

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 14, 2006

3:37 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Gene Therriault, Chair  
Senator Charlie Huggins  
Senator Bettye Davis  
Senator Kim Elton

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Thomas Wagoner, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 274

"An Act relating to the disposition of surplus firearms by the state."

RE-SCHEDULED TO 2/23/06

SENATE BILL NO. 290

"An Act relating to reimbursement of premiums for Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance paid by members of the Alaska National Guard deployed to a combat zone; and providing for an effective date."

HEARD AND HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 290

SHORT TITLE: LIFE INSURANCE FOR NATIONAL GUARD

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) HUGGINS

02/14/06	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/14/06	(S)	STA, FIN
02/14/06	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

Josh Tempel, Staff to Senator Huggins  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced SB 290 for the sponsor

John Cramer, Administrative Service Director  
Department of Military & Veterans  
Affairs  
PO Box 5800

Ft. Richardson, AK 99505-0800

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions related to SB 290

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

**CHAIR GENE THERRIAULT** called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at [3:37:07 PM](#). Present were Senators Bettye Davis, Charlie Huggins, Kim Elton, and Chair Gene Therriault.

**SB 290-LIFE INSURANCE FOR NATIONAL GUARD**

[3:37:30 PM](#)

CHAIR GENE THERRIAULT announced SB 290 to be up for consideration.

JOSH TEMPEL, Staff to Senator Huggins, named the four brave National Guard members who lost their lives in a helicopter crash in Iraq on January 7, 2006 as the introduction of SB 290. He stated that the bill demonstrates support for our National Guard troops by adding a new section to AS 26.05, which would reimburse National Guard soldiers for the \$27 per month life insurance premiums while they are serving in a combat zone, retroactive to January 1, 2006.

CHAIR THERRIAULT explained that Section 1 sets up the fund to hold appropriations and subject to subsection (c), the funds would be available for the commissioner of the Department of Revenue to pay the premiums if the National Guard member submits for reimbursement.

He read subsection (d) on page 2, lines 5 and 6 and asked if the language was included to keep the funds from being swept into the CBR at the end of the year.

JOHN CRAMER, Administrative Service Director, Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA), explained that the language refers to the fact that once the appropriation is made, it's there to be utilized as intended in the appropriation. To get the fund up and running, money must be placed in the fund.

CHAIR THERRIAULT responded he's mindful of the sweep provision of the CBR, which is that at the end of each fiscal year, every

dollar that's "available" - according to the court's interpretation - is automatically swept into the CBR. There's a way to establish a fund so that the surplus doesn't get swept and he asked if subsection (d) gets to that specifically so the fund wouldn't be subject to the annual sweep.

MR. CRAMER said he thought that is the case.

SENATOR HUGGINS remarked he would prefer that the money not be subject to the sweep provision.

CHAIR THERRIAULT noted that only those soldiers in active combat would be subject to the premium reimbursement. He then asked why the fiscal note extends just two years.

MR. CRAMER replied because it's unclear whether or not there will be deployments beyond two years.

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SENATOR ELTON asked what the fiscal note would be if the effective date were January 1, 2005. That change would provide reimbursement for soldiers who were deployed and had returned.

MR. CRAMER responded it would make an additional 300 soldiers eligible for the reimbursement.

SENATOR ELTON asked if the expectation is that 700 soldiers would be deployed in 2006.

MR. CRAMER answered deployment of between 700 and 1000 soldiers is anticipated this year.

SENATOR ELTON suggested that the committee make the bill retroactive to January 1, 2005 so that all the Alaska National Guard members who have been and will be deployed would benefit from the program.

SENATOR HUGGINS said he wouldn't object if the numbers work. He then explained that a reimbursement program would be far easier to administer than any other method.

CHAIR THERRIAULT asked if the life insurance is mandatory and how the premium is paid.

MR. CRAMER replied the insurance is optional and the premium is automatically deducted from the paychecks.

CHAIR THERRIAULT noted that makes it easy to verify that premiums had been paid.

SENATOR ELTON asked about the notion of establishing a deadline for applying for the reimbursement.

MR. CRAMER replied that had been considered and the decision was to place constraints in regulation rather than in the bill.

SENATOR ELTON said there could be an ongoing liability.

SENATOR HUGGINS responded he'd like the constraints to be made through regulation.

CHAIR THERRIAULT asked if there might be more potential for challenges if the cutoff dates were in regulation rather than in the bill.

MR. CRAMER agreed that could happen, but if the regulations were implemented right away those being deployed would have the information before leaving so opportunity for challenges and misunderstandings would be greatly reduced.

SENATOR HUGGINS advised that this information could be part of the pre deployment packets.

[3:52:36 PM](#)

MR. CRAMER advised that the Department of Fish and Game wanted to honor National Guard members by offering them a hunting and fishing license free of charge and that idea might be merged with SB 290.

SENATOR HUGGINS said he'd like the bill to be held over so he could thoroughly review the idea.

CHAIR THERRIAULT noted it wouldn't greatly impact the ADF&G budget.

MR. CRAMER reported that the cost of a combination hunting and fishing license is \$46 and the department estimated that the impact would be in the neighborhood of \$5,000.

CHAIR THERRIAULT said he didn't have any problem giving consideration to merging the bills. Holding the bill would provide opportunity for staff to check on the sweep language and to learn whether or not there might be problems associated with a cut off date if it isn't mentioned in statute.

CHAIR THERRIAULT announced he would hold SB 290.  
There being no further business to come before the committee,  
Chair Therriault adjourned the meeting at [3:58:02 PM](#).