

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

February 28, 2013

1:03 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Co-Chair
Representative Pete Higgins
Representative Shelley Hughes
Representative Lora Reinbold
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Max Gruenberg

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2

Proclaiming the state as a Purple Heart State to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's men and women in uniform wounded or killed by the enemy while serving to protect the freedom enjoyed by all Americans.

- MOVED HCR 2 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 59

"An Act relating to missing vulnerable adult prompt response and notification plans."

- HEARD & HELD

OVERVIEW: VETERANS' TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HCR 2

SHORT TITLE: PURPLE HEART STATE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HUGHES

02/04/13	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/04/13	(H)	MLV
02/28/13	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120

BILL: HB 59

SHORT TITLE: MISSING VULNERABLE ADULT RESPONSE PLAN

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GRUENBERG

01/16/13	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/11/13
01/16/13	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/13	(H)	MLV, STA
02/28/13	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120

WITNESS REGISTER

VIRGINIA SMILEY, Staff
Representative Shelley Hughes
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Related a story of her father's experience during World War II.

MCHUGH PIERRE, Deputy Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HCR 2, testified in support; testified during the hearing on HB 59.

JOHNNY WHITE
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 2.

HENRY HUNTER, SR.
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 2.

FRANCIS BOISSEAU
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on his own behalf in support of HCR 2.

KENNETH ROSS, Member
Military Order of the Purple Heart; Marine Corps League; Vietnam Veterans of America
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 2.

PAUL BEALS
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 2.

VERDIE BOWEN, Director
Office of Veteran Affairs
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HCR 2, answered a question.

TIM ARMSTRONG, Chief of Staff
Southeast District
Department of Alaska Military Order of the Purple Heart
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: on behalf of the Department of Alaska Military Order of the Purple Heart, testified in support of HCR 2.

LIEUTENANT RODNEY DIAL, Deputy Commander
A Detachment
Division of Alaska State Troopers
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 59 representing the Department of Public Safety.

DAVID LEVY, Executive Director
Alaska Mobility Coalition (AMC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Alaska Mobility Coalition's Veterans Transportation Project Update," dated 2/28/13.

ANDI NATIONS, Project Consultant
Veterans Transportation Project
Alaska Mobility Coalition
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the presentation by the Alaska Mobility Coalition.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:03:46 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GABRIELLE LEDOUX called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Representatives Reinbold, Gruenberg, Higgins, Hughes, and LeDoux

were present at the call to order. Representative Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HCR 2-PURPLE HEART STATE

[1:04:04 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2, Proclaiming the state as a Purple Heart State to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's men and women in uniform wounded or killed by the enemy while serving to protect the freedom enjoyed by all Americans.

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REPRESENTATIVE SHELLEY HUGHES, Alaska State Legislature, speaking as the sponsor of HCR 2, informed the committee the resolution would proclaim Alaska as a Purple Heart State, honoring the services and sacrifices of our nation's men and women in uniform wounded or killed by the enemy while serving to protect the freedom enjoyed by all Americans. She opined that it is appropriate for Alaska to become a Purple Heart State. The honor of the Purple Heart is the oldest military decoration and was established during the Revolutionary War by General George Washington. Although its use was discontinued after the Revolutionary War, in the 1920s General Douglas MacArthur encouraged reinstatement of the award and in 1932 - on the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth - a newly designed award was reinstated for use by the U.S. Army. In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt expanded its use to all branches of the armed forces, and in 1962 President John F. Kennedy authorized its use as a posthumous award. Finally, in 1984 President Ronald Reagan authorized its use for those eligible as a result of terrorist attacks and in 1998 civilians were removed from the list of personnel eligible for the medal. The Military Order of the Purple Heart (Order) was chartered in 1958 for those who have received the award. It is estimated that 1.7 million Americans have received the award and about 300 members of the Order live in Alaska; in fact, the Division of Motor Vehicles, Department of Administration, has issued 716 Purple Heart license plates in Alaska. Only four other states have taken this step, however, forty-eight cities, including Wasilla and Palmer, have been declared Purple Heart Cities. Representative Hughes provided committee members a Purple Heart Stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service in 2003. She urged the committee to support the resolution.

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VIRGINIA SMILEY, staff to Representative Shelley Hughes, Alaska State Legislature, said on June 6, 1944, her father landed at Utah Beach in France with the 4th Infantry Division and spent the first night on the beach with a young Ohio soldier who lost his weapon during the landing. Ms. Smiley said her father was later terribly wounded, but never considered himself disabled. She said the intent of the resolution is to honor and recognize all soldiers like her father who were wounded, [and others who were killed].

