

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

February 8, 2018

1:03 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Chris Tuck, Chair
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Vice Chair
Representative Justin Parish
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Lora Reinbold
Representative Dan Saddler

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative George Rauscher

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 15

Relating to awarding the Alaska Decoration of Honor to certain members of the military.

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 14

Relating to awarding the Alaska Decoration of Honor to certain members of the military.

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 194

"An Act relating to members and veterans of the uniformed services, including the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HCR 15

SHORT TITLE: DECORATION OF HONOR AWARD

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KAWASAKI

01/19/18 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

01/19/18 (H) MLV
02/08/18 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: SCR 14

SHORT TITLE: DECORATION OF HONOR AWARD

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) COSTELLO

01/18/18 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/18 (S) STA
01/23/18 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
01/23/18 (S) Moved SCR 14 Out of Committee
01/23/18 (S) MINUTE(STA)
01/24/18 (S) STA RPT 5DP
01/24/18 (S) DP: MEYER, WILSON, GIESSEL, EGAN,
COGHILL
01/29/18 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
01/29/18 (S) VERSION: SCR 14
01/31/18 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/31/18 (H) MLV
02/08/18 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 194

SHORT TITLE: USPHS & NOAA OFFICERS AS VETERANS

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) CLAMAN

03/24/17 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/24/17 (H) MLV, FIN
02/08/18 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR MIA COSTELLO

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented SCR 14 during the combined hearing of SCR 14 and HCR 15.

REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT KAWASAKI

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HCR 15 during the combined hearing of HCR 15 and SCR 14.

VERDIE BOWEN, Director of Veterans Affairs

Office of Veteran Affairs

Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 15 and SCR 14.

REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, introduced HB 194.

CERI GODINEZ, Staff
Representative Matt Claman
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 194 on behalf of Representative Claman, prime sponsor.

CAPTAIN ROBERT PAWLOWSKI, Legislative Lead
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
No address provided

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions and provided testimony during the hearing on HB 194.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Issued a brief comment during the hearing on HB 194.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:03:26 PM](#)

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

HCR 15-DECORATION OF HONOR AWARD **SCR 14-DECORATION OF HONOR AWARD**

[1:04:12 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 15, Relating to awarding the Alaska Decoration of Honor to certain members of the military and SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 14, Relating to awarding

the Alaska Decoration of Honor to certain members of the military.

[1:04:46 PM](#)

SENATOR MIA COSTELLO, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented SCR 14. She paraphrased the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

It is an honor and a privilege to recognize those who have given the ultimate sacrifice in the service of Alaska, that of surrendering their life in the protection of our state and our country. Since 2007, the Legislature has honored their sacrifice with the Alaska Decoration of Honor, presenting a medal to surviving family or friends. There have been more than two hundred recipients of this honor since statehood, recognizing the important roll Alaskans have played, and continue to play, in the security of our home.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 awards the Alaska Decoration of Honor to three army men killed in the line of duty during 2017:

Private First Class Hansen B. Kirkpatrick (Died July 3, 2017)

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jacob M. Sims (Died October 28, 2017)

Staff Sergeant David T. Brabander (Died December 11, 2017)

Private Kirkpatrick of Wasilla served as a mortarman in the 1-36 Infantry stationed in Fort Bills, Texas. At only 19 years old, he died in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, due to wounds sustained during an indirect fire attack. He was described as "a caring, disciplined, and intelligent young soldier."

Chief Warrant Officer Sims of Oklahoma and Southeast Alaska, 36, was a combat engineer turned UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot who had served this state and nation for nearly 20 years. He was killed in a helicopter crash during his deployment in Logar Province, Afghanistan. He served multiple tours of duty in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Staff Sergeant Brabander of Wasilla was a squad leader at Joint Base Elemendorf-Richardson. The 24-year-old deployed to Afghanistan in September, and was killed in Nangahar Province, Afghanistan when his vehicle overturned in a combat zone. Like so many Alaskans, he loved the outdoors.

It is a solemn occasion for a Decoration of Honor to be necessary, and it is our hope that those who put their lives on the line for the safety of Alaskans return home safely themselves. We offer our condolences to the families and friends of these three servicemen, honor their service, and memorialize their sacrifice by passing SCR 14.

SENATOR COSTELLO noted that it is Alaska Statute (AS) 26.05.342 that allows this honor to be awarded; it requires a resolution be passed by the legislature in order to provide the awards to the families.

[1:07:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT KAWASAKI, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HCR 15. For the record, he stated the names of the fallen servicemen being honored [as listed in Senator Costello's sponsor statement previously provided]. He added the names of the surviving family of each deceased serviceman.

