

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

March 27, 2012

1:05 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. 366

"An Act establishing an Alaska intrastate mutual aid system and relating to the duties of the Alaska division of homeland security and emergency management and the duties of the Alaska State Emergency Response Commission."

- MOVED HB 366 OUT OF COMMITTEE

CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 14(STA)

Urging the United States Department of Defense to protect military bases and military personnel in the state for the defense and protection of the state and the nation.

- MOVED CSSJR 14(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 366

SHORT TITLE: DISASTER PLANNING AND SERVICES

SPONSOR(S): COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS

03/15/12	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/15/12	(H)	MLV, CRA
03/27/12	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120

BILL: SJR 14

SHORT TITLE: MILITARY PERSONNEL CUTS & BASE CLOSURES

SPONSOR(s): WIELECHOWSKI

02/01/12 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/01/12 (S) STA
02/07/12 (S) STA AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
02/07/12 (S) Moved CSSJR 14(STA) Out of Committee
02/07/12 (S) MINUTE(STA)
02/08/12 (S) STA RPT CS 5DP NEW TITLE
02/08/12 (S) DP: WIELECHOWSKI, KOOKESH, PASKVAN,
MEYER, GIESSEL
02/08/12 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
02/08/12 (S) VERSION: CSSJR 14(STA)
02/10/12 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/10/12 (H) MLV
03/27/12 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE ERIC FEIGE
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee, introduced HB 366.

MICHAEL PASCHALL, Staff
Representative Eric Feige
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Eric Feige, presented the sectional analysis for HB 366.

BRYAN FISHER, Chief of Operations
Division of Homeland Security/Emergency Management (DHS&EM)
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Fort Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366, and answered questions.

RICHARD ETHERIDGE, Fire Chief
Capital City Fire/Rescue; 2nd Vice President
Alaska Fire Chiefs Association
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366.

KATHIE WASSERMAN, Executive Director
Alaska Municipal League
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366.

MIKE O'HARE, Deputy Director
Division of Homeland Security/Emergency Management (DHS&EM)
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Fort Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366.

DENNIS BRODIGAN, Director
Emergency Services
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366.

JIM BUTLER, Attorney
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366.

DAVID GIBBS, Director
Emergency Operations
Fairbanks North Star Borough
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366.

JEFF TUCKER, Fire Chief
North Star Volunteer Fire Department
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366.

DOUG SCHRAGE, Representative
Intrastate Mutual Aid System (IMAS) Committee
International Association of Fire Chiefs
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 366.

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Speaking as the sponsor, introduced CSSJR14(STA).

MCHUGH PIERRE, Deputy Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Fort Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 14.

LUKE HOPKINS, Mayor
Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 14.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:05:53 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STEVE THOMPSON called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Representatives Thompson, Austerman, Miller, and Lynn were present at the call to order. Representatives Cissna and Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 366-DISASTER PLANNING AND SERVICES

[1:06:51 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 366, "An Act establishing an Alaska intrastate mutual aid system and relating to the duties of the Alaska division of homeland security and emergency management and the duties of the Alaska State Emergency Response Commission."

[1:07:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ERIC FEIGE, Alaska State Legislature, informed the committee HB 366 is a committee bill from the Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee. He said members of his staff are experts regarding emergency services and incident command. Representative Feige advised that the bill was requested by the state emergency services community and, because of the expertise of his staff in this regard, he will be carrying the bill.

[1:08:26 PM](#)

MICHAEL PASCHALL, Staff, Representative Eric Feige, Alaska State Legislature, disclosed he is: an assistant chief and a board member of a fire department that may fall under the agreement established by the bill; the chair of the Delta Greely Local Emergency Planning Committee, which may be asked to participate in planning activities under the aforementioned agreement; and a member of the Alaska Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan committee, which falls under the State Emergency Response

Commission (SERC), Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA). He then disclosed that Representative Feige is the chief of Chickaloon Fire Service, Inc. Mr. Paschall read the following statement [original punctuation provided]:

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency: "Mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements are agreements between agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions that provide a mechanism to quickly obtain emergency assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and after an incident."

Through the EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact), all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands all have agreed and established guidelines to provide aid across state [borders].

Across Alaska, local organizations adjacent to each other sometimes have agreements to provide assistance in the event of an emergency, often within the same political subdivision. When an incident commander needs additional resources, such as an additional ambulance, established procedures work to make the aid available.

Unlike the EMAC that allows response across state [borders], and local agreements that provide assistance for isolated incidents - Alaska has no unified agreement in place allowing one political subdivision to assist another.

Although assistance can be obtained, all of the details concerning cost, responsibility, liability, and other items have to be negotiated on a situation by situation basis.

