

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 31, 2016

8:15 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Bob Lynn, Chair
Representative Wes Keller, Vice Chair
Representative David Talerico
Representative Liz Vazquez
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Ivy Spohnholz

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Louise Stutes

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 30

Urging the American Psychiatric Association to change the term "post-traumatic stress disorder" or "PTSD" to "post-traumatic stress injury" or "PTSI"; and urging the governor to support usage of the term "post-traumatic stress injury."

- MOVED CSHJR 30(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

Alaska Police Standards Council

Carrie Belden - Anchorage
John Papasodora - Nome
Bryce Johnson - Juneau
Kelly Swihart - Petersburg

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

State Commission for Human Rights

Brandon Nakasato - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Alaska Public Offices Commission

Thomas Temple - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Parole Board

Steve Meyer - Kenai
Jason Wilson - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 269

"An Act adding the commissioner of military and veterans affairs to the membership of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault."

- MOVED CSHB 269(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 30

SHORT TITLE: POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HERRON

02/19/16	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/16	(H)	MLV, STA
03/15/16	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/15/16	(H)	Heard & Held
03/15/16	(H)	MINUTE (MLV)
03/22/16	(H)	MLV AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/22/16	(H)	Moved CSHJR 30(MLV) Out of Committee
03/22/16	(H)	MINUTE (MLV)
03/23/16	(H)	MLV RPT CS (MLV) NT 6DP 1NR
03/23/16	(H)	DP: SPOHNHOLZ, TUCK, LEDOUX, COLVER, HUGHES, HERRON
03/23/16	(H)	NR: LYNN
03/24/16	(H)	STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/24/16	(H)	Scheduled but Not Heard
03/31/16	(H)	STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 269

SHORT TITLE: MVA COMMISSIONER MEMBER OF CDVSA

SPONSOR(S): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/20/16	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/20/16	(H)	STA, FIN
03/31/16	(H)	STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE BOB HERRON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HJR 30, as prime sponsor.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HJR 30.

CARRIE BELDEN, Appointee
Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

JOHN PAPASODORA, Appointee
Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC)
Nome, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

BRYCE JOHNSON, Appointee
Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

BRANDON NAKASATO, Appointee
State Commission for Human Rights
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights.

THOMAS TEMPLE, Appointee
Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Public Offices Commission.

STEVE MEYER, Appointee
Parole Board
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Parole Board.

JASON WILSON, Appointee
Parole Board
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Parole Board.

KELLY SWIHART, Appointee
Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC)
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

RON CLARKE, Legislative Liaison
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 269 on behalf of the House Rules Standing Committee, sponsor, by request of the governor.

LAURIE HUMMEL, Adjutant General/Commissioner
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 269.

BRENDA STANFILL
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 269.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:14:27 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR WES KELLER called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:15 a.m. Representatives Spohnholz, Talerico, Keller, and Vazquez were present at the call to order. Representatives Kreiss-Tomkins and Lynn arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HJR 30-POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY

[8:15:09 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR KELLER announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 30, Urging the American Psychiatric Association to change the term "post-traumatic stress disorder" or "PTSD" to "post-traumatic stress injury" or

"PTSI"; and urging the governor to support usage of the term "post-traumatic stress injury."

[Before the committee was CSHJR 30(MLV).]

[8:15:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BOB HERRON, Alaska State Legislature, presented HJR 30 as prime sponsor. He relayed that the proposed resolution is an issue affecting many people, and it would serve as a conversation starter. He advised that post-traumatic stress is caused by an event, such as combat, rape, child abuse, or other traumas. He said that the symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, insomnia, and suicidal thoughts.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON offered that to some people the current label of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) represents a stigma suggesting an untreatable condition even though it is a treatable injury. The implied request within HJR 30 is for the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to consider changing the term "post-traumatic stress disorder" to "post-traumatic stress injury" in the next revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). He conceded that opinions exist on both sides of the issue of changing the terminology and reiterated that the proposed legislation will encourage conversation about an important issue. He added that HJR 30 urges the Alaska Congressional Delegation to champion the terminology in ways it sees fit, and it would designate June 27, 2016 the PTSI Awareness Day.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON concluded by saying that he is in support of an amendment to be offered by Representative Lynn, and advised that this resolution is not about changing the current award qualifications for a Purple Heart.

