

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

January 24, 2012

1:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Dan Saddler, Co-Chair
Representative Steve Thompson, Co-Chair
Representative Alan Austerman
Representative Bob Lynn
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Bob Miller

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Carl Gatto, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 247

"An Act establishing July 30 each year as Alaska National Guard Day."

- MOVED HB 247 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 247

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD DAY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) LYNN, THOMPSON, SADDLER

01/17/12	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/6/12
01/17/12	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/17/12	(H)	MLV, STA
01/24/12	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120

WITNESS REGISTER

CRAIG CAMPBELL, President & Chief Operating Officer
Alaska Aerospace Corporation
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Speaking for the Alaska Aerospace Corporation and as a former Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard, testified in support of HB 247.

MARK LYNCH, City Manager
City of Cordova
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 247.

JENNIFER GIBBINS, Editor
The Cordova Times
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 247.

TIM JOYCE, Public Information Officer
City of Cordova
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 247 and answered a question.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CO-CHAIR DAN SADDLER called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Representatives Saddler, Thompson, Miller, Lynn, and Austerman were present at the call to order. Representative Cissna arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 247-ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD DAY

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CO-CHAIR SADDLER announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 247, "An Act establishing July 30 each year as Alaska National Guard Day."

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CO-CHAIR THOMPSON moved to adopt HB 247 as the working document.

[There being no objection, HB 247 was before the committee.]

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REPRESENTATIVE LYNN referred committee members to the sponsor statement and material in the committee packet, and added that the Alaska National Guard has served citizens and protected their interests from the snowdrifts of Cordova to the battlefields of Iraq. He opined the legislature should honor

the Guard with a special day of recognition. Recently, the Guard sent more than 50 members, supplies, and equipment and "answered the call" from Cordova which was buried under record snowfall. This is a typical response from the Guard; in fact, the 4,000 members of the Alaska National Guard are trained to react quickly and efficiently in an emergency and in disaster relief missions, nationally if necessary. Representative Lynn read from several newspaper headlines to illustrate the variety of services provided by the Guard. He advised that the Alaska National Guard has a presence in more than 75 communities throughout Alaska and promotes positive examples and activities, such as the Alaska National Guard Counterdrug Program. In addition, since 2003, approximately 1,500 Guard members have deployed overseas in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan. This bill recognizes the value and dedication of the Guard and its role in the economy, security, and overall well-being of our state and country. Representative Lynn encouraged the legislature to honor the Guard each year on July 30, which is the anniversary of its authorization by Congress in 1948.

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REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN said he was an ex-Guard member and that the bill is "way past due." He was a member of the Guard for seven years in the 1960s and he recalled the Guard's response after the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake and tidal wave.

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CO-CHAIR SADDLER, as a co-sponsor of the bill, expressed his support. The Guard also provides civil defense work, Operation Deep Dig in Cordova, deploys overseas and does some fun things too, for example, Operation Santa Claus. Although this legislation is "somewhat symbolic" it will raise the profile, awareness, and morale of the Guard and its work.

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REPRESENTATIVE MILLER agreed this was a good way to focus on the achievements of the Guard and expressed his support.

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON pointed out that those employers of Guard members make the members' service possible and give them the time to train or deploy when needed.

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CRAIG CAMPBELL, President & Chief Operating Officer, Alaska Aerospace Corporation, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs, informed the committee he is a former Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard and thanked the sponsors of the bill. He stated that the National Guard is the oldest component of the armed services in the U.S. This legislation acknowledges the unique characteristic of the Guard as a federal and state organization that is primarily established under the control of a state governor until mobilized. The Guard traces its history to 1636 when the first militia was formed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The militia - now the National Guard - is the only military with a dual role as its mandate includes the training and appointing of officers by the states, except when mobilized by the President for federal service. In 1947, Congress transformed the militia into the National Guard, and it was activated as a force in 1948. Today each state, territory, and the District of Columbia have a National Guard organization divided into army and air units, with total personnel exceeding 500,000 volunteers. The Guard was established for the Territory of Alaska in 1939. Mr. Campbell provided a short history of the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG). Following World War II, the Air National Guard was formed, with the first unit formed in Alaska in 1952. At the present time there are over 4,000 men and women serving in the Alaska Army and Air National Guard - predominately on a part-time basis, as volunteer citizen-warriors - and Mr. Campbell listed many of their missions, stressing those of domestic support. He concluded by stating his strong support of HB 247.

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MARK LYNCH, City Manager, City of Cordova, spoke on behalf of the mayor and vice-mayor of Cordova. Mr. Lynch said that the National Guard was asked to come to Cordova during the recent snow emergency. They quickly responded and helped the people of Cordova out of a "really tough spot." The community was overwhelmed by significant snowfall in a short period of time, and houses were in danger of collapse. He expressed his belief that the action by the Guard saved property and probably lives. Mr. Lynch urged the committee and the legislature to recognize the Guard for its service to all of the citizens of the state, and especially to the citizens of Cordova.

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JENNIFER GIBBINS, Editor, The Cordova Times, described the difficult conditions caused by weeks of snowfall in Cordova. The difficulties became an emergency in January with the threat of the collapse of buildings and homes. With the help of the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Guard, disaster was averted. She relayed that a Guard member said he was rewarded by knowing that the Guard had prevented a disaster from happening. House Bill 247 is important because it recognizes the Guard for its service and also for the example it sets, and she expressed her belief Guard members have "an extraordinary ethic of service." Ms. Gibbins stated her support of the bill.

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TIM JOYCE, Public Information Officer, City of Cordova, said he was a former mayor of Cordova and served as the public information officer during the snow emergency. Mr. Joyce said, "I can personally attest that it would have been a disaster of much higher scale if the National Guard had not mustered out to help Cordova in our time of need." Cordova is grateful, and it is appropriate for the state to recognize the National Guard on the date of its founding. He also agreed with Co-Chair Thompson that employers of Guard members need to be thanked. Mr. Joyce advised Cordova is unified in its support of HB 247. In response to a question from Co-Chair Thompson, Mr. Joyce said no fishing boats were sunk in the harbor, although some in storage were damaged, and a seine tender sank.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER, upon determining no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony.

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CO-CHAIR THOMPSON moved to report HB 247 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

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There being no objection, HB 247 was reported out of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

[1:28:00 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 1:28 p.m.