

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE

March 21, 2014

1:37 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Bert Stedman, Chair
Senator Peter Micciche, Vice Chair
Senator Kevin Meyer

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Pete Kelly
Senator Johnny Ellis

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 263(HSS)
"An Act extending the Alaska senior benefits payment program."

- MOVED CSHB 263(HSS) OUT OF COMMITTEE

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 25(MLV)
Urging the United States Congress to restore the presumption of a service connection for Agent Orange exposure to United States Veterans who served in the waters defined by and in the airspace over the combat zone in Vietnam.

- MOVED CSHJR 25(MLV) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 263

SHORT TITLE: EXTEND SENIOR BENEFITS PAYMENT PROGRAM

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HAWKER

| | | |
|----------|-----|--|
| 01/21/14 | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 01/21/14 | (H) | HSS, FIN |
| 02/04/14 | (H) | HSS AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106 |
| 02/04/14 | (H) | Moved CSHB 263(HSS) Out of Committee |
| 02/04/14 | (H) | MINUTE(HSS) |
| 02/05/14 | (H) | HSS RPT CS(HSS) NT 7DP |
| 02/05/14 | (H) | DP: SEATON, REINBOLD, PRUITT, KELLER, NAGEAK, TARR, HIGGINS |
| 02/18/14 | (H) | FIN AT 1:30 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519 |
| 02/18/14 | (H) | Moved CSHB 263(HSS) Out of Committee |

02/18/14 (H) MINUTE(FIN)
02/19/14 (H) FIN RPT CS(HSS) NT 10DP
02/19/14 (H) DP: HOLMES, MUNOZ, THOMPSON, EDGMON,
T.WILSON, GUTTENBERG, GARA, COSTELLO,
02/19/14 (H) STOLTZE, AUSTERMAN
02/26/14 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
02/26/14 (H) VERSION: CSHB 263(HSS)
02/28/14 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/28/14 (S) HSS, FIN
03/12/14 (S) HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/12/14 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --
03/14/14 (S) HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/14/14 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --
03/19/14 (S) HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/19/14 (S) Heard & Held
03/19/14 (S) MINUTE(HSS)
03/21/14 (S) HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: HJR 25

SHORT TITLE: VIETNAM VETS: SERVICE-RELATED DISEASES

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) LEDOUX

02/03/14 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/03/14 (H) MLV
02/18/14 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120
02/18/14 (H) Moved CSHJR 25(MLV) Out of Committee
02/18/14 (H) MINUTE(MLV)
02/19/14 (H) MLV RPT CS(MLV) 7DP
02/19/14 (H) DP: GRUENBERG, HIGGINS, SADDLER,
REINBOLD, HUGHES, LEDOUX, FOSTER
03/10/14 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
03/10/14 (H) VERSION: CSHJR 25(MLV)
03/12/14 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/12/14 (S) HSS, STA
03/19/14 (S) HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/19/14 (S) Heard & Held
03/19/14 (S) MINUTE(HSS)
03/21/14 (S) HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

CECILE ELLIOT, Staff
Representative Hawker
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an overview of HB 263.

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HJR 25.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:37:32 PM](#)

CHAIR BERT STEDMAN called the Senate Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:37 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Micciche, Meyer, and Chair Stedman.

CHAIR STEDMAN reviewed the agenda.

HB 263-EXTEND SENIOR BENEFITS PAYMENT PROGRAM

[1:38:01 PM](#)

CHAIR STEDMAN announced that HB 263 is before the committee. He noted it was the second hearing on the bill and the intent is to look to the will of the committee.

CECILE ELLIOT, Staff, Representative Hawker, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided an overview of HB 263. She related that HB 263 extends the Senior Benefit Program for six years. If the bill were not to pass, the program would sunset in June 2015. The program currently serves 11,000 seniors and is based on income. Seniors who qualify receive payments of \$125, \$175, or \$205 per month. She said the sponsor feels as though this is a very important program and serves a vulnerable population of Alaska.

CHAIR STEDMAN noted one fiscal note from the Department of Health and Social Services for \$23 million in general funds for FY 15, with estimated costs for the out years. The funding is already included in the Governor's FY 15 budget.

He said the committee has held public testimony.

[1:40:00 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE commented that he strongly supports the bill and cross-sponsored it today on the floor.

SENATOR MEYER asked why the program is extended for six years.

MS. ELLIOT answered that Representative Hawker felt that it was important to assure this population that the program would

continue, and to allow enough time to re-assess the state's financial situation.

SENATOR MEYER noted the program's intent and fiscal ramifications. He had some reservations about a program this expensive extending six years.

[1:41:49 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE moved to report CS for HB 263, version U, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note.

[1:42:03 PM](#)

CHAIR STEDMAN announced, without objection, CSHB 263(HSS) is moved to the next committee of referral.

HJR 25-VIETNAM VETS: SERVICE-RELATED DISEASES

[1:42:23 PM](#)

CHAIR STEDMAN announced that HJR 25 was before the committee. He said the intent is to bring the resolution back for further review and look to the will of the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HJR 25, read the following statement:

HJR 25 is a step towards fixing a bureaucratic lapse in our treatment of Vietnam Veterans. Currently, only soldiers who had boots on the ground during the conflict are eligible for benefits related to their exposure to Agent Orange. Basically, HJR 25 fixes this.

CHAIR STEDMAN noted one zero fiscal note from the Legislature and announced that public testimony was closed.

[1:44:14 PM](#)

SENATOR MEYER moved to report CS for HJR 25, version U, from committee with individual recommendations and attached zero fiscal note.

CHAIR STEDMAN announced that without objection, CSHJR 25(MLV) is moved to the next committee of referral.

CHAIR STEDMAN reviewed the upcoming committee calendar.

[1:45:44 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stedman adjourned the Senate Health and Social Services Standing Committee hearing at 1:45 p.m.