[8:18:07 AM](#)

ROBERT DOEHL, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), identified himself as a retired colonel, and testified in support of HJR 30 in that it addresses a condition affecting thousands of Alaskans. He relayed that of the 74,000 veterans in Alaska, 57,000 have seen combat, and past experience has revealed that as many as 30 percent, or 19,000 Alaskans, are likely to suffer from some degree of post-traumatic combat stress. He went on to say that PTSD does not only impact veterans as tens of thousands of family members are

also affected by injuries to their loved ones and the subsequent disruption to daily life. He said that the [19,000] he mentioned excludes the tens of thousands of active military serving in Alaska and their families.

[8:19:25 AM](#)

COLONEL DOEHL related that within his career, he often deals with those struggling with PTSI - beginning when he was an 18-year-old infantry medic through to his retirement as a vice wing commander a few decades later. As an attorney, he related, while at the U.S. Department of Justice, he worked with hundreds of PTSI survivors dealing with aviation accidents, and while in the State of Alaska, Office of the Attorney General, he worked with sexual assault survivors. Speaking from first-hand experience, he said he has seen that PTSI takes a continuous devastating toll if not treated, and asserted that many victims can't hold down jobs, become estranged from their families, or lose their lives.

COLONEL DOEHL opined that the term "disorder" implies a deviation from normal and exacerbates a stigma that discourages diagnosis and treatment. He stated that PTSI does not arise from a genetic condition or from personal values and decisions, and that PTSI is not a disorder in an individual but the result of an externally imposed event or events. He added that PTSI is a natural response to an unnatural situation and declared that the time was well past to rename the condition to accurately reflect that it is caused by an external force.

COLONEL DOEHL referred to the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs hearing on HJR 30 [March 22, 2016], in which Representative Lynn voiced concern that some veterans may claim PTSD as an excuse for their actions. He remarked that when there is a battle field injury, it is inexcusable not to provide assistance to a downed battle buddy. He said, to the extent calling post-traumatic stress a disorder discourages calling for aid, changing it from "disorder" to "injury" makes it clear the appropriate action is treatment - not just living with it or making it an excuse. He went on to say that Canada, shortly after [the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001], changed its military regulations to refer to post-traumatic stress as an injury, not a disorder to encourage seeking treatment.

COLONEL DOEHL, on behalf of the DMVA, welcomed the efforts of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs on

this matter of vital importance to the state's veterans, service members, their families, and all of society.

8:21:29 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER after ascertaining no one further wished to testify, closed public testimony on HJR 30.

8:22:01 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ related that she serves on the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs and had the privilege of listening to the testimony of Colonel Doehl and leaders from [the nonprofit] Honor for All. She related that she was impressed with their commitment in helping people recognize that PTSD is something from which one suffers and does not indicate something is intrinsically wrong with the victim. She offered that if changing the title from "disorder" to "injury" can help any of our military veterans seek the services to help them recover from it, then she thinks that would be fantastic.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ relayed her personal experience in adopting a child who underwent a great deal of trauma as a young person who has experienced many of the symptoms mentioned, including flashbacks, hypervigilance, nightmares, emotional numbness, and anxiety. Through treatment, her daughter has been able to recover from many of the symptoms. She added that while her daughter will probably never be the person she would have been had she not experienced the trauma, that personal experience for Representative Spohnholz has been a great example that treatment can help people overcome the effects of PTSD and become healthy and happy people. She expressed her desire for the military veterans, who have experienced traumatic stress as a result of their service to the country, to be able to find that kind of healing and happiness. She added that it is a dignity they deserve and she is excited to support the proposed resolution.

8:23:49 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO made a motion to adopt Amendment 1 [labeled 29-LS1483\N.1, Shutts, 3/28/16], which read:

Page 3, following line 13:
Insert new material to read:

"WHEREAS this resolution does not advocate changing the current qualifications for the Purple Heart; and"

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER objected for purposes of discussion.