[1:09:17 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked, "Do you have any idea how many more of the declaration of honor medals we have in inventory?"

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI answered that the Joint Armed Services Committee has approximately 60 blank medals in storage.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that the declaration of honor was established by his predecessor, Representative Nancy Dahlstrom.

[1:10:16 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK opened public testimony on HCR 15 and SCR 14.

[1:11:10 PM](#)

VERDIE BOWEN, Director of Veterans Affairs, Office of Veteran Affairs, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), stated that DMVA supports HCR 15 and SCR 14. He expressed appreciation to the legislature for creating the means to honor fallen service members. In response to Representative Saddler, he explained the process by which military personnel is recognized. He said DMVA verifies that the individuals being considered were killed in a combat zone. He said there have been 241 recipients. He credited former Representative Dahlstrom and her aides for their work to create a decoration of honor. In response to a follow-up question, he said the contact information for the surviving family of the fallen servicemen was current as of a few weeks ago, and DMVA makes every effort to ensure that they receive the awards given.

[1:13:47 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER emphasized the importance of not only making the award, but going the extra step in ensuring the family receives it.

[1:13:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD echoed the comment of Representative Saddler. She related that there had been medals in her office "stacked really high," and her staff tried to help find the contact information for the recipients. She said it was sad to see the medals sitting in an office when she knew "someone would treasure and value them."

[1:14:35 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HCR 15 and SCR 14.

[1:14:44 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK announced that HCR 15 and SCR 14 were held over.

HB 194-USPHS & NOAA OFFICERS AS VETERANS

[1:14:55 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 194, "An Act relating to members and veterans of the uniformed services, including the Commissioned Corps of the

United States Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps."

1:15:20 PM

REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, introduced HB 194. He paraphrased the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 194 brings alignment between the federal definition of "veteran" under Title 38: Veterans Benefits, and the state definition of "veteran" as it applies to persons who provided active duty service in the uniformed services of the United States. Currently, the state consistently defines "veteran" as service in the armed services only. This does not recognize the full-time active duty military service of the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps (NOAA), which, under by U.S. Code Title 38, are recognized as uniformed services and are entitled to veterans benefits.

Officers from the USPHS and NOAA (previously known as the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey) have served throughout Alaska since the early 1900's. Like in the armed forces, each USPHS and NOAA serving officer has deployed by orders to the needed mission. Today, USPHS Officers currently serve from Ketchikan to Kotzebue providing services to Alaska's native communities ranging from offering health care to water sanitation engineering. NOAA Officers lead surveying and mapping operations throughout Alaska, improve the navigation over coastal and Arctic waters, and operate vessels conducting fishery research and assessment in state and federal waters. Each officer, regardless of service, is on orders directing the nature of their deployment and their duty stations. This is no different than officers serving in the armed forces.

Upon leaving the service, whether by resigning the commission or retiring in grade, the officers have earned their federal veterans benefit. Many of these officers that have had duty in Alaska have chosen to stay, contributing to our work force and economy by

building businesses, providing medical services, or continuing to offer their expertise in public service. This bill offers the opportunity for the state of Alaska to recognize their previous service and the veteran status they have earned.

[1:16:37 PM](#)

CERI GODINEZ, Staff, Representative Matt Claman, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 194 on behalf of Representative Claman, prime sponsor. She imparted that Title 38 of United States Code (USC) defines a veteran as "a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable." She said Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 3.7, includes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) "as individuals or groups considered to have performed active military, naval, or air service," whereas Alaska Statute defines veteran only as "a person who has served in a branch of the armed service of the United States." She stated that NOAA and USPHS officers are deployed by orders to needed missions, and each officer, regardless of service, is "on orders directing their duty stations and the nature of their deployment," and while serving, they are subject to the same commitment to duty as are members of the armed forces. Ms. Godinez related that currently in Alaska there are at least 11 active or retired NOAA Corps officers and 551 active or retired USPHS officers. These officers currently receive Veteran Administration (VA) benefits but are not considered veterans under Alaska Statutes, thus under current Alaska Statutes, they are not eligible for veteran benefits. She stated, "HB 194 will expand the definition of 'veteran' to include these hardworking Alaskans."

[1:18:05 PM](#)

MS. GODINEZ presented the sectional analysis, which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Section 1 AS 18.50.320: Bureaus and custodians of vital records must furnish copies if requested. Federal, state and local agencies may request copies of vital records. Up to four veteran death certificates shall be issued free of charge. Amends 18.50.320(7)(B): adds The Commissioned Corps of the

United States Public Health Services and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps to the definition of veteran.

