it's in dire need of about \$15,000 to bring it to a standard of which veterans and their families can be proud.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA related that over the past couple of years she has been involved with the military stand down, which is an incredible event. Through this process veterans find places to work and receive training [and more]. It seems that this committee should be an integral part of the aforementioned event.

CHAIR LYNN said Representative Cissna has an excellent idea. He then related his participation in a fundraising event for the family assistance center in Anchorage. In his district alone, over \$2,300 was raised for the family assistance center, he related. He expressed the desire to have all districts involved in this because the welfare of the family or military personnel is very important.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG suggested that a citation or resolution could be presented at the stand down.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA noted that such has been done before. She clarified that she was actually suggesting the legislature have a presence at the stand down.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG surmised, in reference to the unnumbered legislation, that there is no objection to Section 1

dealing with the death certification and Section 2 dealing with the governor's certificate. Upon Representative Dahlstrom's suggestion, Representative Gruenberg said he would amend the unnumbered legislation to specify that recipients of a Purple Heart could receive a [special license plate] for free.

CHAIR LYNN suggested including the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor in the group that would receive a [special license plate] for free.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG surmised then that Sections 5-7 could be separate legislation.

CHAIR LYNN noted his preference for legislation that keeps [issues] separate in order to avoid one matter creating difficulty for the others.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at [2:37:30 PM](#).