

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 11, 2014

3:32 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Peter Micciche, Chair  
Senator Cathy Giessel, Vice Chair  
Senator Dennis Egan  
Senator Click Bishop  
Senator Lyman Hoffman

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 98

"An Act relating to Department of Public Safety regulations allowing village public safety officers to carry firearms."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 98

SHORT TITLE: VPSO FIREARMS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) OLSON

04/05/13	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/05/13	(S)	CRA, STA
02/11/14	(S)	CRA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SENATOR DONALD OLSON  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska,

**POSITION STATEMENT:** SB 98 Sponsor.

DAVID SCOTT, Staff for Senator Olson  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided an overview of SB 98.

COLONEL JAMES COCKRELL, Director  
Alaska State Troopers  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Stated that the Alaska State Troopers supports SB 98.

TERRY VRABEC, Deputy Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Public Safety  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Stated that the Alaska Department of Public Safety supports SB 98.

GARY FOLGER, Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Public Safety  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports SB 98.

SERGEANT JODY POTTS, VPSO Director  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports SB 98.

ANNE SEARS, Representative  
Public Safety Employees Association  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports SB 98.

KATHIE WASSERMAN, representing herself  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports SB 98.

JOY HUNTINGTON, Representative  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports SB 98.

MIKE COONS, representing himself  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Did not indicate a position on SB 98.

JOE MASTERS, representing himself  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supports SB 98.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:32:33 PM](#)

**CHAIR PETER MICCICHE** called the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Egan, Bishop, Vice-Chair Giessel, and Chair Micciche.

CHAIR MICCICHE welcomed Senator Olson to the meeting.

**SB 98-VPSO FIREARMS**

[3:33:23 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE announced that the purpose of the meeting is to hear SB 98; an act relating to the Alaska Department of Public Safety (DPS) regulations allowing Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO) to carry firearms. He noted that Senator Olson is the bill's sponsor. He said it is his intent to not pass SB 98 out of committee at today's meeting. He specified that public testimony and committee discussion will commence today. He said SB 98 will be back before the committee at the next scheduled meeting.

[3:33:51 PM](#)

SENATOR HOFFMAN joined the committee meeting.

[3:34:01 PM](#)

SENATOR DONALD OLSON, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, bill sponsor, introduced SB 98. He said part of the reason why he brought SB 98 forward is because over the last several years, as we have seen our society become more and more violent, there has been more and more violence against the VPSO in particular. He disclosed that there have been two deaths in the Bristol Bay area and areas outside of his district. He specified that in his district, District T, there were two bouts with force that involved a gun and resulted in a VPSO being severely injured. He said the recent incidences is reason it is about time that SB 98 be brought forward in order to go ahead and try and remedy the situation where VPSOs on the front lines have little backup. He asserted that SB 98 will provide protection for VPSOs to defend themselves as well as community members. He explained that in regulation a prohibition exists against VPSOs having and carrying firearms. He explained that SB 98 will take away the prohibition and allow individual "nonprofits" to decide for their respective boroughs whether to go ahead and allow their VPSO to carry firearms.

[3:35:47 PM](#)

DAVID SCOTT, Staff for Senator Olson, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, informed the committee that SB 98 clearly establishes the legislature's intent that VPSOs be allowed to carry firearms. He said SB 98 sets forth that VPSOs would have to meet satisfactory training requirements. He noted that since SB 98 was introduced during the 2013 legislative session, DPS has drafted regulations to allow properly trained VPSOs to carry firearms while on duty. The regulations also detail training and oversight requirements. He said passage of SB 98 will make the state's support clear and unambiguous for allowing VPSOs to carry firearms.

MR. SCOTT recounted that in March 2013, there was a horrible incident where an unarmed VPSO in Manokotak was shot and killed, leaving a lot of folks very disturbed in the area as well as around the state. He said the Manokotak incident was also a reminder of the 1986 slaying of another VPSO in the Bristol Bay region of Naknek. He set forth that VPSOs often work without backup in remote locations where a call to the Alaska State Troopers (AST) can mean hours or days before backup arrives.