Section 2 AS 18.55.470(4): applies to veterans who may apply for Alaska Housing Finance Corporation loans. Amends AS 18.55.470(4): changes "military services" to "uniformed services" and changes "armed services" to "uniformed services".

Section 3 AS 18.55.470: Applies to who may apply for Alaska Housing Finance Corporation loans. Amends AS 18.55.470 to add new paragraph: provides the definition of "uniformed services" as "the armed forces of the United States, The Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Services, and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps."

Section 4 AS 18.56.101 applies to who may receive eligibility for veterans' interest rates. Amends AS 18.56.100(2) and AS 18.56.100(4): changes "armed forces" to "uniform services". Adds application to 2 "regular or reserve" officers of USPHS and NOAA.

Section 5 AS 18.65.310(1) applies to veteran designation on identification cards. Amends AS 18.65.310(1) to include USPHS and NOAA officers.

Section 6 AS 26.10.070(a) applies to fees collected for the veteran's report of separation. Amends AS 26.10.070(a) to include USPHS and NOAA officers.

Section 7 AS 26.10.080(d)(2) applies to veterans who may be eligible to receive death gratuity. Amends AS 26.10.080(d)(2): expands definition of veteran to include USPHS and NOAA officers.

Section 8 AS 26.15.130(a) designates the qualifications for those who may be eligible for veteran's loans. Amends AS 26.15.130(a): changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services"

Section 9 AS 26.15.130(b) defines veterans dependents' who may be eligible for loans. AS 26.15.130(b): changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services"

Section 10 AS 26.15.160 extends veterans loans provisions to include the Alaska Territorial Guard and Veterans of Korea and Vietnam. Amends AS 26.15.160: changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services"

Section 11 AS 26.15 covers the provisions for veteran's loans. Amends AS 26.15; adds new section AS 26.15.190: Adds definition of "uniformed services" and "veteran" which include USPHS and NOAA commissioned officers.

Section 12 AS 28.10.181(d) provides for the registration of vehicles owned by veterans with disabilities. Amends AS 28.10.181(d): changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services"

Section 13 AS 28.10.181(l) provides for the registration of vehicles owned by Pearl Harbor survivors. Amends AS 28.10.181(l): changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services"

Section 14 AS 28.10.181(p) provides for the registration of vehicles owned by veterans. Amends AS 28.10.181(p): changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services"

Section 15 AS 28.10.181 contains provisions for registration of unique and special vehicles and vehicles used for special purposes in Alaska.

Section 16 AS 28.15.111(c) contains provisions for issuing drivers licenses, including a particular veterans designation. Amends AS 28.15.111(c): changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services", Adds definitions of "uniformed services" and "veterans" which include USPHS and 3 NOAA commissioned officers.

Section 17 AS 29.45.030(i) relates to provisions for exemptions from general taxation for disabled veterans Amends AS 29.45.030(i); changes "military services" to "uniformed services". Defines "uniformed services".

Section 18 AS 36.30.321(f) relates to provisions for the five percent preference on qualified bidders of public contracts. Amends AS 36.30.321(f): Adds USPHS and NOAA commissioner officers to definition of "veteran".

Section 19 AS 36.30.321(k) relates to provisions for the preference of bids from persons with disabilities on public contracts. Amends AS 36.30.321(k): Changes "military services" to "uniformed services"

Section 20 AS 36.30.321 relates to bidder preference for public contracts. Amends AS 36.30.321, adds new subsection: defines "uniformed services".

Section 21 AS 38.05.067(e) relates to the preference for veterans for unoccupied residential land. Amends AS 38.05.067(e): changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services"

Section 22 AS 38.05.940(b) relates to the provisions for eligibility for the land purchase price discount. Amends AS 38.05.940(b): changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services"

Section 23 AS 38.05.965: definitions Amends AS 38.05.96; adds new paragraph: defines "uniformed services".

Section 24 AS 39.25.159(f) relates to provisions for employment preference for veterans and former prisoners of war. Amends AS 39.25.159(f); adds USPHS and NOAA commissioner officers to definition of "veteran"

Section 25 AS 43.20.048(f) relates to provisions for veteran employment tax credits. Amends AS 43.20.048(f); adds USPHS and NOAA commissioner officers to definition of "veteran"

Section 26 AS 44.29.520(a) relates to the composition of the board of the Alaska Pioneer' Homs Advisor. Amends AS 44.29.520(a); adds USPHS and NOAA officer to list of eligible members of the Pioneers' Home Advisory Board.