[8:24:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO mentioned that Amendment 1 adds a section on page 3 that read: "Whereas this resolution does not advocate changing the current qualifications for the Purple Heart. He offered his understanding that the sponsor agrees with the proposed amendment. He relayed that between his two older brothers, both Vietnam War veterans, are four Purple Hearts, a Silver Star awarded by the U.S. Marine Corp, and a U.S. Navy Commendation Medal. He stated that he appreciates their service.

[8:25:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER removed his objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[8:26:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO moved to report CSHJR 30(MLV), as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and zero fiscal note.

[8:26:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER objected. He stated he is sympathetic to the issue but disagrees with using the word "injury" because it muddies the meaning of the term and opens the door to legal interpretation. He removed his objection. There being no further objection, CSHJR 30(STA) was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[8:28:59 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:29 a.m. to 8:31 a.m.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

[8:31:28 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN announced that the next order of business would be the confirmation hearing of the various boards and commissions.

Alaska Police Standards Council

8:32:07 AM

CARRIE BELDEN, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC), said that she is currently the director of the Division of Probation and Parole, Department of Corrections (DOC). She relayed that she was born and raised in Alaska, and that Alaska remains home for her, her immediate family, and her extended family. She offered her wish to be reappointed to the Alaska Police Standards Council in order to support her community and make it a safer place.

MS. BELDON advised that she began working for DOC in 2004 as a Probation Officer I, was promoted to supervisor, and assisted in the training unit for the largest probation office in the state. She continued by saying that she transferred to the Parole Board, became supervisor of the Parole Board, then promoted to director of the Parole Board, and was then asked to be director of the Division of Probation and Parole. Ms. Beldon said that she has attended various trainings, is a member of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), and completed the NIC executive excellence program. She mentioned that she has attended a couple of APSC meetings. She stated her belief that it is important work, and related that she would like to be involved.

8:35:04 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER made a motion to advance the confirmation of Carrie Belden, appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council, and added that the vote of the House State Affairs Standing Committee does not indicate approval or disapproval but is a vote to move the name forward to the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

8:35:35 AM

JOHN PAPASODORA, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC), advised he has lived in Alaska for 53 of his 55 years. He relayed that he graduated from the University of Alaska and has been in both state and municipal law enforcement since 1985. He related that he began his career with the Soldotna Police Department and worked there for five years before accepting a

position with the Alaska Department of Public Safety (DPS) as a state trooper. He said he worked for the Division of Alaska State Troopers (AST) for just over 19 years, worked in various locations throughout the state, was promoted to sergeant, worked in the General Investigations Unit, was promoted to lieutenant, and worked in field operations, including emergency operations, homeland security, and the Alaska Bureau of Investigation (ABI). He relayed that he oversaw ABI as a captain until his retirement and he is currently the chief of police in Nome. He related that he has a wide variety of experience with his 31 years of service in law enforcement in the State of Alaska.

MR. PAPASODORA explained that his intent for serving on the Alaska Police Standards Council is to continue building professionalism within the police field and to work with partners in DOC. He pointed out that law enforcement is going through a transition throughout the country, and expressed his desire to be part of the forward movement to help Alaska avoid some of the problems occurring in other places in the nation. He opined that Alaska has a professional base of law enforcement services and that Alaska's criminal justice system is effective compared with other places. He reiterated his desire to continue Alaska's forward momentum in increasing and maintaining professionalism within all criminal justice agencies.

[8:38:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER made a motion to advance the confirmation of John Papasodora, appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council, and added that the vote of the House State Affairs Standing Committee does not indicate approval or disapproval but is a vote to move the name forward to the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

[8:39:34 AM](#)

BRYCE JOHNSON, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC), advised he has been the Chief of Police of the Juneau Police Department (JPD) for just under three years, and that he has three children - one having graduated from Thunder Mountain High School and two teenagers currently attending the high school. He said he worked his way up through the ranks in the Salt Lake City Police Department (SLCPD) and retired with just over 20 years of service before being hired as the Chief of Police at JPD. He offered that SLCPD is similar to the Anchorage Police Department (APD) in size and scope.