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether passage of the resolution would provide an opportunity to help encourage wounded combat veterans to sign up for the benefits offered to them by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA).

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MCHUGH PIERRE, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), assured the committee that DMVA will use the status as a Purple Heart State to build awareness for veterans to sign up for health care benefits from USDVA. When more veterans in Alaska sign up, the USDVA will dramatically increase health care and the range of services provided in the state.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER expressed his support for the resolution.

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CO-CHAIR LEDOUX opened public testimony.

[1:15:17 PM](#)

JOHNNY WHITE said that he earned a Purple Heart in 2005 while serving with the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne in Iraq. During his deployment, the mission was to stop the flow of insurgents into Iraq, and 34 Marines were lost in one fight. His wounds were inflicted on November 19, and his first memory afterward is of a World War II veteran who was also a Purple Heart recipient. With the assistance of the Purple Heart Foundation he finally received the Purple Heart in 2012 and began to receive the help and benefits he had earned. If Alaska becomes a Purple Heart State, every veteran will benefit.

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HENRY HUNTER, SR. said he received a Purple Heart in 1971 while serving with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. He said his neighbor received the Purple Heart posthumously after being killed in action in Vietnam, and expressed his hope that the state will recognize all the veterans who received the Purple Heart. His experience as a veteran in the USDVA system is that he does not fully receive his benefits, but if Alaska becomes a Purple Heart State benefits may become more available. In fact, outside of Bethel there are 56 villages with many veterans living there. Mr. Hunter said he was inspired to enlist and help our country with no questions asked.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD said it was an honor to hear Mr. Hunter's story.

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FRANCIS BOISSEAU said he has been a resident of Fairbanks for 40 years after retiring from the U.S. Army in 1973. He served three tours in Vietnam and was wounded in 1967 while flying in support of an extraction helicopter in western Vietnam. During his 23 years in the Army, he served 16 years as a pilot and then flew for 25 years as a civilian helicopter pilot. In the Interior there was one service officer serving a large area, and Mr. Boisseau is now a service officer of the Order in Fairbanks. He said he belongs to eight service organizations and Chapter 675 in Fairbanks has approximately 75 members. The Alaska Chapters of the Order have established a Purple Heart memorial and the Purple Heart Trail. Mr. Boisseau provided the following statistics: In Vietnam over 58,000 service members died and 300,000 were wounded; In Iraq and Afghanistan, 6,280 service members died and 41,936 were wounded; during the years between 1955 and 1999, others gave their lives in conflicts; and from 1775 to present about 2.7 million military personnel have been wounded or killed. If Alaska becomes a Purple Heart State, everyone who has served in the military will be honored, in addition to their relatives. He urged the committee to not let the opportunity slip by.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD expressed her hope that Mr. Boisseau will celebrate the passage of Vietnam Veteran's Day. On behalf of the committee, she thanked him for his service and testimony.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX echoed Representative Reinbold's comments.

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KENNETH ROSS, a member of the Order, the Marine Corps League, and Vietnam Veterans of America, informed the committee he is working to make Talkeetna a Purple Heart City along with Wasilla, Huston, Palmer, and the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough. Mr. Ross was wounded in 1968 during the end of the Tet Offensive era. He expressed his appreciation to the mayor of Wasilla because becoming the fifth Purple Heart State will help the USDVA reach more Alaska residents living in the Bush with their medical benefits in order to improve lives. He urged for the passage of HCR 2.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked for Mr. Ross's affiliation.

MR. ROSS said he was speaking as a representative of all three organizations and as an individual.

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PAUL BEALS reviewed his military history, including as a corpsman in Vietnam during 1967, 1968, and 1969. He expressed his belief that he is a member of a generation of warriors who had an obligation and rite of passage to serve. However, many Vietnam veterans returned home to a country "at war with itself." He was wounded in 1967 and during two years of service saw many young men die. Not too long ago he obtained a Purple Heart license plate to remember those who died. At graduate school at the University of Alaska Fairbanks his thesis was an analysis of conversations with Alaska Native Vietnam combat veterans, and he learned that in the small villages a high percentage were drafted and died in service, or who died later from service-related difficulties. Mr. Beals is now a licensed counselor working in suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, and his experience is that those living in isolation, as many veterans do, are most vulnerable. He advised recognition is valuable to bring one out of isolation. He recalled a national representative of USDVA who showed indifference to those who returned home to their villages in Alaska after being drafted into military service. Although there has been improvement, there is still room for more. He said the resolution raises the consciousness of society, and stated his support.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD thanked Mr. Beals for his testimony and for helping others at risk for suicide.