He asserted that Senator Olson feels that it is not reasonable to continue to ask VPSOs to walk unarmed into situations that pose obvious personal danger. He added that it is the sponsor's hope that arming the first responders will have a deterrent effect in providing safety to VPSOs and communities. He informed the committee that SB 98 does not require VPSOs to be armed. He noted that while the state funds the VPSO program, provides officer training and administrative support, it is Alaska's regional native associations that hire VPSOs and work with the communities where they are posted. He asserted that the wishes of individual communities must be respected and everyone involved must have a thorough understanding of the issue surrounding VPSOs, which is why there is no mandatory language inside the bill.

[3:38:23 PM](#)

He revealed that Senator Olson's office as well as the sponsor in the other body's office was notified last week of a VPSO program oversight that DPS is in the process of rectifying. He informed the committee that Colonel Cockrell will address the specific issue. He added that Deputy Commissioner Vrabec will provide detailed information about the VPSO weapons training program that the DPS will administer.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked for a summary regarding VPSO work session and stakeholder meeting that occurred.

MR. SCOTT replied that he has listened to a portion of the meeting and read the sponsor's companion bill. He stated that he will provide a summary to the committee at the next meeting.

CHAIR MICCICHE replied that a summary would be helpful in understanding the point of view of those most exposed to the VPSO program on a daily basis.

[3:40:44 PM](#)

COLONEL JAMES COCKRELL, Director, Alaska State Troopers, Anchorage, Alaska, supports SB 98.

[3:40:55 PM](#)

TERRY VRABEC, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Public Safety, Juneau, Alaska, supports SB 98.

COLONEL COCKRELL addressed the situation pertaining to a current VPSO that has a felony conviction, something that is against the regulations. He noted that he will explain the kind of procedures that DPS has taken to follow up on the issue. He recounted that he reviewed the individual's when the felony issue was brought to his attention. During the file review he noted that DPS had given the nonprofit a waiver to allow the person to be hired as a VPSO. He specified that the individual was charged on several counts in 1999 and eventually pleaded out to third degree assault in 2000. He explained that the DPS Commissioner referred to a provision that allowed for a waiver. He noted that the provision did not specify waiver allowance. He noted that the DPS Commissioner provided the nonprofit with a waiver to hire the individual with a felony and the individual is still employed as a VPSO. He set forth that referencing the incident was done to make sure that DPS was transparent and open with the discovery.

[3:43:01 PM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL asked if DPS will put in place criteria for psychological testing and background checks to permit weapons to be carried. She said she is not opposed to the bill, but asserted that there is going to have to be more screening and training.

COLONEL COCKRELL replied that DPS is in favor of arming VPSOs. He concurred that there is going to be a process that will be different than unarmed VPSOs, including different psychological tests, polygraph, strict firearms training in addition to the

current use of force training provided at the Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA).

SENATOR GIESSEL asked to confirm that the AST training happens in Sitka.

COLONEL COCKRELL answered correct.

SENATOR GIESSEL asked to clarify that VPSOs receive part of the AST training. She asked exactly what the VPSO training entails.

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MR. VRABEC confirmed that DPS' PSTA is located in Sitka. He said municipal officers, state agency officers like park rangers, as well as AST are trained at PSTA. He set forth that DPS is very proud of PSTA and the training program. He said VPSOs are also trained at PSTA as a separate academy. The VPSO candidates receive similar training, but VPSOs do a lot more than some of the traditional law enforcement. He specified that VPSOs receive extensive fire, search and rescue, and additional medical training over a 10 week period with an additional 2 weeks at the Fire Training Academy. He summarized that VPSOs receive 12 weeks total training at PSTA. He said compared to the Municipal Academy, which is more traditional law enforcement, the training period is 15 to 18 weeks and is dependent on the type of officer. He specified that the Municipal Academy is a 900 plus hour academy where the VPSO Academy is approximately 600 plus hours.