CHIEF JOHNSON related that he is excited about APSC and attended one of its meetings. He expressed his belief that law enforcement has had a tough couple of years nationally and that the profession needs improvement; however, he noted that the behavior of officers and their sanctioned actions 25-30 years ago would result in termination today. He offered that crime rates today are at historic lows, citing community oriented policing and other innovations coming out of police departments, and emphasized the importance of ridding police departments of unprofessional police officers. He related that he feels a deep responsibility to his profession to make sure that police officers are the guardians of the public and of the profession of policing.

[8:41:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER made a motion to advance the confirmation of Bryce Johnson, appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council, and added that the vote of the House State Affairs Standing Committee does not indicate approval or disapproval but is a vote to move the name forward to the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

State Commission for Human Rights

[8:42:53 AM](#)

BRANDON NAKASATO, Appointee, State Commission for Human Rights, said that he is currently a research analyst with the Division of Senior and Disability Services (SDS), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). He advised that after college, he served as an AmeriCorps volunteer helping Somali refugees integrate into their new communities in Central Maine. He said he served in a local volunteer human rights organization called the Lewiston-Auburn community task force, a collaboration between the Maine Human Rights Commission, law enforcement, and other local authorities reviewing human rights complaints in Lewiston-Auburn. He pointed to his service on multiple boards involving anti-discrimination and human rights work, including the African Immigrants Association, the African Emigrants Advocacy Group, and the Kentucky Fairness Alliance. He said he currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Friends of Alaska [Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)] and the Friends of the Library, Anchorage.

MR. NAKASATO related that his commitment to human rights is based on his experience in working on matters of social justice and his personal experience and perspective as an ethnic and sexual minority. He stated, "I believe in the inherent equality and dignity of every person, and that the work of the commission in its 53-year history is vital to insuring it is honored as called for by our human rights law."

[8:44:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN asked whether he was advocating for a sexual minority.

MR. NAKASATO reiterated that part of his experience as a commissioner would be his experience and perspective as an ethnic and sexual minority.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER asked for clarification that he is a representative of a sexual minority.

MR. NAKASATO answered that he is gay.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER made a motion to advance the confirmation of Brandon Nakasato, appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights, and added that the vote of the House State Affairs Standing Committee does not indicate approval or disapproval but is a vote to move the name forward to the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

Alaska Public Offices Commission

[8:46:01 AM](#)

THOMAS TEMPLE, Appointee, Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC), said that he is an attorney in Fairbanks, Alaska and would be honored to serve on the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC). He opined that it is important the public have full confidence in the election process, and that transparency and ethics are promoted among candidates and public officials. He said he would be honored to offer his time and talents in accomplishing that mission.

[8:46:57 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN asked Mr. Temple to identify what, in his background, would help him in the political realm.

MR. TEMPLE responded that he is not a particularly political person, although, he said he votes in every election and follows the local and national issues. He related that his relevant background includes his service on the Fairbanks North Star Borough Planning Commission and the Fairbanks Public Safety Commission. He added that as a practicing attorney for 15 years, he would be able to spot issues and address them in a fair manner.

[8:48:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER made a motion to advance the confirmation of Thomas Temple, appointee to the Alaska Public Offices Commission, and added that the vote of the House State Affairs Standing Committee does not indicate approval or disapproval but is a vote to move the name forward to the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

Parole Board

[8:48:25 AM](#)

STEVE MEYER, Appointee, Parole Board, said that he was a 35-year resident of Alaska and lives in Kenai with his wife and dogs. He advised that he began his career in 1991 as a correctional officer and has since retired. He related that he was a corrections officer for five years, a training officer at the Anchorage Correctional Officer Academy for one year, a transportation and training sergeant at the Wildwood Correctional Center, and a probation and parole officer for the last ten years of his career. He mentioned that he also wrote presentence reports for the Superior Court and was a member of the Alaska State troopers Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) for 15 years.

MR. MEYER went on to say that he has a solid background in most aspects of law enforcement and has served on numerous boards and advisory committees in his community. He added that his life experience prior to corrections included work in oil fields, commercial fishing, and construction, and opined that he would bring his experience and knowledge of parole issues and a reasonable voice to the board.

