

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
February 4, 2008
1:44 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Meyer called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:44:00 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Mike Chenault, Co-Chair
Representative Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair
Representative Bill Stoltze, Vice-Chair
Representative Harry Crawford
Representative Mike Hawker
Representative Reggie Joule
Representative Mike Kelly
Representative Mary Nelson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Richard Foster
Representative Les Gara
Representative Bill Thomas Jr.

ALSO PRESENT

Representative Anna Fairclough; Representative John Coghill;
Representative Lindsey Holmes; Representative Ralph Samuels;
Ben Mulligan, Staff, Representative Bill Stoltze; Renee
Limoge, Staff, Representative Anna Fairclough; Kathie
Wasserman, Alaska Municipal League, Juneau; Chris
Ashenbrenner, Executive Director, Council on Domestic
Violence & Sexual Assault

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

John Parker, Executive Director, Kenai Peninsula Borough
Economic Development District

SUMMARY

HB 272 An Act extending the termination date of the
Alaska regional economic assistance program; and
providing for an effective date.

HB 272 was HEARD & HELD in Committee for further
consideration.

HB 334 An Act extending the termination date of the
Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault;
and providing for an effective date.

HB 334 was reported out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with a new fiscal note by the Department of Public Safety.

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#HB334

HOUSE BILL NO. 334

An Act extending the termination date of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; and providing for an effective date.

REPRESENTATIVE ANNA FAIRCLOUGH, SPONSOR, testified HB 334 is an authorization bill to extend the life of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). Last year, during the 25th Legislature, the House passed the 2014 date for reauthorization but on concurrence, the Senate could not reach consensus on that date. The Senate then put forward the 2011 date with which the House concurred. She emphasized the importance of the 2014 date. She assured members that the Task Force findings would be to the legislative body by March 1st. She introduced Representative Coghill and Representative Holmes, both of whom serve on the Task Force Committee.

Representative Fairclough explained that current law, slated to expire 2011, means the 26th Legislature would be addressing the issues in the second year of that term. She noted the importance for understanding the issues of domestic violence, which the Task Force has been working diligently. In order to be successful, it is imperative that the Commission not be working on reauthorization during that legislative session but rather on the goals of the findings. The primary issue is recommendations for a strategic plan and mandates for consideration of that plan.

REPRESENTATIVE LINDSEY HOLMES testified in support of the legislation. She stated that the Task Force is in agreement that there must be a strategic plan, which should take a year to implement. She recommended the 2014 deadline, which provides enough time to get the plan in place before reauthorization.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHN COGHILL addressed concerns of reauthorization. He assured the Committee that problems exist throughout Alaska. He advised that reauthorization of the Council is imperative. There are places in Alaska that are like a war-zone. He stated that the Council has been busy applying for grants & providing accountability for those on the front-line. The Council has had a difficult time determining a long range plan because the Legislature

has put them on a short-funding string. He urged that the legislation pass so that the necessary changes can be outlined in a strategic plan.

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Representative Kelly questioned why the sponsors believe that the plan could pass through both bodies this year. Representative Fairclough explained that both bodies were intentionally included during Task Force negotiations and that all elected officials participating on the Commission are in support of the 2014 date.

Representative Coghill added that there has been pressure on CDVSA to keep focused on their priorities. He admitted that the Council Network has not always worked well with the legislature and that there have been disagreements regarding service and allocation concerns. The Task Force has attempted to address those issues.

Representative Coghill acknowledged that there is a lot of work required to address existing issues statewide. Tolerating violence and sexual assault is a serious crime. He stressed that the importance of providing help to those that are in greatest need.

Representative Kelly advised that work is expensive. He looked forward to seeing the report outcome. Representative Coghill advised that the report does address many issues and that the Commission has encouraged greater accountability from the Council.

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Representative Joule commented that there is no mystery of who the victims are and who the perpetrators are. He encouraged that the Legislature be active in helping. He worried about the changing roles for Native Alaskan men. He questioned if there were resources infused into the request to attempt change of behavior. He realized that changing behavior is not the problem of the Legislature.