He referenced SB 98 and noted that DPS supports the bill. He noted talking to PSTA's Commander regarding the addition of firearms training for VPSOs. He specified that the current firearms training is more than firearm use, there is a lot of training that goes into teaching someone carrying a weapon when not to shoot. He explained that when PSTA talks about the use of deadly force, there is a continuum for the moment a hand is laid on someone to place under arrest up to the various tools that an officer or trooper may have on their belt. He added that there is a lot of training besides just the range training that an officer must meet and PSTA will be just as adamant with VPSOs. MR. VRABEC said to be qualified to carry a firearm an individual must pass the firearms training and there will be no rubber-stamped certification for candidates. He asserted that the PSTA takes the use of deadly force very seriously and the training process is very important to PSTA. He pointed out that the PSTA Commander is very adamant that he and his staff can develop a good and safe training program.

3:47:33 PM

SENATOR HOFFMAN asked if PSTA is the only academy where individuals can receive firearms training.

MR. VRABEC replied that there are two other academies: the Anchorage Police Department and the University of Alaska-Fairbanks runs an accredited law enforcement academy. He noted that both academies are also approved by the Alaska Police Standards Council as well as PSTA.

SENATOR HOFFMAN asked that in order to save on expenses would the existing VPSOs be able to get training in Anchorage since they already received their other training PSTA.

MR. VRABEC answered that the topic could be discussed, but asserted that his answer is no because some of the equipment, training, and staff is specific to PSTA in Sitka. He said DPS can better train VPSOs at PSTA in Sitka.

SENATOR EGAN addressed training hours and noted that Mr. Vrabec said 600 hours is currently required for the basic VPSO training. He asked if the VPSO firearms training will entail additional training.

MR. VRABEC answered yes. He said the added firearms training will be a couple of weeks, but the exact hours has not been determined.

CHAIR MICCICHE clarified that the VPSO is a village's first-responder rather than a police officer. He asked to verify that the VPSO receives firefighting as well as law enforcement training.

3:50:15 PM

MR. VRABEC replied yes. He noted that VPSO receive some training that police officers do not receive.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if VPSO training includes nonlethal solutions.

MR. VRABEC answered yes. He specified that VPSO training does not involve firearms to this point. He noted that VPSOs have several tools on their belt and are force-continuum trained for the use of handcuffs, pepper spray devices, or Taser devices.

CHAIR MICCICHE noted that any non-felon Alaskan that passes a background check can carry a weapon in the state of Alaska. He said there clearly is a liability issue. He asked if there had been actions against the state for liability due to an injury or fatality caused by an unarmed VPSO being in a bad situation.

MR. VRABEC replied that he was not aware of past liability issues and asked the Colonel Cockrell for his input.

3:52:03 PM

COLONEL COCKRELL answered that he does not have direct knowledge of any lawsuits initiated by a VPSO arrest.

SENATOR GIESSEL noted Chair Micciche's question and asked to clarify that VPSOs are employees of the native corporations and not employees of the state. She inquired why the state would carry the VPSO liability.

COLONEL COCKRELL specified that when DPS enters an agreement with the nonprofits, they sign a release saying that they are responsible for VPSO liability. He pointed out that he is not an attorney and hates to get into answering what the state's liabilities are. He noted that DPS is married to the VPSO program by providing oversight and training. He set forth that he is unable to answer questions regarding state liability from VPSO actions.

SENATOR HOFFMAN addressed the liability issue and noted that the question has come up in the past. He specified that public safety is the responsibility of the state. He said the state is contracting with the nonprofits to provide a service on behalf of the state of Alaska. He noted that the issue of liability has come up and in his opinion is unanswered. He pointed out the fact that the native corporations are providing a service on behalf of the state of Alaska at a much reduced cost in lieu of a trooper, something that the corporations understand and are more than willing to provide.

CHAIR MICCICHE noted that great points were brought up. He clarified that his liability inquiry was brought up to address the possibility for the proliferation of VPSO liability suits in the past and possibly the future where people go for the deepest-pockets. He asked Mr. Vrabec if a VPSO video overview will be presented to the committee.

