

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

April 6, 2017

1:03 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Chris Tuck, Chair  
Representative Justin Parish  
Representative George Rauscher  
Representative Lora Reinbold  
Representative Ivy Spohnholz  
Representative Dan Saddler

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 125

"An Act relating to a veteran's designation on an identification card or a driver's license for Hmong veterans and Lao veterans."

- MOVED HB 125 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 125

SHORT TITLE: LAO/HMONG VETERAN DRIVER'S LIC. & ID CARD

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) TARR

02/15/17	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/15/17	(H)	MLV, STA
04/04/17	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/04/17	(H)	Heard & Held
04/04/17	(H)	MINUTE(MLV)
04/06/17	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, answered questions regarding HB 125.

ROBERT DOEHL, Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions regarding HB 125.

VERDIE BOWEN, Director of Veterans Affairs  
Office of Veteran Affairs  
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions regarding HB 125.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:03:12 PM](#)

**CHAIR CHRIS TUCK** called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Representatives Parish, Rauscher, Reinbold, and Tuck were present at the call to order. Representatives Spohnholz and Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**HB 125-LAO/HMONG VETERAN DRIVER'S LIC. & ID CARD**

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CHAIR TUCK announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 125, "An Act relating to a veteran's designation on an identification card or a driver's license for Hmong veterans and Lao veterans."

CHAIR TUCK noted that Representative Saddler's question from a previous hearing was answered by Hillary Martin with Legislative Legal and Research Services, who stated that the current drafting is correct: the long version of the definition only needs to be stated once in each section.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked how many people are likely to qualify for a Hmong or Lao [veteran] driver's license designation under HB 125.

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REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor of HB 125, offered her understanding that the answer is about 40 individuals.

1:05:31 PM

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH stated that his notes indicated about 30 to 40.

1:05:43 PM

ROBERT DOEHL, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), offered the department's estimate of approximately 40.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked Verdie Bowen if Hmong veterans are included in the count of veterans the Office of Veteran Affairs assists and for whom the office facilitates the provision of services.

1:06:19 PM

VERDIE BOWEN, Director of Veterans Affairs, Office of Veteran Affairs, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), responded that the way the Office of Veteran Affairs accounts for Hmong veterans is through events on May 15, Hmong Memorial Day. He stated that his office does not currently provide benefits to Hmong Veterans but the office does recognize and honor their service to the nation.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER stated his understanding that a benefit of the veteran driver's license designation is the opportunity to "contact veterans and ... sign them up and increase our count for federal VA purposes." He recalled a provision in HB 125 that would allow the Office of Veteran Affairs to make contact with the veterans. He asked if Hmong and Lao veterans are included in the current statewide count of veterans and what benefits the bill would bring to any qualifying individuals.

MR. BOWEN stated that HB 125 reflects [the department's] position of honoring these veterans. He stated that the only benefit the Hmong veterans would receive under HB 125 would be discounts for their veteran status at places which provide such a discount. There would be no VA benefits set aside for these veterans. The legislation would bring recognition that could help establish the ability to allow Hmong veterans to receive national recognition such as burial in national cemeteries.

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REPRESENTATIVE TARR stated that the recognition may be more symbolic than material. She remarked, "To go into Denny's on the day where they provide the discount for veterans, for the first time ever in the United States, they will walk in and be able to say to someone I'm a veteran who served this country."

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CHAIR TUCK stated that in such a circumstance, the server might be interested in learning more and experiences and conversations could be shared.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH commended Representative Tarr for bringing the legislation forward. He remarked, "We have a clear moral obligation to Hmong veterans, and finally we're taking a step towards honoring it in a way that they've requested. So I'm fully in support of this bill."

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if the bill authorizes a Hmong veteran to receive the same veteran designation on his/her driver's license or ID card as any other veteran.

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REPRESENTATIVE TARR answered yes.

[1:10:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH moved to report HB 125 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 125 was moved from House Military and Veterans' Affairs Special Committee.

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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 1:11 p.m.