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Representative Fairclough explained that the Task Force has been diligent in listening to communities across the State. They did address issues of men in rural and remote places & needs of the women and children in those places. She acknowledged that one size does not fit all in the response. The State & agencies that have serviced the issue have done an outstanding job providing crisis intervention. The place where there is lack is in prevention and intervention to those behaviors in young men and then the accountability for perpetrators in the system.

Representative Fairclough anticipated that dollars put in the front end will actually cause an initial increase to the crimes. As the agencies do a better job in intervention & prevention in communities, the response is expected to increase. Increased numbers mean that fewer children will be victimized at home.

Representative Fairclough noted that testimony heard in Bethel and reinforced in other village communities, shows that one size will not fit all. She projected that the western model may not be the best solution for the rural communities; there are not the same resources or support that those living in urban areas have. She anticipated a recommendation to fund a pilot program, which would differ from the "western model" type and meant for reaching the needs of rural Alaska. Representative Fairclough commented that the Task Force is now reviewing the report and determining the contents.

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Vice-Chair Stoltze commented that the work done by the Task Force is admirable and that they have addressed many issues. He questioned if Juneau was the best location for the Task Force and asked if the location had been an issue for the group, when attempting to create a better model for serving all of Alaska. Representative Fairclough responded that the Senate had stripped that language from the bill. There were six pivotal mandates, which did not include location of the Council. Until a vote is taken on the entirety of the package, everything is subject to argument, debate and change.

Vice-Chair Stoltze believed that including the location could prevent consensus building. Representative Fairclough reiterated that language had been removed. Vice-Chair Stoltze stated his concern regarding inclusion of a location consideration and hoped the model could be fixed. Representative Fairclough discussed the new director at CDVSA, who has created a successful year with continuity and quality of employees. She reiterated that the management team is looking-up for the Council.

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Representative Kelly commented on asset value received from the media. He stated that statistics indicate the safest women & children are those of a married woman. He encouraged the use of the media to help address the problems of domestic violence early on. He believed that the need is one of teaching and encouraging rather than policing. He reiterated that the model that works best is a traditional one.

Representative Nelson disagreed with the comments made by Representative Kelly. She cited many cases where the perpetrators of crime are married men. The pattern of violence exists in many married men, pointing out that cycles of violence occur for married men with rage issues. Representative Kelly reiterated that the information was a statistical fact, which emphasizes the model most successful and safe for women and children is marriage.

Representative Fairclough stated that she was not familiar with those statistics. She agreed that the media campaign could provide a vehicle to help stop the encouragement of violence both inside and outside the home. She pointed out that domestic violence is most frequently reported inside homes. She stated that the media campaign could include churches and other areas within the communities.

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CHRIS ASHENBRENNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COUNCIL ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT (CDVSA), noted appreciation for the work undertaken by the Task Force. She testified in support of HB 334. She stated that the Task Force was able to focus the Council on work needed for developing a strategic plan to make an effective change and then measure that change. She urged extension of the reauthorization to 2014.

Co-Chair Chenault inquired the number of shelters statewide and how the distribution of funds was determined. Ms. Ashenbrenner responded that there are nineteen women shelters, two of which are only operated programs. The funding cycle is every two years through a Request for Proposal (RFP) for services. The Council makes the determination of funding decisions; there is no standardization of that criterion. Core services are expected of each shelter.

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PUBLIC TESTIMONY CLOSED.

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Co-Chair Meyer asked about the recommendations made by last year's audit. Representative Fairclough stated that the auditors recommended an extension to 2014.

Representative Fairclough addressed location and employment issues. One recommendation considered by the Task Force is creating non-exempt positions. All CDVSA staff currently is in exempt positions, making it less attractive for hiring; a point the Task Force is discussing. The Task Force is also

recommending awarded grant criteria address objectives and outcome measures. Additionally, consideration has been made to the length of service for the Council Board. Presently, they sit on the Council board for one funding cycle. The Task Force is recommending more formalized orientation training so that the Board realizes they serve as a Council, representing the entire State of Alaska, instead of advocates for the network on domestic violence. That will also be addressed in the final report.