When an event occurs, people work to continue the operation or the reestablishment of services. Time is not available to negotiate items such as: Who will pay the transportation costs to the area. Who is responsible for maintenance of the equipment that is

involved? Who can terminate an employee, and other such items.

House Bill 366 and its companion in the other body, SB 208, will put in place a tool that will make assisting those in need easier for us here in Alaska. This process is not just about typical emergency services such as fire, police, and emergency medical services. It also includes everything from water and sewer treatment facilities, electric and other utilities, , fuel delivery, all services individuals expect to be available to them before, during and after an emergency.

The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and interested response organizations developed model legislation for an intrastate mutual aid system. A copy of the model legislation was provided to you.

The bill you have before you is an adoption of the model legislation. It was developed by the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management here in Alaska in conjunction with several organizations including the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association, Alaska Municipal League, and the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

Section 1 of this bill requires the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to play an integral role in developing and implementing the Intrastate Mutual Aid System established by this bill.

Section 2 requires the division to coordinate the operation of the agreement or IMAS.

Section 3 addresses the State Emergency Response Commission and requires the commission to make recommendations about IMAS and adopt regulations necessary to carry out the agreement.

Section 4 requires the commission to review and make recommendations about the mutual aid system.

Section 5 establishes the mutual aid system between participating political subdivisions. Provides that every political subdivision is a participating member

unless the subdivision withdraws. Provides what assistance a political subdivision may request. Addresses qualifications and employment of, and workers' compensation for, emergency responders. Establishes reimbursement procedure, tort liability for participating political subdivisions. Provides definitions for the provisions establishing the mutual aid system.

[1:13:42 PM](#)

MR. PASCHALL, in response to Representative Austerman, said the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) is an established commission that consists of several department commissioners, representatives of local governments, urban and rural emergency planning agencies, and federal non-voting members.

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN surmised the Alaska intrastate mutual aid system would be established through the commission.

MR. PASCHALL explained the system would be established through the division and the commission. Both the commission and the division have certain duties outlined in statute for existing activities, and for activities that would fall under the intrastate agreement.

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN asked whether the mutual aid system has staff that "coordinates any kind of a disaster that comes along."

MR. PASCHALL said that depends on the activity. The state would coordinate activities at the state level through its emergency response center during a state disaster. For a locally-declared disaster, "it would be between the two political subdivisions." It would also depend on the scale of the emergency. Equipment and skilled workers are maintained at all levels - within local and state government - so the division has much information available; however, the agreement would establish that if one needed a particular asset, does one contact a neighboring community or does one contact the state.

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN observed the fiscal note is zero, so there is no cost associated with implementing this mutual aid system.

MR. PASCHALL confirmed that much of the information for the system is in place; in fact, the cost that occurs is in the

event of a disaster, and language in the bill provides for what costs are paid by the responding agency, and what costs are paid by the requesting agency. Furthermore, personnel from the division already provide many of the services and information addressed by the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN questioned if there is no agreement prior to a natural disaster, who bears the liability for the costs of the response.

MR. PASCHALL said that is the purpose of the bill, so that there is an agreement in place. Without the costs "spelled out" the different organizations negotiate throughout the state. For example, Juneau may send assistance to another community in Southeast, and if an agreement is not in place, the costs must be determined each time.

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN noted the bill allows subdivisions to "opt out" of [withdraw from] the agreement; however, if that subdivision then suffers a disaster, would there be no response because it is not part of the mutual aid system.

MR. PASCHALL agreed that an entity that opts out of the agreement may get no response to its request. He expressed his belief that this scenario is possible and has happened.

[1:20:03 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA said that she was in Tanana after the flood and saw how vulnerable many Alaskan communities are. She recalled from previous testimony that "people get help when they need help," and asked what particular event inspired the bill.

MR. PASCHALL answered that the need for this agreement has been discussed for several years, and testimony from emergency responders will explain the difficulties that they have had providing aid across political subdivisions.

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON recalled that during the Big Lake fire, many fire departments responded from all around the state.

MR. PASCHALL added that wild land fires require a response from federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to provide services all over the country. The bill sets the legislation and terms that should be in place for an agreement within the state.

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON related an argument over liability between the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the Bureau of Land Management.

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER returned attention to the zero fiscal note. He asked if there is a provision in the bill that will direct various state agencies, or departments, to locate equipment at specific locations, and if so, whether there would need to be state funding to accomplish that.