[1:35:37 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked for whom Mr. Beals was testifying.

MR. BEAL

S said he was speaking for himself, for those who died in his arms, and for those living in villages.

REPRESENTATIVE HIGGINS said he has been a member of the military for 11 years. His heartache is that the government is "not producing what they promised us." He asked whether the resolution would help in this regard.

[1:37:14 PM](#)

VERDIE BOWEN, Director, Office of Veteran Affairs, DMVA, said yes, the resolution will help because retired service members generally are invisible in the community. Producing recognition such as this, and other memorial events, will often bring veterans out into the community so other can see that they have served. Some veterans are silent about their service.

[1:38:47 PM](#)

TIM ARMSTRONG, Chief of Staff, Southeast District, Department of Alaska Military Order of the Purple Heart, informed the committee he was speaking on behalf of the Order. The Military Order of the Purple Heart is a congressionally chartered veterans' organization comprised 100 percent of combat veterans wounded or killed in the theatre of war, and many are awarded the medal posthumously. The Order is a support mechanism, aiding veterans in obtaining the benefits and medical attention they earned by providing assistance, guidance, and legal representation. Alaska has the highest ratio of veterans to population in the U.S., and veterans contribute to the health and economy of the state. Alaska recognizes the value of veterans and their contributions; in fact, Alaska was one of the first states to award high school diplomas to veterans who interrupted their education for service during World War II. Alaska has also established memorials and August 7 as Purple Heart Day holiday. Mr. Armstrong urged the committee to support Alaska as a Purple Heart State beside its other designations. For the benefit of the committee, he displayed his Purple Heart medal, which was

awarded for wounds received during his service in Vietnam in 1968, and which was used as a model to craft the highway signs along the Purple Heart Trail from Tok to Fairbanks.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD thanked Mr. Armstrong for his service and his testimony.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX thanked Mr. Armstrong for his service and his testimony. After determining no one else wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES thanked all who testified and all who came to her expressing interest and hope in this effort. The resolution attempts to express the gratitude of the state.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG appreciated all of the testimony as co-sponsor of the resolution. He relayed an experience that occurred during his service in Vietnam.

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REPRESENTATIVE RIENBOLD moved to report HCR 2 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HCR 2 was reported from the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

HB 59-MISSING VULNERABLE ADULT RESPONSE PLAN

[1:46:32 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 59, "An Act relating to missing vulnerable adult prompt response and notification plans."

[1:47:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MAX GRUENBERG introduced HB 59 as the sponsor. The bill will create a new system to help find missing vulnerable adults in a manner similar to the Amber Alert system, which is used to locate missing or abducted children. He recalled similar legislation last year received support in both bodies of the legislature, and 29 other states have adopted an alert system directed towards seniors or vulnerable adults. He referred to supporting documentation provided in the committee packet. Representative Gruenberg said the plan is important

for Alaskan families because the weather and geography pose obstacles to a search for vulnerable adults.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to adopt HB 59, Version 28-LS0260\N, Strasbaugh, 2/18/13, as the working document. There being no objection, Version N was before the committee.

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REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG called attention to the definition of vulnerable adult in Version N, which references AS 47.24.900(21), the statute that defines a vulnerable adult as a person 18 years of age or older who, because of incapacity, mental illness, mental deficiency, physical illness or disability, advanced age, chronic use of drugs, chronic intoxication, fraud, confinement, or disappearance is unable to meet the person's own needs or to seek help without assistance. He said the bill is clear that the vulnerable adult is missing, and that the purpose of the Silver Alert is to find the person missing. The bill provides a new Section 2 which requires the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA) to cooperate with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to use statewide and local radio and television and other media to develop and implement prompt response and notification plans for use by law enforcement, groups, and persons to locate a missing vulnerable adult. Representative Gruenberg continued to explain that the notification plans include standards to determine the circumstances under which a vulnerable adult will be considered missing and the format, content, and distribution of related reports. Also, the plan must determine where to implement the plan and the voluntary participation by radio and television broadcasters, newspaper publishers, and other communication media. Subparagraph (b) contains tort immunity for radio and television broadcasters and publishers of communication media. Contained in the committee packet are letters of support from AARP Alaska Chapter, the Alaska Commission on Aging, the Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police, the Alaska Peace Officers Association, the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and a fiscal note from DPS.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked for an explanation on the inclusion of the word "fraud" in the definition of vulnerable adult.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG explained that the word "fraud" was added to a number of statutes due to legislation passed last year that increased the protection of vulnerable adults who were victims of elder fraud. Although possible, it is unlikely fraud will be the "triggering event" in the case of a missing vulnerable adult.