[8:50:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER made a motion to advance the confirmation of Steve Meyer, appointee to the Parole Board, and added that the vote of the House State Affairs Standing Committee does not indicate approval or disapproval but is a vote to move the name forward to the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

[8:51:50 AM](#)

JASON WILSON, Appointee, Parole Board, said he is Tlingit, was born and raised in Juneau, and he has four daughters, ages two through seventeen. He highlighted from his resume the following: he is currently the Village Public Safety Officer Manager for Tlingit Haida Central Council; he previously worked for the Division of Juvenile Justice; he was a youth counselor at Johnson Youth Center for eight years; and he coached softball at Thunder Mountain High School. He said he looks forward to the opportunity to serve Alaska on the Parole Board.

[8:53:18 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN asked Mr. Wilson whether there was anything in tribal law that would help him understand the requirements in state law, particularly with parole issues.

Mr. Wilson responded that he was still learning and was uncertain, but he said he was sure that will come up.

[8:54:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER made a motion to advance the confirmation of Jason Wilson, appointee to the Parole Board, and added that the vote of the House State Affairs Standing Committee does not indicate approval or disapproval but is a vote to move the name forward to the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

Alaska Police Standards Council

[8:54:33 AM](#)

KELLY SWIHART, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC), stated that he and his wife moved to Alaska in 1991 with the U.S. Army, and he began his career in law enforcement in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley in 1996. He went on to say that in

2011, he was offered the position of the director of public safety in Hoonah, Alaska, and after two years accepted the position of chief of police in Petersburg. He expressed his sentiment that law enforcement is "near and dear to me," and he stated he would like to continue his service on APSC to help maintain the standards and ideals of the law enforcement profession. He added his belief that the mission of APSC is to develop standards and to make sure law enforcement officers receive the training they need to achieve those standards and then hold them accountable.

[8:56:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER made a motion to advance the confirmation of Kelly Swihart, appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council, and added that the vote of the House State Affairs Standing Committee does not indicate approval or disapproval but is a vote to move the name forward to the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

[8:57:21 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:57 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.

HB 269-MVA COMMISSIONER MEMBER OF CDVSA

[8:59:30 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 269, "An Act adding the commissioner of military and veterans affairs to the membership of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault."

[8:59:48 AM](#)

RON CLARKE, Legislative Liaison, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), presented HB 269 on behalf of the House Rules Standing Committee, sponsor, by request of the governor. He explained that the proposed legislation adds the commissioner of DMVA to the membership of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). He explained that Section 1 adds the position of commissioner of DMVA to the list of members of the council, and Section 2 sets the quorum at six members instead of the previous five.

[9:01:32 AM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL LAURIE HUMMEL, Adjutant General/Commissioner, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA); Adjutant General Alaska National Guard, testified in support of HB 269 which seeks to add the DMVA commissioner to the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. She asked the committee to give its "quick and favorable" attention to the proposed legislation.

[9:02:00 AM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL paraphrased her written testimony as follows:

It may not be immediately apparent why a military officer would be a logical addition to this group, but the council's mission falls squarely in my lane, as I'll explain. As commissioner, I serve as the State of Alaska's official liaison to all military forces serving in state. This additional role means that I'm in daily contact with a full spectrum of military personnel and their family ... members. Today in Alaska, there are some 23,000 active and reserve component military personnel and 4,100 national guardsmen. I'm also responsible for the state's Office of Veterans' Affairs, which assists veterans to access those state and federal programs and services. As you know, Alaska has more veterans per capita than any other state - that's about 74,000 veterans, and that number is increasing every year. There is a total of about 101,000 service members and veterans, that along with their 189,000 dependent family members - that's a total of 290,000 people or about 40 percent of Alaska's residents. That's a huge portion of our population. And put another way, that's about on average 1,800 veterans and 3,800 dependent family members per House district. These Alaskans are important for their sheer numbers, but they also have unique perspectives and valuable skills, and they bring talent and extraordinary benefit to their communities. They also have extensive experience in facing the social ills that plague us all, including sexual assault, domestic violence, and their effects on both military and civilian community. But working with active duty veterans and service members and their families every day, I can't help but share their experiences, their challenges, their struggles, and

their successes in overcoming the wide-ranging effects of sexual assault and domestic violence.