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MR. PASCHALL said no. That process is already in place; for example, communications equipment is already located throughout the state in large and remote "hubs." There is also an inventory of equipment owned by individual agencies that is available for state use if needed. He stressed that HB 366 establishes the responsibility for the equipment that is made available. The planning processes are continuous, and funded through the division.

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN asked for the definition of political subdivisions.

MR. PASCHALL explained they are a municipality or a community that is unorganized and has more than 25 people, and is unique in nature. Larger areas are those of recognized municipalities, and in an unorganized borough, they are individual communities that may or may not be organized.

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON opened public testimony.

[1:27:23 PM](#)

BRYAN FISHER, Chief of Operations, Division of Homeland Security/Emergency Management (DHS&EM), DMVA, expressed his support of the bill and disclosed that DHS&EM participated in writing the proposed legislation. In response to Representative Austerman's question as to whether there are costs associated with implementing the mutual aid system, Mr. Fisher pointed out that implementing the system would be a part of DHS&EM's day-to-day mission, which is to coordinate resource support for local jurisdictions and political subdivisions in the event of a disaster. In addition, DHS&EM serves as the primary staff support to SERC, and as part of its regular job to support the commission, would participate in all of the work needed to be done to develop policies and procedures if the legislation is passed.

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN restated his question regarding the status of subdivisions that opt out of the agreement.

MR. FISHER explained opt out provisions are included to give some flexibility. The primary mission of DHS&EM in an emergency is to respond to all resource requests with assistance from the nearest location; however, weather issues can intercede. The system put in place by the bill will allow a community to get the assistance that is closest to them, thereby saving time. Mr. Fisher assured the committee that if a community opts out, that does not prevent it from requesting support, and DHS&EM will respond to the request. In further response to Representative Austerman, he advised in a statewide emergency, a political subdivision that opted out of the mutual aid system would not be called upon to be the first resource provider to respond, because the issues addressed in the bill, such as tort liability and workmen's compensation, would not have been agreed to. He said, "We wouldn't want to put anybody, expose anybody to risk, or put anybody in harm's way without some prior planning and processes in place." Another reason for not calling upon a political subdivision that opted out is the other major issue addressed in the legislation: the reimbursement of jurisdictions for their response efforts, or the repair of communities after a disaster is declared. However, Mr. Fisher stressed that in life/safety situations, DHS&EM would respond to any community as fast as it can.

[1:32:02 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON asked how important the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) system is to communication between departments and agencies when responding.

MR. FISHER said communication provided by the ALMR system is an integral part of an effective and coordinated response.

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RICHARD ETHERIDGE, Fire Chief, Capital City Fire/Rescue; 2nd Vice President, Alaska Fire Chiefs Association, stated HB 366 is very important to fire and rescue organizations. He described the bill as a collaborative partnership between state, local, and federal authorities, which creates the framework for agencies to provide and receive assistance. At this time, DHS&EM is tasked with coordinating this effort statewide. He cautioned that no department in Alaska has the ability to handle

a major disaster on its own; however, the bill is a "force multiplier" that allows communities to ask for help from neighbors. Mr. Etheridge acknowledged that state law already provides for mutual aid agreements between departments, but it is unknown which communities will need assistance. For example, Thorne Bay recently needed assistance with a hazardous materials incident, and because there was not a mutual aid agreement in place, a lot of questions needed to be answered first - the proposed bill would have put the framework together and saved time. He advised that calls have increased in Southeast, and the bill eliminates much of the administration process. Mr. Etheridge described recent incidents in Southeast, and said the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association and Capital City Fire/Rescue urge the passage of the bill.

[1:36:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked whether there are international emergency relationships with Canada and its territories.

MR. ETHERIDGE advised there are some agreements in place; in fact, agencies in Juneau respond to the mining communities up the Taku River and have permission to cross the border in an emergency. In Haines and Skagway, the fire departments have agreements with Whitehorse, Yukon Territory.

[1:38:49 PM](#)

KATHIE WASSERMAN, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League, on behalf of the Alaska Municipal League (AML), stated its support for HB 366. She disclosed that the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association has a seat on AML's board. Ms. Wasserman said from her experience as the former mayor of a small town, she believes this bill will save up to one hour of "hesitancy" - because of possible liability and cost - before a community responds to a request for assistance. Although communities do respond to one another, time is critical.

[1:41:20 PM](#)

MIKE O'HARE, Deputy Director, DMVA, emphasized the bill in its simplest form establishes agreements for liability, tort issues, and the reimbursement of costs for small to medium emergencies. Previous testimony proves that small requests for equipment and personnel are becoming more frequent. He reiterated that DHS&EM supports the legislation which will enable the division to work with SERC to develop a system at no additional cost to the

state. Regarding the question of whether additional funding would be required at a later date, he said there would be none, and additional needs of communities will be addressed by grants, or through capital improvement program (CIP) requests. In response to Representative Cissna, Mr. O'Hare explained that the state has an existing mutual aid agreement with neighboring Canadian territories called the Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Arrangement. In closing, he estimated that more than 25 other states have enacted similar legislation.