MR. VRABEC confirmed that his intent is to have the VPSO presentation at the next meeting.

[3:55:44 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP announced that he had one question for DPS Commissioner Folger. He addressed a quote from former DPS Commissioner Masters where he said he was offended by the suggestions that the character and quality of VPSOs is such that they cannot safely be allowed to carry firearms in the course of their duties. He asked DPS Commissioner Folger if he concurred with former Commissioner Masters' assessment.

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GARY FOLGER, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Public Safety, Anchorage, Alaska, answered that he does concur.

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CHAIR MICCICHE opened public testimony.

[3:57:18 PM](#)

SERGEANT JODY POTTS, VPSO Director, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), Fairbanks, Alaska, supports SB 98. She said she agreed with previous testimony that there has been an increase in the level of violent crime and officer assaults. She stated that SB 98 is important and noted her background as a VPSO in addition to growing up in a village. She noted her support for SB 98 as a necessity for VPSO safety, but pointed out her reservations concerning the screening process. She detailed that VPSOs are not armed and individuals go through a very basic criminal background checked. VPSO candidates are interviewed by the nonprofit where a decision is made whether or not to hire. She asked that the VPSO standards be raised to include a screening process to address mental and physical fitness, especially to address liability concerns for the nonprofits. She said she has full faith in the VPSO training at PSTA. She noted her past training experience at PSTA was very high quality and prepares VPSOs for work done out in the field. She asserted that there is a lot that is expected of VPSOs and SB 98 will further the quality and possibilities for rural Alaskans and their public safety measures.

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ANNE SEARS, Representative, Public Safety Employees Association, Anchorage, Alaska, noted that she has been a State Trooper for 13 years and spent 11 years in the Bush; 7 years in Nome and 4 years in Galena. She said she has had the privilege of overseeing and working with VPSOs in Nome and Galena. She read the following prepared statement:

I am speaking to the committee in support of not only the training of armed VPSOs to the standard of other certified police officers, but the rigorous background and psychological "vetting" that should accompany the training of an armed VPSO. Being a certified police officer is an incredible responsibility. I carry a gun and a badge, and am authorized to shoot in defense of the life of others and of myself; it is a responsibility I assume every day when I go to work and I do not take lightly. I did go through one week of handgun training when I was at PSTA; it was a week of intense training, but it wasn't only just the one week. During the entire PSTA, which when I went through for the troopers was 17 weeks all together back in 2001, during the entire PSTA training, the use of force-continuum was emphasized from a certified police officer's mere presence, which is at the low end of the use of force-continuum to the use through the use of deadly force; it was reemphasized with scenarios, not just one week of handgun training, but every week. We were shown, lectured about, and listened to audio about shoot and don't shoot real life situations which we may encounter as troopers and police officers every day. Not only the one week of handgun training and then the everyday emphasis of use of force, we also went through defensive tactics and that's not just in defense of ourselves, defense of others, but also weapon retention, learning how to hold on to our weapons, regain our weapons if ever in the off chance came that we did lose our weapons. As you all know, we did lose a police officer in Kenai who was shot with his own weapon, I think it was five or six years ago. After PSTA, I had 14 weeks of field training; that field training is with an experienced, certified police officer. I was exposed daily to stressful, sometimes potential lethal situations. I had the benefit, even after field training, of having those experienced officers, not only to back me up, but debrief after high risk calls I was exposed to. Now after 13 years of being a trooper, I have the benefit of working side-by-side with other men and women who have had the same training at PSTA as I had, the same field training as I had after PSTA, and can trust their decision making because of their training and their experience. If VPSOs are armed, they need to be afforded the same training and experiences as I and other fellow, certified police officers have received.