Section 27 AS 44.35.900 defines "veteran". Amends AS 44.35.900; adds USPHS and NOAA commissioner officers to definition of "veteran"

Section 28 AS 47.55.900: definitions. Amends AS 47.55.900; adds USPHS and NOAA commissioner officers to definition of "veteran"

[1:20:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked how many other states are using "this expanded definition."

MS. GODINEZ replied that she does not know, but she deferred to Captain Robert Pawlowski.

[1:20:55 PM](#)

CAPTAIN ROBERT PAWLOWSKI, Legislative Lead, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), stated as follows:

With regards to that: In research and fundamental, six use the definition that includes the U.S. Public Health Service; two use the definition of U.S. Code 10 that defines the breadth of the military service; and two are marginally specific in including (indisc.) - generally, U.S. Public Health Service.

[1:21:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked Captain Pawlowski to repeat the information, because the audio had become garbled at one point.

CAPTAIN PAWLOWSKI responded, "Six states use a definition that includes it; two use U.S. Code 10; and two specify more to the U.S. Public Health Service."

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked Captain Pawlowski to confirm that "those two are not inclusive of that 6."

CAPTAIN PAWLOWSKI answered, "No, those two are not inclusive of the six. Six specifically go beyond the armed forces to include U.S. Public Health Service and NOAA."

[1:22:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN said, "Six specifically stated in their statute; two of them make reference to the U.S. Code. So, by reference to the U.S. Code, they're adding -- So, you've got actually eight that cover all. And then it sounds like there's

two more that only cover NOAA but not the U.S. Public Health Service, or do I have that backwards?"

[1:22:47 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ said, "Backwards."

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN amended his statement, "So, two that cover the U.S. Public Health Service that do not cover NOAA."

MR. PAWLOWSKI responded, "Yes, that is correct."

[1:22:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX noted that there were several fiscal notes in the committee packet. Many of them are zero fiscal notes, but the fiscal note from the Department of Administration (DOA) is not. Further, she inquired as to whether the fiscal note from the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) reflected "just a change in funds."

[1:23:53 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK said there was no one from DHSS to answer that question. He said the fiscal note from the Department of Revenue (DOR) addressed license plates. He offered his understanding that of the footnote in the DHSS fiscal note that "it's conditional on the certificates as well as, possibly, some benefits."

[1:24:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN said one of the provisions of the proposed legislation include a limited death benefit to spouses. He said he thinks it is described as a gratuity.

CHAIR TUCK said he thinks it was a bill by the late, former Representative Max Gruenberg that established that.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX said she did not understand the meaning behind the positive and negative amounts that came out to zero (in the DHSS fiscal note).

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN suggested someone from DHSS address the question.

CHAIR TUCK suggested it might be the movement of monies from the designated general fund to the undesignated general fund.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX responded that that would not "take into account that there'd actually be some expenses."

CHAIR TUCK responded that the footnote [analysis, at the bottom of the DHSS fiscal note], demonstrates an expense, and he highlighted some of the information in the analysis, which in its entirety read as follows:

HB 194 version "A" adds the commissioned corps of the United States Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to the current definition of veterans under the Vital Statistics Act (AS 18.50.320(7)(B)). Since 2012, family members or personal legal representatives (such as executors) of resident veterans that pass away in Alaska may each request up to four (4) certified copies of the veteran's death certificate without charge.

Approximately 90% of the Bureau of Vital Statistics ("Bureau") budget for vital records administration comes from fees (general fund program receipts). Because the Bureau relies substantially on fees to support its operating costs, any loss of these program receipts will have an impact on staffing and quality of service to the public if not replaced by general funds.

Based on the Bureau's experience with free death certificates under existing law, the number of newly eligible veteran deaths per year is estimated to be approximately 20. Assuming an average of four qualified family members (or executors) order all four death certificates each at no charge (families have been known to request as many as 40 copies of a death certificate), each veteran death represents 16 certificates provided to families.

It is anticipated the impact would be comparatively less for the first few years and then increase as more families become aware of the new law. For these calculations, the division assumes 75% of eligible family members and individuals will take advantage of this opportunity in Year 1, gradually increasing to the full 100% by Year 6.

The current fee for a death certificate is \$30 for the first copy, and \$25 thereafter for the same record at the same time. A set of four is therefore $\$30 + 3(\$25) = \$105$.

Year 1: 75% of 20 veteran deaths x 4 requestors x one \$105 set of 4 copies = \$6,300

Year 6: 100% of 20 veteran deaths x 4 requestors x one \$105 set of 4 copies = \$8,400

The Bureau will experience a greater loss of revenue if the total number of decedents classified as veterans exceeds assumptions or more than four qualified family members/individuals request four certificates. If the current level of staffing and service to the public is to be maintained, these lost program receipts will have to be replaced with GF.

