

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

March 27, 2018

1:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 152

"An Act establishing September 11 of each year as Patriot Day."

- MOVED HCS SB 152 (MLV) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 152

SHORT TITLE: SEPT. 11: PATRIOT DAY

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) MEYER

01/24/18	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/18	(S)	STA
02/01/18	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/01/18	(S)	Moved SB 152 Out of Committee
02/01/18	(S)	MINUTE (STA)
02/02/18	(S)	STA RPT 3DP 1NR
02/02/18	(S)	DP: MEYER, WILSON, GIESSEL
02/02/18	(S)	NR: EGAN
02/07/18	(S)	TRANSMITTED TO (H)
02/07/18	(S)	VERSION: SB 152
02/09/18	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/09/18	(H)	MLV
03/01/18	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/01/18	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --

03/22/18 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/22/18 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
03/27/18 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR KEVIN MEYER
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing of SB 152, presented the legislation as prime sponsor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR CHRIS TUCK called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Representatives Tuck, Parish, Reinbold, Spohnholz, and LeDoux were present at the call to order. Representatives Rauscher and Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

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SB 152 - SEPT. 11: PATRIOT DAY

CHAIR TUCK announced that the only order of business would be SENATE BILL NO. 152 "An Act establishing September 11 of each year as Patriot Day."

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SENATOR KEVIN MEYER, Alaska State Legislature, advised that SB 152 officially designates September 11 of each year as Patriot Day for the State of Alaska. He explained that the dictionary describes a patriot as a person who loves, supports, and defends his/her country and its interest with devotion. This definition is appropriate for the terrorist attacks September 11, 2001. Almost 3,000 people were killed in those attacks, making it the worst attack of terrorism ever on United States soil. The nation was inspired by the heroic sacrifices of its first responders, fire fighters, law enforcement, and military. He said he found it interesting that many regular citizens responded to the cries for help and the shrieks of terror, and in the process, many gave the ultimate sacrifice. On October 25, 2001, a bi-partisan resolution designating September 11 as a national day of mourning was introduced in the U.S. House of

Representatives by 11 Republicans and 11 Democrats. The legislation designating September 11 as Patriot Day was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate unanimously, and signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 18, 2001. In observance of Patriot Day, the flag of the United States is flown at half-staff at the White House, all United States government buildings, and establishments throughout the country and the world. Flags are encouraged to be displayed in individual American homes and a moment of silence is observed in many places to correspond with the attacks beginning at 8:46 a.m., when the first airplane struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Each year, the Alaska governor issues a formal proclamation recognizing September 11, yet its title has varied between governors, such as Commemoration Day, Patriot Day, or National Day of Service and Remembrance. According to the research, most states do refer to it as Patriot Day, and according to the definition of patriot, he said he found it appropriate to make it official and call the day, Patriot Day. This legislation officially recognizes September 11 as Patriot Day in the State of Alaska, it not only honors and remembers those individuals who were injured or killed during these terrorist acts, but also pays tribute to the military who are still fighting terrorism. He advised that almost 2,100 Alaska patriots were deployed last fall from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) to Afghanistan to continue to fight the war on terrorism on behalf of all Americans.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked whether there was a reason the state was not already embracing and celebrating September 11 with a passion.

SENATOR MEYER reiterated that somewhere along the line its title varied between the governors of Alaska, and this legislation would officially make it Patriot Day no matter who was governor.

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CHAIR TUCK advised the committee that his office worked with the sponsor earlier to craft an amendment to include Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day in this legislation. He offered his belief that it is appropriate for both of these bills to come together, such that the state is not only honoring those who experienced the traumas on September 11, 2001, but also recognizes that many people from that incident and other

incidents, whether during a time of war, emergency, or trauma, have suffered some sort of post-traumatic stress injury in their lives.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER referred to Chair Tuck's amendment and asked whether a post-traumatic stress injury is limited to those who are military or first responders because he was trying to understand the nexus between that and Patriot Day.

CHAIR TUCK responded that post-traumatic stress injury is not limited to first responders or the military, it is for anyone who has suffered any type of adverse life changing experiences.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked the nexus with that definition of post-traumatic stress injury and Patriot Day.

CHAIR TUCK responded that the amendment recognizes Patriot Day as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the people who suffered post-traumatic stress injury; and June 27 of each year recognizes Post-Traumatic Injury Awareness Day.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked why that date was chosen.

CHAIR TUCK answered that June 27 is recognized nationwide, and the legislature passed a resolution two years ago recognizing June 27. Subsequently, he noted, that date is recognized annually in other states, and this resolution includes Alaska rather than the necessity of passing a resolution every year.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked the reason June 27 was chosen nationally.