[9:04:12 AM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL continued:

A community the size of ours demands that we tackle these difficult issues head on, and we're doing so. By working to protect our military men and women from the effects of sexual assault and domestic violence, we've learned valuable lessons that we could use to assist all Alaskans. The military, in general, has learned a lot about creating safe work places, fostering respectful colleagues, and the importance of clear knowledge that we all serve under a command structure committed to the safety and security of the force. The services have launched and will continue comprehensive, wide-ranging efforts to raise awareness of sexual assault and harassment.

Specifically at the Alaska National Guard, we've implemented new measures to protect victims and their identities. We have the sexual assault prevention and response program, which provides crisis intervention and support services to victims of sexual assault 24/7 statewide, and this program is an associate member of the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. It has a working relationship already with the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. We would welcome an expansion of that relationship through passage of HB 269, and the formal connection between DMVA and the council that would bring benefit to Alaskans statewide.

[9:05:38 AM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL continued:

As Adjutant General, I chair regular meetings to review the progress of all current and pending cases of sexual assault associated within the guard family. I imagine there is no other state, local, or private employer in Alaska that has been faced with challenges in this area to the point of crisis and tackled them as aggressively as we have.

Finally, ... there is a budgetary angle to this. A 2008 study found that the average cost of a sexual assault nationwide is over \$150,000; that 50 percent of victims will not be able to work in their current jobs for a year after assault due to the severity of their mental health injuries; and that violence and substance abuse constitute up to a third of the cost of healthcare nationally or about \$750 billion a year. We could share with the council our most successful practices from the services that we provide to eligible victims with federal funds. Our military programs are robust and part of an integrated approach to maximize the opportunity for survivor recovery. The [U.S.] Department of Defense has invested heavily in this aspect of personnel readiness and wellness, and we at DMVA manage and operate many integrated programs. We'd like to share what we've learned along the way with the council, and we'd also like to learn from the other council members' expertise.

So, in summary, Mr. Chairman, this is very important work, which unfortunately will never be done. Your military forces in Alaska are committed to remaining vigilant and willing to tackle difficult situations, and we look forward to working even more closely with the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. I recommend your prompt passage of HB 269, and I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak.

[9:07:41 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN asked Adjutant General Hummel to repeat the number of veterans in each House district on average.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL replied, on average, there are 1,800 veterans and 3,800 dependent family members per House district.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER asked for an explanation of the fiscal note.

[9:08:44 AM](#)

MR. CLARKE responded that the duties associated with service on the council are in line with what Adjutant General Hummel does as a matter of course within her daily duties. He further stated that travel would be minimal due to the ability to teleconference meetings, and the council frequently meets in

Anchorage where Adjutant General Hummel is stationed. He concluded that the fiscal note is zero for those reasons.

[9:09:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1 to add the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs to Section 18.66.050 (4) and would add to the title: "and relating to the duties of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault."

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER objected for purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS offered that the proposed conceptual amendment was a conforming amendment to make sure the addition of the new member to the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is reflected in all parts of the statute.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER removed his objection to Conceptual Amendment 1. There being no further objection, Conceptual Amendment 1 was adopted.

[9:10:53 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 9:11 a.m.

[9:11:19 AM](#)

BRENDA STANFILL, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), testified on behalf of ANDVSA's 19 member agencies and associate member in support of HB 269. She relayed that ANDVSA is supportive of DMVA joining the council, adding that the council is made up of public and state department members, and ANDVSA attempts to maintain a balance between the two. She continued that a balanced membership assists in making sure the council receives the perspective of the state departments, the communities, and those involved with the everyday work. She stated that with the addition of the DMVA member on the council, the ratio then becomes six state department members and four public members. She voiced concern that the council is lacking in representation from rural Alaska and pointed out that it is a huge issue for ANDVSA, especially when considering the geographical issues and lack of services in the rural areas. She asked that the legislature consider adding an additional member to the council in order to balance the ratio.

[9:14:04 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN closed public testimony on HB 269.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS asked whether the suggestion to add an additional member to the council had been proposed previously, and he also asked about the origin of the suggestion. He recommended that the committee proceed with HB 269.

CHAIR LYNN suggested offering Representative Kreiss-Tomkins' question to the House Finance Committee, the next committee of referral.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER moved to report HB 269, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and zero fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 269(STA) was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[9:16:55 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:17 a.m.