In order to bear the responsibility of the use of deadly force, they need the same intense background investigation and training as any other certified police officer; that is what we should expect of our VPSOs if we arm them, the training and experience in order to bear the responsibility of the use of deadly force, but the same background and training as any other certified police officer we can reasonably trust we are safe, that they are safe, and the public that they serve and we serve are safe as well. If we don't give the VPSOs the training and experience they are entitled to, the state and corporations expose themselves to liabilities in a case of wrongful death or even injury because of their actions. I feel that if we train the VPSOs, give them their arms, and we train the VPSOs to use those handguns, I think the state does bear a responsibility, not just the nonprofits that hire them in their different regions.

[4:05:13 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE announced that Ms. Sears was roughly double over her time limit.

MS. SEARS summarized as follows:

Certified police officers bear a heavy responsibility. Every day we go to work we bear the awesome responsibility of life or death. We are vetted and then trained to be able to bear the responsibility. We do not take it lightly. We have the intestinal fortitude with which to bear that responsibility.

CHAIR MICCICHE noted that the police officer Ms. Sears mentioned in Kenai was John Watson, a good friend and a good man.

[4:06:38 PM](#)

KATHIE WASSERMAN, representing herself, Juneau, Alaska, supports SB 98. She added that her organization has not taken a committed stand on SB 98 and the topic will be discussed next week. She surmised that many in her organization are in support of SB 98. She noted her background as a mayor of two remote communities that used the VPSO program. She added that her husband taught Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and first aid at PSTA. She noted the 25 year problem with the VPSO program where the VPSO is the only person in town with a stick and everyone else has a gun. She noted difficulty in the VPSO position where the individual has to respond to fires, EMS, domestic disputes, and

situations involving alcohol. She asserted that additional training will be required should SB 98 pass. She remarked that public safety is one of the main tenants of government.

4:09:20 PM

JOY HUNTINGTON, Representative, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks, Alaska, supports SB 98. She commended Sargent Potts for her excellent job testifying earlier and noted that she has done a great job while acting as an amazing role model across the state for young women everywhere. She commended Senator Olson for sponsoring SB 98. She revealed that the TCC's board passed a resolution that supports the safety of VPSOs and commends the state of Alaska for recognizing the need for improved safety measures through legislation to arm VPSOs for their safety and the safety of communities. She noted the VPSOs receive retirement from the entity they are working for, but not from the state. She asserted that VPSOs put their lives on the line while their families are not fully protected. She called attention to the positive working relationship between DPS and TCC. She revealed her difficulty of growing up in a village without a VPSO. She said an armed VPSO will change the dynamics in a community and dispel wrongful intent. She summarized that SB 98 will directly save lives and help people.

4:12:53 PM

MIKE COONS, representing himself, Palmer, Alaska, said he submitted two letters for the record. He pointed out to the committee that he had acted as a VPSO in Hooper Bay. He voiced his concern for VPSO administrative protocol in the event a VPSO uses a weapon. He noted the expense the state is bearing for the VPSO program and asked that the nonprofit corporations pay for more due to the direct impact on the native community.

4:15:48 PM

JOE MASTERS, representing himself, Anchorage, Alaska, supports SB 98. He noted that he was the DPS Commissioner for the past five years and was involved for 32 years. He said he served as started a VPSO in the village of Unalakleet, municipal officer in Unalaska, state trooper for 20 years, and then DPS Commissioner for five years. He detailed that his responsibility as DPS Commissioner entailed oversight for both the Uniform Division as well as the VPSO program.

MR. MASTERS divulged that he was one of two DPS Commissioners that served when a VPSO was lost in the line of duty. He said over the past 35 years, VPSOs are asked to respond to criminal offenses and act as law enforcement officers in the most remote

communities with the possibility for very little immediate backup. He noted that VPSOs respond to the same types of offences and incidences that police officers respond to on a daily basis. He remarked that misdemeanor incidences or violation offenses can quickly escalate into lethal events that require VPSOs to defend themselves. He asserted that lethal events do not give VPSOs the luxury of calling for backup or allow for retreat. He noted the slow but steady increase in the uses of force against police officers and VPSOs in Alaska. VPSOs are experiencing serious assaults at the average of one per month over the last couple of years with approximately seven incidences involving suspects directly threatening officers with firearms. He called attention to the following incidences:

- Murder of VPSO Thomas Madole in Manokotak who was responding to a misdemeanor in March 2013.
- Southwest Alaska VSPOs assaulted with a shotgun where one VPSO took pellets in the face.
- Northwest Arctic VPSO was responding to an intoxicated individual where the individual pointed an AR-15 at the VPSO.