[1:26:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ said [the DHSS fiscal note] reads as a zero fiscal note but is not.

CHAIR TUCK speculated that the department is willing "to absorb that" with its existing budget.

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN reiterated that the committee would likely need to hear from the department.

[1:27:13 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked about the history of the legislation.

[1:27:50 PM](#)

CAPTAIN PAWLOWSKI said he worked with Senator McGuire, upon the passing of the Senator's father, to recognize the USPHS, which lead to Senate Bill 184. He said he appreciates Representative Claman's efforts to bring the legislation back as HB 194.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER mentioned the issue of property tax exemptions for veterans being a municipal issue. He recognized that the fiscal notes show impacts to state government, but asked what the impact to local municipalities would be under HB 194.

[1:29:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN said he cannot speak to how the tax structure is set up in municipalities other than the Municipality of Anchorage, but those deductions do not result in a loss of revenue in Anchorage. He added, "It shifts how property values are assessed ... in the way tax is collected. You're basically dividing the total value into the total amount owed, and so it means that people who qualify for the exemption, like other veterans, would pay less than people who weren't veterans, but the total amount collected by the municipality would remain the same."

[1:30:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX offered her understanding that a municipality sets its mil rate, and she surmised that if a number of people qualify for exemption, then that would cost the municipality money.

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN responded that the mil rate is set on the total value of the municipality, and when there is an exemption, that reduces the total value. He offered an example to explain in more detail.

[1:32:33 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK opened public testimony on HB 194.

[1:33:14 PM](#)

VERDIE BOWEN, Director of Veterans Affairs, Office of Veteran Affairs, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), stated that the department is neutral on HB 194, and he said he was available for questions.

[1:33:43 PM](#)

CAPTAIN PAWLOWSKI imparted that he is a retiree from NOAA. He stated that he is "a service disabled veteran by the definitions of the State of Alaska." He added, "However, I am not a veteran by the definitions of the State of Alaska." He indicated that NOAA has been active in Alaska for 100 years, and USPHS for about 90 years. He said HB 194 reflects on the 400 USPHS officers that are stationed in Alaska and the represented organization - the Commissioned Officers Association - which has

238 active members in Alaska, as well as "a record of 415 members or inactive members in the state." Captain Pawlowski stated that [those members] have brought "a significant amount of help to Alaska in the Indian Health Service, in providing medical support to the U.S. Coast Guard at its different locations, and in stepping forward in case of flu and other potential epidemics through the Center for Disease Control." He said they, like the NOAA officer, are on military orders and make the commitment to be stationed in Alaska, where they bring their families and choose either to stay in service until retirement or depart to join in the community in a variety of ways, including: public health service, sanitation, and environmental engineering. Captain Pawlowski said his peers from NOAA entered the building business, in hydrographic surveying and geodetic control, as well as working for the federal government in fisheries work or for communities through work with municipalities, such as does retired Lieutenant Commander Tim Steel.

CAPTAIN PAWLOWSKI said he had asked various groups to submit for the record their perspectives on this issue. He said the two chapters of the Commissioned Officers Association "have resolutions in," and several letters of support have been sent. He said he sees HB 194 as a private service bill, and he looks to the state to recognize the 100 years of service in Alaska, where there has been loss of life. He indicated that the [Rockmore-King Medical Clinic], at the Coast Guard Air Station in Kodiak was name for his pediatrician, based on a 1985 crash. He said while he was in service during World War II, while supporting the Coast Guard in national defense missions, people lost their lives. He said there is a lot of history of contribution to Alaska, both in "the health of the people that our officers have brought" and in "the expansion of our coastal surveys" that NOAA officers have brought. Captain Pawlowski asked the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs "to look at this bill in recognizing the long history and dedication of these officers on ... active military duty, as defined in U.S. Code 10 and receiving veteran recognition as established under ... U.S. Code 37 and 38."

[1:38:42 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 194.

1:39:05 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said he would appreciate the chance to hear from other veterans' groups, for example, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the Vietnam Veterans [of America]. He said he is not a veteran, but offered his understanding that being a veteran is "a very important part of people's character and self-worth and story."

[1:40:00 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK said the bill was noticed last week; therefore, he said he thinks there had been time for those groups to weigh in if they had wished to do so. He said he would be open to allowing invited testimony.

[1:40:29 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK announced that HB 194 was held over.

[1:43:06 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 1:43 p.m.