

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 11, 2012
1:50 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Paul Seaton, Co-Chair
Representative Peggy Wilson, Vice Chair
Representative Alan Dick
Representative Bob Herron
Representative Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Eric Feige, Co-Chair
Representative Neal Foster
Representative Cathy Engstrom Munoz
Representative Scott Kawasaki

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 13(FIN)

"An Act providing for the waiver or reduction of certain fees and charges in state parks for disabled veterans."

- MOVED CSSB 13(FIN) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 192

"An Act relating to the oil and gas production tax; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 13

SHORT TITLE: LOWER PARK FEE FOR DISABLED VETERANS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) FRENCH

01/19/11	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/7/11
01/19/11	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/11	(S)	RES, FIN
03/21/11	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/21/11	(S)	Heard & Held
03/21/11	(S)	MINUTE(RES)
01/23/12	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

01/23/12 (S) Moved CSSB 13(RES) Out of Committee
 01/23/12 (S) MINUTE(RES)
 01/25/12 (S) RES RPT CS 5DP 2NR NEW TITLE
 01/25/12 (S) DP: WAGONER, PASKVAN, FRENCH,
 WIELECHOWSKI, MCGUIRE
 01/25/12 (S) NR: STEDMAN, STEVENS
 01/25/12 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 01/25/12 (S) Moved Out of Committee 1/23/12
 01/25/12 (S) MINUTE(RES)
 01/31/12 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 01/31/12 (S) Heard & Held
 01/31/12 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 02/03/12 (S) FIN RPT CS 6DP 1NR NEW TITLE
 02/03/12 (S) DP: HOFFMAN, STEDMAN, THOMAS, EGAN,
 MCGUIRE, ELLIS
 02/03/12 (S) NR: OLSON
 02/03/12 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 02/03/12 (S) Moved CSSB 13(FIN) Out of Committee
 02/03/12 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 02/06/12 (S) CORRECTED FIN RPT RECEIVED
 02/13/12 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 02/13/12 (S) VERSION: CSSB 13(FIN)
 02/15/12 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 02/15/12 (H) RES, FIN
 04/11/12 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

LISA WEISSLER, Staff
 Senator Hollis French
 Alaska State Legislature
 Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SB 13 on behalf of Senator French, prime sponsor.

CLAIRE LECLAIRE, Deputy Director and Chief of Field Operations
 Central Office
 Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation (DNR)
 Department of Natural Resources
 Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on SB 13.

BEN ELLIS, Director
 Central Office
 Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation (DNR)
 Department of Natural Resources
 Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on SB 13.

SHARLA COOK
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Speaking on her own behalf, testified in support of SB 13.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:50:54 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR PAUL SEATON called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:50 p.m. Representatives Seaton, P. Wilson, Gardner, Dick, and Herron were present at the call to order.

SB 13-LOWER PARK FEE FOR DISABLED VETERANS

[1:51:14 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SEATON announced that the only order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 13(FIN), "An Act providing for the waiver or reduction of certain fees and charges in state parks for disabled veterans."

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LISA WEISSLER, Staff, Senator Hollis French, Alaska State Legislature, said SB 13 is designed to show a small token of appreciation to disabled veterans by providing them with free and discounted access to the Alaska State Park System facilities. In 1991, the legislature created a special disabled camping permit; SB 13 will extend that benefit to resident disabled veterans for boat ramp permits, RV facilities, and day parking, and will provide at least a 50 percent discount off the fee for public use cabins. She noted that the original bill provided for free public use cabins, but the benefit was reduced to a 50 percent discount due to concern from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that notices of cancelation for free cabins would not be received.

CO-CHAIR SEATON announced the bill before the committee was committee substitute (CS) for SB 13(FIN), Version 27-LS0097\B. He then asked how the disabled status would be verified.

MS. WEISLER said the intent of the sponsor is for the legislation to apply to a veteran with any level of disability and no threshold has to be met. She deferred to DNR regarding the implementation of the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked whether the requirement of a 50 percent disability had been removed from the bill.

MS. WEISLER indicated yes.

REPRESENTATIVE DICK suggested disabled veterans could advance a fully refundable deposit on a free cabin as a way to encourage notice of cancelation.

MS. WEISLER acknowledged several ideas were discussed prior to the introduction of the CS.

CO-CHAIR SEATON inquired as to how disabled veterans will identify themselves to the DNR.

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CLAIRE LECLAIRE, Deputy Director and Chief of Field Operations, Central Office, Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation, DNR, replied that the division would administer the program in a manner similar to the free camping passes for disabled veterans, which are issued in person at each of DNR's public information centers. To get a pass, the veteran provides their U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Universal Access and Identification Card (VIC) - known as the red, white, and blue card - or a print letter from VA, both of which state that they have a service-connected disability.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON cautioned that people will try to abuse this privilege, and asked how the department intends to try to prevent this by those who do not apply for a pass in person.

MS. LECLAIRE advised the division provides a small number of camping passes through the mail on an honor basis, but most veterans obtain their passes at the offices in Fairbanks, Anchorage, or Juneau, and thereby establish their status as a disabled veteran.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON advised that there are public use cabins in her area, but a trip to Juneau [for a pass] is quite expensive.

MS. LECLAIRE assured the committee the division will determine how to best provide this service to veterans. She pointed out that most public use cabins in Southeast Alaska are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

BEN ELLIS, Director, Central Office, Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation, DNR, added that the process is the same for all, and veterans would need to register to reserve a cabin.

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REPRESENTATIVE DICK asked for the expense to the state to provide this benefit to veterans.

MR. ELLIS said the division estimates about \$252,000 in lost revenue if the bill is passed.

REPRESENTATIVE DICK pointed out this level of expense to the state warrants a higher degree of scrutiny of the participants.

MR. ELLIS estimated that of the \$252,000, the loss of cabin rental fees will be about \$92,000.

[2:03:08 PM](#)

SHARLA COOK informed the committee she is a retired general officer with over 29 years of active duty military service. She spoke in support of SB 13, saying according to the Department of Labor Statistics, of the nearly 25 million veterans in the U.S. almost three-fourths have served in a war or conflict. Many have returned with injuries or disabilities. Over 20,000 were wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan, and one-half of those are unable to resume their military careers due to disability. Disabled veterans also have a lower rate of employment and promotion than others. Because of service-related disabilities, veterans have lost current and future earning power, and SB 13 provides something beyond employment: the elimination or reduction of fees so that disabled veterans and their families can enjoy Alaska State Parks. Disabled veterans and their families have paid a price in pain and suffering, and opening up state parks will serve as a restorative and healing tribute to their sacrifice. Ms. Cook urged support for SB 13.

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CO-CHAIR SEATON closed public testimony after ascertaining no one else from the public wished to testify. He then noted page

2, line 18 of the bill directs DNR to provide a form for use by the disabled veteran. He assumed this would be the mechanism by which DNR determines the status of a disabled veteran.

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REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON moved to report CS for SB 13(FIN), Version 27-LS0097\B, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

CO-CHAIR SEATON observed there has been no adverse testimony on the bill.

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There being no objection, CSSB 13(FIN) was reported from the House Resources Standing Committee.

[2:07:04 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:07 p.m.