REPRESENTATIVE HIGGINS asked for clarification on the amendment. [In the committee packet was a proposed amendment that was not offered].

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG said the only item in the amendment is on page 2, line 17, as follows: after "(3)" insert the word "the."

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked whether DMVA or DPS have expressed support for or opposition to the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG stated his preference for the departments to indicate their positions.

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REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES asked whether the Silver Alert system could be incorporated into the existing Amber Alert system in order to reduce work for the departments.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG advised the Amber Alert system does not have statutory basis and the bill would put the Silver Alert system into statute, ensuring a statewide procedure.

REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES asked if agencies were currently searching for vulnerable adults on a voluntary basis.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG was unsure how regularly searches are made outside of Anchorage.

REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES surmised the Amber Alert is working just for children who live in cities. She asked whether the Amber Alert also needs to be in statute and implemented statewide.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG deferred to the department, although he was told that the Amber Alert is successful as is, but the Silver Alert will benefit from publicity and from written plans.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD inquired as to how many people go missing, and questioned the accuracy of a zero fiscal note when the bill will result in extra work. She asked whether a report of related costs will be made to the legislature if the bill passes and regulations are written.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG said that would not be a problem; however, the departments will report directly to the legislature if there is a fiscal impact sufficient to warrant an appropriation. In further response to Representative Reinbold, he relayed the departments do not anticipate the need for an appropriation. He called attention to the 2/25/13 letter from the Commission on Aging stating that at least 60 percent of those with Alzheimer's disease wander at some point during the course of their disease and if not found within a 24-hour period up to one-half of those wanderings may result in personal injury or death. He offered to provide additional statistics.

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REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES relayed her personal experience with her mother-in-law who was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. She asked why HB 59 was referred to this committee.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG explained the communication system affected by the bill is under the emergency management function of DMVA.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG, in further response to Representative Hughes, indicated he has not gathered statistics on veterans.

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MCHUGH PIERRE, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner /Adjutant General, DMVA, acknowledged that the bill instructs DMVA to partner with DPS to accomplish the intent of the bill. Currently, DMVA partners with DPS on the Amber Alert, which works well as it is presently implemented. He opined this legislation is proposed because communities want to protect vulnerable adults of all descriptions. An existing system within DMVA exists to send messages in emergency situations - such as Amber Alerts and tsunamis, or other needed widespread communication to the public - and this system can be used for the proposed Silver Alert. Mr. Pierre advised that DPS will do most of work and there is no increased cost to DMVA.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD restated her concern about the zero fiscal note and asked for assurance that DMVA will inform the legislature if costs are incurred.

MR. PIERRE confirmed that if the bill incurred costs known at this time it would be reflected in the fiscal note. He pointed out that DMVA does not respond until the message is spread statewide.

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REPRESENTATIVE HIGGINS surmised that DMVA is a part of the communication process and asked how the message is communicated to the public.

MR. PIERRE said the DMVA process is two-fold: at the time of any emergency, DPS or DMVA can put a message in the system for dissemination. In further response to Representative Higgins, he explained that emergency alert system (EAS) alerts are broadcast on television and radio.

REPRESENTATIVE HIGGINS advised that Florida has big signs over the highways that display the message.

MR. PIERRE expressed his belief that there are three signs on the road system in Alaska that "are plugged into the system." He clarified that the fiscal note addresses the action that is prescribed by the legislation and does not address "future wishes or desires by the department." In fact, if further action is deemed necessary, there must be budget discussions.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG expressed his appreciation to Mr. Pierre for his work on the bill.

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RODNEY DIAL, Lieutenant, Deputy Commander, A Detachment, Division of Alaska State Troopers, DPS, informed the committee DPS is neutral on HB 59 and supports the intent of the legislation. However, the department is concerned about the definition change regarding "vulnerable adult" that was brought about by Senate Bill 86 during the last session of the legislature. The aforementioned change in the definition of vulnerable adults included those believed to be incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, and significantly increased the number of potential alerts generated by the bill. An increased number of alerts may discourage voluntary participation in the program and

have a desensitizing effect on the public, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the program. In addition, the expansion of the definition may result in the abuse of the system in domestic situations. As a matter of fact, each year DPS receives reports of missing domestic partners who have intentionally severed contact. Lieutenant Dial advised that callers sometimes falsify information in an attempt to find someone. Use of the past definition of vulnerable adult - "a person 18 years of age or older who because of a physical or mental impairment is unable to meet the person's own needs or to seek help without assistance" - could address these concerns.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked whether the expanded definition would increase the fiscal note.