Co-Chair Meyer pointed out the 2/01/08 date of the new fiscal note. Representative Hawker inquired if there had been changes to the long-term spending plan from last year. Representative Fairclough replied that there are no changes. Ms. Ashenbrenner added, the sunset note is representative of their budget with a slight increase from last year.

Representative Hawker questioned if funding sources were consistent with prior year budgets. Ms. Ashenbrenner explained that Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding had been backed out in last year's budget and replaced with general funds; in the proposed budget there is a funding source change where the general funds are replaced with the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) felon funds.

Representative Hawker clarified that the monies were federal grant receipts and general fund dollars. Ms. Ashenbrenner replied that CDVSA does receive a small amount of federal funds through public health.

Representative Kelly asked the original amount of TANF dollars received by CDVSA. Ms. Ashenbrenner responded that most recently, \$500 thousand dollars was backed out and replaced last year by general fund dollars. This year, \$1.3 million dollars has been replaced by the PFD felon funds. Those allocations are made available through a formula by the Department of Corrections, which places the felons PFD checks into programs that protect public safety.

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Vice-Chair Stoltze MOVED to REPORT HB 334 out of Committee with individual recommendations and with the accompanying fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

HB 334 was reported out of Committee with a "do pass" recommendation and with a new fiscal note by the Department of Public Safety.

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#HB272

HOUSE BILL NO. 272

An Act extending the termination date of the Alaska regional economic assistance program; and providing for an effective date.

REPRESENTATIVE BILL STOLTZE, SPONSOR, testified that HB 272 provided for a re-extension of the Alaska Regional Development Organizations (ARDOR) statute. The Alaska Regional Economic Assistance Program was created by the Legislature in 1988 to promote the economic development of Alaska's urban and rural areas. The program enables the creation of the ARDOR's. Each ARDOR is guided and directed by a Board of Directors composed of the economic development interests in their region. To carry out the mission, the State provides funding in the form of grants for the program. In turn, the ARDOR's use that money to leverage, on average, eight times the State's investment in private, federal and other funds.

Currently, there are eleven ARDOR's across the State that:

- Enable local officials and businesses to pool their limited resources and work together on economic development;
- Develop partnerships among public, private and other organizations; and
- Provide technical assistance via direct links with local citizens.

Vice-Chair Stoltze stated that the programs are an important part of the economic development in each region. The program is funded primarily through the use of Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) receipts. He said that the extension request was not controversial and urged support for the legislation.

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KATHIE WASSERMAN, ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE (AML), JUNEAU, spoke in full support for HB 272. She explained that AML works closely with the ARDOR's. AML addresses legislative issues, not those of economic development. However, it is hoped that the issues that AML does address, can provide communities the tools from which to upgrade their economic development needs. She reiterated support for the bill.

Ms. Wasserman changed her hats, pointing out that as Chair of the Denali Commission Economic Development group, she works with the ARDOR's and noted that all projects look better to the State if they are done on a regional bases.

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JOHN PARKER, (TESTIFIED VIA TELECONFERENCE), EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, offered to answer questions of the Committee.

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PUBLIC TESTIMONY CLOSED.

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Co-Chair Meyer asked if State grants had been included for the program. Vice-Chair Stoltze said they had, recalling individual ARDOR projects.

Co-Chair Meyer asked if there had been any collaboration between Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) and the ARDOR program. Vice-Chair Stoltze discussed that many ARDOR members, also work in the tourism industry. ATIA does "cross pollinate" in small communities, which usually includes the local chamber of commerce's.

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Co-Chair Meyer asked if the bill was intended to be held in Committee for an amendment. Vice-Chair Stoltze replied it would be fine to hold the bill, because it was anticipated that an amendment would be forthcoming.

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HB 334 was HELD in Committee for further consideration.
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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 P.M.