He said the types of offenses against VPSOs in communities are escalating. He noted that assaults against Alaska police officers have increased 66 percent for injury assaults and 137 percent for non-injury assaults since 2002.

[4:19:55 PM](#)

He pointed out that the concept of arming VPSOs is not new and noted that VPSOs could be armed when he started as a VPSO in 1982. He revealed that some villages had taken on additional liability insurance for their VPSOs. He said the practice of arming VPSOs ended in the mid to late 1980s. He pointed out that police officers are not the only officers or employees of the state that carry firearms as a regular part of their duties. In downtown Anchorage there are armed security guards that are trained and certified to carry firearms on a daily basis with no incidents reported. He said to think that only certified police officers can carry handguns is not a very good stance to take nor would it be accurate to assume that only certified police officers can safely carry firearms in the performance of their duties.

MR. MASTERS set forth that there are three things that can be done as follows:

1. We do nothing and keep it status quo.

2. Minimize risk by not placing VPSOs in the position of responding to the types of offenses that could end up taking their lives.
3. Take the steps necessary to allow VPSOs to be armed.

He asserted that allowing VPSOs to be armed is the right way and really the only realistic way to move forward at this point. He said he had the honor of attending the funeral services of Thomas Madole and going through the services solidified in his mind that the state of decline requires VPSOs to be armed.

He summarized that the VPSO program is changing, the demands in the communities are changing, and what the VPSOs are facing is certainly changing. He asserted that the reason why SB 98 and the companion bill are receiving such broad support is because it is the right thing to do.

[4:23:04 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE noted that he allowed Mr. Masters to present his full message due to his background with the VPSO program.

SENATOR HOFFMAN thanked Mr. Masters for taking time out of his private life to come and testify before the committee. He said the VPSO program is a very important issue to rural Alaska. He declared gratitude for Mr. Master's public service commitment and dedication to Alaska's public safety on behalf of the 62 communities that he represents today and the 150 communities that he represented in the past.

CHAIR MICCICHE announced that no other members are signed up to testify. He noted that the bill's fiscal note does include additional liability insurance, if calculated on a per-armed VPSO basis the liability insurance seems to be sufficient.

[4:24:49 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE announced that SB 98 will be held until the next committee meeting.

SENATOR BISHOP stated that he had a question for Deputy Commissioner Vrabec and a comment. He asked what would be the protocol should there be a firearm discharge from a VPSO.

MR. VRABEC replied that regardless whether it was a VPSO or any type of shooting, DPS is going to respond respectively and do a full investigation. DPS takes any type firearms discharge very seriously whether it was a hunting issue or a fishing issue. He

asserted that there is no doubt that the public is owed an investigation involving an officer shooting a firearm.

SENATOR BISHOP commented that he supports VPSOs receive their training at PSTA in Sitka where the troopers receive their training.

MR. VRABEC replied that he thanked Senator Bishop for his support and asserted his belief at the moment that VPSO training at PSTA in Sitka is the best choice.

CHAIR MICCICHE addressed the VPSO's other duties and asked if some of the villages have a team approach with search and rescue training. He also asked about various training that is offered to VSPOs.

[4:26:39 PM](#)

MR. VRABEC replied that the Sitka Academy offers a lot of different trainings in different areas throughout the year. He noted that DPS, police departments, and the Alaska Police Standards Council offer trainings that VPSOs are allowed to attend. He explained that VPSOs are not officially on the Special Response Team, but the VPSOs do respond with AST on a regular basis to calls in hundreds of areas with some being very serious.

CHAIR MICCICHE thanked everyone for their testimony. [SB 98 was held in committee.]

[4:27:29 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Micciche adjourned the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee at 4:27 p.m.