[1:44:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN understood that although the bill has a zero fiscal note, DHS&EM will look for federal grants or CIP funds to continue to fund the program.

[1:45:07 PM](#)

MR. O'HARE said no. He clarified that there will be no additional funding to put the intrastate mutual aid system together.

[1:45:58 PM](#)

DENNIS BRODIGAN, Director, Emergency Services, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, expressed his support of the bill for all of the reasons offered by the previous testifiers.

[1:46:28 PM](#)

JIM BUTLER, Attorney, informed the committee he practices law for a small firm in Kenai. He disclosed he is a former public member of SERC, but is not speaking on its behalf today. Mr. Butler said his law practice primarily is involved with the world of emergency and incident management from local to national levels, and he regularly participates on multi-agency hazardous teams and on corporate incident management teams. He pointed out that in the past the legislative and agency processes have focused on planning for emergencies. At this point, however, the bill represents an opportunity to create the administrative mechanisms that allow first responders to efficiently and effectively respond. Mr. Butler advised that in the aftermath of an emergency, city officials, local officials, risk managers, lawyers, accountants, and insurance representatives enter into the picture - all with distinct responsibilities - and unless there is an established system in place, difficulties arise. He opined that HB 366 creates the

authority in the legal mechanism for municipalities. Although fire protection authority rests with the Division of Forestry, Department of Natural Resources, and hazardous material authority rests with the Department of Environmental Conservation, this legislation addresses nontraditional emergencies such as floods, ice jams, or an event that requires providing technical assistance. He encouraged the committee to advance the bill.

MR. BUTLER opined evaluation of the system at an administration level will inform political subdivisions about how they want to fit into the system.

[1:50:51 PM](#)

DAVID GIBBS, Director, Emergency Operations, Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB), spoke in support of HB 366, adding that the FNSB assembly identified intrastate mutual aid legislation as one of its legislative priorities in 2010. He related that FNSB became intimately involved in the response to the 2009 ice jam flooding on the Yukon River when it was asked to provide equipment and assistance. Some of the requested assistance was not provided due to the lack of an agreement regarding authorities, compensation, and liability. In fact, the Yukon River flooding response was a clear demonstration of the value of having procedures and agreements in place prior to the occurrence of a disaster.

[1:52:43 PM](#)

JEFF TUCKER, Fire Chief, North Star Volunteer Fire Department, stated he was also the immediate past president of the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association. He supported the previous testimony, and stressed that HB 366 provides the framework upon which agencies can build their intrastate mutual aid emergency response plan that is critical to help communities throughout Alaska. He restated the support of the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association.

[1:53:41 PM](#)

DOUG SCHRAGE, Representative, Intrastate Mutual Aid System (IMAS) Committee, International Association of Fire Chiefs, disclosed he holds seats on the boards of the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association and the Western Fire Chiefs Association. Mr. Schrage expressed his support of HB 366 and the previous testimony, adding that one of the primary problems that the bill

addresses arose following Hurricane Katrina when emergency managers were shopping for less costly, but more distant, resources. In addition, he noted that the successful agreements that already exist between firefighting agencies are a model for this legislation.

[1:55:31 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON, after determining no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[1:56:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN moved to report HB 366 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 366 was reported out of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

[1:56:29 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 1:56 p.m. to 1:59 p.m.

[1:59:14 PM](#)

SJR 14-MILITARY PERSONNEL CUTS & BASE CLOSURES

[1:59:29 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the final order of business would be CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 14(STA) Urging the United States Department of Defense to protect military bases and military personnel in the state for the defense and protection of the state and the nation.

[1:59:44 PM](#)