LIEUTENANT DIAL replied no, because the legislation requires DPS to maintain an email, fax, and phone list that would be disseminated to regional dispatch centers, and after the format is in place, a minimal amount of time would be needed to transmit the notifications. In fact, existing 24-hour regional dispatch centers currently process calls for missing persons and the only change is the requirement to use a notification process.

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LIEUTENANT DIAL concluded, saying that DPS takes all missing persons very seriously, supports the intent of HB 59, and stands ready to assist with the legislation and its intent.

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CO-CHAIR LEDOUX expressed her intention to hold HB 59 so the sponsor can address the questions posed by DPS.

REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES asked DPS for suggestions on how to change the definition in order to improve the legislation.

LIEUTENANT DIAL said the definition in the original legislation proposed last year would suffice. The department needs flexibility in order to use its experience and prevent abuse of the system in a domestic situation. The original definition provides sufficient latitude to encompass those identified by a Silver Alert as well as to offer protection in a domestic situation, or thoughtful action in the case of chronic inebriants. He restated the department's support for the intent of HB 59.

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REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES agreed that desensitizing the public would not be what the sponsor seeks to achieve.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG asked whether DPS suggests the use of the definition in Senate Bill 179 proposed during the last session of the legislature.

LIEUTENANT DIAL indicated yes, in the confines of this legislation and what would require notification, but DPS does not want to change the definition of a vulnerable adult in statute.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG advised the original definition used in Senate Bill 179 and the subsequent committee substitute by the House was the identical definition as in HB 59.

LIEUTENANT DIAL was under the impression that there was a forthcoming version of the Senate bill.

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CO-CHAIR LEDOUX held HB 59 in committee.

Overview: Veterans' Transportation Project

[2:26:21 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX announced that the final order of business would be a presentation by the Alaska Mobility Coalition.

[2:28:13 PM](#)

DAVID LEVY, Executive Director, Alaska Mobility Coalition (AMC), informed the committee AMC is a private, non-profit membership organization with 128 members across the state that represents and advocates for public and community transportation. It provides technical assistance and support to rural, private, public, and non-profit transit systems. Members provide over seven million rides annually, transporting Alaskans to work, school, and medical appointments [slide entitled, "Alaska Mobility Coalition"]. The Veterans Transportation Project sponsored by AMC began when the Governor's Coordinated Transportation Task Force heard public testimony about a lack of transportation for veterans to access medical care and job

opportunities. State agencies that work with veterans cited the duplication of service and lack of coordination. In addition, transportation organizations were having difficulties assisting veterans. From that, AMC became interested in reaching out to veterans and enlisted personnel. Challenges were: eligibility requirements, military cultural issues, demographics, and funding that restricted the coordination of transportation [slides entitled, "VTP/Voices from the Community"]. Members of AMC's statewide task force are: transit providers in Anchorage and Juneau; government agencies such as the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), the Alaska VA Healthcare System (VA), the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOTPF) and the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD); and private veterans' organizations such as Armed Forces YMCA, Vets Helping Vets, and the Alaska Veterans' Foundation [slide entitled, "Veterans Transportation Advisory Group"]. After eight months of work, the advisory group has met with the director of the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs Veterans' Transportation Service (VTS) Program; provided information at the Alaska Community Transit Conference; and explored a new program formed to hire veterans for work in the transit industry [slide entitled, "Activities and Progress to Date"]. The second part of the project is putting veterans to work with public transportation projects by using funds from a state grant to obtain federal funds [slide entitled, "Alaska Mobility Coalition's Veterans Transportation Project Grants: Getting Alaskan Veterans to Work"]. The first grant was awarded to DLWD to provide bus passes and vouchers for transportation to work and job training facilities for veterans in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Wasilla, and Juneau [slide with bullets beginning with "RFP"]. Mr. Levy thanked the legislature for its past support.

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ANDI NATIONS, Project Consultant, Veterans Transportation Project, said she served on the Governor's Coordinated Transportation Task Force and heard of the needs of the transportation providers who wanted to help veterans, but were looking for funding sources. Furthermore, the veterans' services were limited and both groups benefitted from improved communication through the project. Sharing information at the veterans' summit in Anchorage and other communications are making transportation more available for veterans. For example, transportation on military bases has been extended to connect with public transportation in Anchorage and Fairbanks. In addition, VA signed a memorandum of understanding with the

Alaska Native Healthcare System to enable all veterans living in remote areas to obtain services in their local community healthcare clinic and avoid the expense and fatigue of travel. Ms. Nations concluded, saying collaboration will help veterans with jobs and to keep in touch with national resources.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.