

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

February 23, 2010  
9:07 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Linda Menard, Chair  
Senator Kevin Meyer, Vice Chair  
Senator Hollis French  
Senator Joe Paskvan

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Albert Kookesh

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 259

"An Act relating to the powers and duties of the legislative audit division."

- BILL HEARING POSTPONED

HOUSE BILL NO. 274

"An Act establishing August 7 as Purple Heart Day."

- MOVED HB 274 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 274

SHORT TITLE: ESTABLISHING PURPLE HEART DAY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) DAHLSTROM, GARDNER, BUCH, KELLER, PETERSEN, LYNN, GATTO, TUCK, DOOGAN, THOMAS, HAWKER, GUTTENBERG, RAMRAS, FAIRCLOUGH, JOHNSON, MILLETT, HERRON

01/08/10	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/10
01/19/10	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/10	(H)	MLV, STA
02/02/10	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
02/02/10	(H)	Moved Out of Committee
02/02/10	(H)	MINUTE(MLV)
02/03/10	(H)	MLV RPT 6DP
02/03/10	(H)	DP: KAWASAKI, LYNN, T.WILSON, BUCH, RAMRAS, GATTO
02/05/10	(H)	STA REFERRAL WAIVED

02/08/10 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
02/08/10 (H) VERSION: HB 274  
02/10/10 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/10/10 (S) STA  
02/23/10 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE BERTA GARDNER  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of HB 274.

ELLIE SICA  
Intern to Representative Gardner  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information for HB 274.

TIM ARMSTRONG, Chief of Staff  
Alaska Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported HB 274.

RON SIEBELS, Department Commander  
Alaska Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)  
Anchorage, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported HB 274.

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

REPRESENTATIVE DAHLSTROM

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:07:19 AM](#)

**CHAIR LINDA MENARD** called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators French, Paskvan, Meyer and Menard.

**HB 274-ESTABLISHING PURPLE HEART DAY**

[9:07:59 AM](#)

**CHAIR MENARD** announced the first order of business to come before the committee would be HB 274.

REPRESENTATIVE BERTA GARDNER, sponsor of HB 274, said the bill makes a necessary and important statement by establishing, in perpetuity, Purple Heart Day to honor those members of the military service who have been injured or killed in battle.

ELLIE SICA, intern to Representative Gardner, said the Purple Heart is awarded to any member of the US Armed Forces who has either been killed or wounded in battle. Approximately 1.7 million service men and women have received the Purple Heart, including many Alaskans. About 500,000 Purple Heart recipients are still living. She said that on August 7th, 1782, General George Washington established the badge of military merit. In 1932, this badge was reestablished as the Purple Heart in honor of George Washington, his memory and those who have been killed or wounded in battle.

She said a number of other states recognize August 7th as Purple Heart Day. HB 274 will demonstrate that Alaska honors its veterans and Purple Heart recipients.

[9:11:12 AM](#)

CHAIR MENARD asked how many other states have established Purple Heart Day.

MS. SICA replied that Wisconsin annually celebrates August 7th by displaying the American flag. New Mexico, North Dakota, Nevada, New York, Arizona and Mississippi all honor it in some way.

CHAIR MENARD asked if 25 percent of the states currently have Purple Heart day.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER replied that 25 percent is an over-estimate but that Alaska can lead the way.

CHAIR MENARD asked if Purple Heart Day has been before the Legislature previously.

MS. SICA replied that August 7, 2009, was recognized as Purple Heart Day with a Governor's Proclamation.

SENATOR MEYER asked how many Alaskans qualify for, or have received, the Purple Heart.

MS. SICA said the number of Purple Heart recipients is not recorded by state. The approximate number for the nation is currently 1.7 million but that is changing every day.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER said participation in the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) is voluntary. The exact number or recipients per state is not known because many veterans qualify but do not join the order.

SENATOR MEYER said he assumes Alaska has numerous Purple Heart recipients due to the large military presence in Alaska.

[9:14:13 AM](#)

CHAIR MENARD recognized Senator Paskvan as joining the meeting.

TIM ARMSTRONG, Chief of Staff, Alaska Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), spoke in support of HB 274. He said over 500 recipients of the Purple Heart are in Alaska and 270 of those are members of MOPH. Everyone member of MOPH must show appropriate documentation. He showed the committee his DD 214 [Defense Department, form 214] which is a one page summary of a person's military service, including awards and declarations.

[9:18:19 AM](#)

MR. ARMSTRONG said the MOPH would love to see Purple Heart Day established in perpetuity so that people who suffered wounds in action are recognized appropriately. He noted that the Purple Heart Highway, between Tok and Fairbanks, is a tremendous welcome to veterans entering Alaska which has one of the highest per capita populations of veterans.

RON SIEBELS, Department Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart, said since the American Revolution, many Americans have put on a military uniform to help maintain a free country. He said the Purple Heart is an award that no one pursues; rather it happens during tragic moments of man's inability to peacefully coexist. Wars pass and the combatants slowly fade with history. From time to time, Americans search for the right words or actions to say "thanks."

[9:22:32 AM](#)

He felt that passage of HB 274 would preserve our elected officials legislative action to say "thanks" to Alaska's past, present and future Purple Heart recipients.

[9:23:26 AM](#)

CHAIR MENARD closed public testimony.

SENATOR MEYER moved to report HB 274 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objection, the motion carried.

9:24:42 AM

CHAIR MENARD, seeing no further business to come before the committee, adjourned the meeting at 9:24 a.m.