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor, introduced CSSJR 14, saying the resolution urges the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to protect military bases and military personnel in Alaska for the defense and protection of the state and the nation. He stressed the purpose of the resolution is not necessarily to protect Alaska's economy, but is for the security of the nation. Senator Wielechowski further explained the resolution is in response to two possible base realignment and closure rounds expected in the next few years. Base closures are authorized by Congress through a process called Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), defined by DOD as

the congressionally authorized process to reorganize its base structure around the world to more efficiently and more effectively support our forces and increase operational readiness and facilitate new ways of doing business. He pointed out that the first step during the BRAC process in 2005 was a threat assessment of the future national security environment, followed by the development of a force structure plan to meet those threats, and then implementation of mandated selection criterion. In 2005, it was suggested to consolidate Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson Army Base, and to close Eielson Air Force Base (Eielson AFB). The consolidation created Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, but the closure of Eielson AFB was prevented by intervention from the community. However, Eielson AFB may still be the base most threatened with closure. Senator Wielechowski noted there is a separate resolution opposing the transfer of the F-16 Aggressor Squadron from Eielson AFB to Elmendorf Air Force Base. Returning to CSSJR 14, he advised the message that needs to be heard is: Alaska is sitting at the top of the world and is within nine hours of 95 percent of the industrial world; has the best joint training spaces available within the U.S. armed forces; has the largest overland instrumented training range in the world; and has the shortest deployment route to eastern and central Asia. Furthermore, Eielson AFB supports the North American Aerospace Command (NORAD) and ground-based missile defense systems; protects sovereign air space; secures the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS); serves as an air bridge to the Pacific theatre; is critical in defense of the Pacific; has few environmental constraints; has a self-contained fuel supply; has seismic detectors; has huge storage capacity; has long runways; and has self-contained water and power supplies on base. Senator Wielechowski concluded that the resolution makes clear that Alaska is very important to the security of the U.S.

[2:05:00 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON observed the resolution does not specify either base, but addresses all of the bases and personnel.

REPRESENTATIVE AUSTERMAN expressed his support of the resolution. He noted there is no reference to the U. S. Coast Guard although it is the first line of defense.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI acknowledged the critical importance of the Coast Guard to national security, and pointed out that it is not considered in BRAC rounds.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA opined the security of Alaska is special and unusual because of its large land area and the enormous quantity of its resources. Also, Alaska has neighbors who may covet its resources. She related that DHS&EM has been surveying rural and coastal communities looking for "weak points," so they can give warning. The bases also serve in this way. She urged that any analysis of the security of the nation should begin with Alaska.

[2:09:27 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI advised that the federal government is reevaluating where threats lie, and they lie in the Pacific theatre near Alaska; in fact, Alaska is within nine air hours of 95 percent of the industrial world. There are two air routes from North America to eastern and central Asia - through Hawaii and Guam or through Alaska - and the route through Alaska is 1,800 miles shorter. He concluded that the nation needs to be prepared to defend the country and the state.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA recalled that Alaska has the largest percentage per capita of veterans. She said it is important to remember that human resources are critical to the defense of the state and to prepare for possibilities.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER expressed his support of the resolution and said it defends the value of Alaska's military to the nation. He reviewed some of the statements in the resolution and opined it would be a big mistake to reduce the military presence in Alaska. Representative Saddler said he was looking forward to discussing these points with the Pentagon delegation. As a cross sponsor, he noted the importance of the principle to defend all bases and all missions in the state, due to Alaska's strategic position.

[2:13:35 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON, hearing no further questions from the committee, opened public testimony.

[2:13:57 PM](#)

MCHUGH PIERRE, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General, DMVA, stated that the resolution is consistent with the message of DMVA, which is that Alaska holds strategic value to the focus of the military that is now on the Asia/Pacific area, as announced by the President.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked how the resolution could affect and help veterans living in the state.

MR. PIERRE said the resolution clearly supports the logistics needed to defend Alaska. He referred to the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC), and noted that smaller bases around the state are needed to support larger training bases.

[2:16:16 PM](#)

LUKE HOPKINS, Mayor, FNSB, gave a short history of Eielson AFB. Mr. Hopkins expressed his hope that the resolution would be passed out of committee, as he has been informed that other states are sending messages to Congress and DOD supporting their positions; however, Alaska is in a great position for rapid deployment and JPARC training, and also has superior strategic importance. He cautioned that the relocation of the F-16 Aggressor Squadron from Eielson AFB is based on savings from questionable information. Mr. Hopkins concluded that the resolution imparts an urgent message to the flight assessment team.

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON supported funds being placed in the governor's supplemental budget to hire a consultant firm to help the state research the actual savings.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if FNSB engaged the services of lobbyists or advisors in this issue.

MR. HOPKINS said yes. The borough assembly has authorized \$120,000 to hire a consulting firm in Washington D.C. - which has experience with the 2005 analysis used by the Air Force - and a local economist to advise on housing and local information. These analyses will be provided to Alaska's congressional delegation. In further response to Representative Saddler, he said the consultants are Information Insights, Northern Economics, and Public Private Solutions Group.

[2:22:21 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON, after determining no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[2:22:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to report CSSJR 14(STA) out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSSJR 14(STA) was reported from the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

[2:22:58 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 2:22 p.m.