CHAIR TUCK replied that it was a national effort by "Honor For All," but he could not recall why June 27 was chosen. This resolution passed through this committee last year, he reiterated.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH shared his experience during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Many of the nation's brave men and women were impacted and deployed overseas into extremely difficult situations, often returning to the states with post-

traumatic stress injuries. He commented that he was unsure he would ever celebrate that day because for patriotism, he has July 4. Remembering a tragedy as anything but a tragedy and having any import beyond the tragedy is personally difficult for him; however, he thanked Chair Tuck for bringing this amendment forward. In moving forward, he said, it is his hope that the nation will never take its eyes off of the full truth of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

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REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX moved to adopt Amendment 1, 30-LS1014\A.1, Radford/Laffen, 3/21/18, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 1, following "Day":

Insert "; and establishing June 27 of each year as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day"

Page 1, line 3:

Delete "a new section"

Insert "new sections"

Page 1, following line 12:

Insert new material to read:

"Sec. 44.12.170. Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day. Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day is established on June 27 of each year to promote awareness of persons suffering from post-traumatic stress injury and to encourage Alaskans to reach out to those persons to provide support and eliminate the stigma associated with post-traumatic stress injury. Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public."

CHAIR TUCK objected.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD shared her experience during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. She referred to the amendment and asked whether anyone was following up on the families who lost loved ones, and whether they are receiving care.

SENATOR MEYER answered that that is a difficult question to answer. He said he does not know whether the families who lost

love ones on "that day" are receiving care, but he does know that if the state will honor and remember this day always as Patriot Day, that in some way the families are helped.

It has been almost 20 years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and people are starting to already forget what happened that day, the legislature needs to make sure that in Alaska that does not take place, he stressed.

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CHAIR TUCK shared his own experience during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. He referred to post-traumatic stress injuries, and paraphrased the sponsor statement as follows: "any event that makes you fear for your safety, especially if the event feels unpredictable and uncontrollable." He opined that many Americans felt that way on that day and the symptoms may include: "flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event." He related that he was unsure the nation has fully healed from those attacks almost 20 years ago. Chair Tuck described that it will be a "generational thing" and memories will eventually die out, but the nation must never forget. Similar to Pearl Harbor, this event brought the nation together because it was grieving, it was in fear, and it tried to figure "it" out together as one nation.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that this legislature has proposed and enacted Indigenous People Day, African-American Soldier Highway Day, Alaska Reads Day, and Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and this legislation proposes to add Patriot Day and Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Day. He asked the number of people residing in Alaska who are affected by post-traumatic stress injury.

CHAIR TUCK answered that he does not know the number of people affected by post-traumatic stress injury. He advised that the term was first post-traumatic stress disorder and it was changed to post-traumatic stress injury due to the stigma of a disorder. People are not born with this injury, it happens as a reaction to an experience beyond their control and its unpredictability, it is well known that many people suffer from this injury. Especially, he pointed out, those in the military and first responders because they see and experience trauma that the average person does not experience. The goal here is to make

sure there is a day allowing these individuals to obtain treatment, help, and a place to talk and share, which is a pathway to healing from those traumatic experiences. Designating June 27 designating Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day was passed by 27 states, and the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate also recognizes that day, it is a day everyone unites around people and offers an opportunity to talk about their experiences.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether there was a previous Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Day, and whether this creates a different holiday.

CHAIR TUCK answered that has not been a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Day because the term was changed prior to any day being selected.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether there is any distinction in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) between post-traumatic stress disorder and post-traumatic stress injury.

CHAIR TUCK answered that this amendment simply recognizes Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Day as June 27.

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REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX commented that there was a discussion on this issue in the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs a few years ago and the professionals changed this to "injury" rather than "disorder."

CHAIR TUCK advised that he has some numbers based on percentages that were enclosed in the committee packet for House Bill 100, passed last year. It is well known that post-traumatic stress injury often happens with military and first responder service, but it is not limited to those services. He advised that as to those children suffering from adverse childhood experiences, more than 60 percent of children ages zero-17 years' experience or witness at least one traumatic event during those years, according to a 2009 study. Post-traumatic stress injury can manifest due to domestic violence and abuse, physical assault, violence, and sexual victimization. When reviewing the military, during the Vietnam War, approximately 30 percent of the servicemen and servicewomen experienced post-traumatic

stress injury; 10 percent in the Gulf War; 60 percent in Afghanistan, Operation Endearing Freedom; and 12-20 percent in Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, he explained.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether adverse childhood experience disorder is a type of post-traumatic stress injury.

CHAIR TUCK offered that there are adverse childhood experiences that could be looked at as post-traumatic stress injury if it had a long-term effect on the child with the symptoms described earlier.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ clarified that adverse childhood experiences are a set of defined experiences that can take place in childhood resulting in post-traumatic stress injury, but there is no such thing as adverse childhood experiences disorder.

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CHAIR TUCK advised that normally the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs staff would be online, but they are in Kotzebue and out of cell phone range. Verdie Bowen, Veterans Affairs Administrator, expressed support for this amendment and Mr. Bowen asked that the committee move this amendment forward.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER requested a letter, document, or e-mail verifying Mr. Bowen's request "would be good. I've actually heard him express those same thoughts though."

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CHAIR TUCK withdrew his objection. There being no objection, Amendment 1, A.1, was adopted

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER suggested a conceptual amendment to SB 152, page 1, lines 9-10, after the word "providers," delete the language "from violent acts." Thereby, he explained, making the applicability of Patriot Day broader. The military, first responders, and healthcare providers, do not only protect people from violent acts, they protect people against diseases, which are not violent acts.

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SENATOR MEYER responded that he has no objection to removing the language and he would leave it up to the committee. He related that to him, Patriot Day is for the people responding, maybe not necessarily to violent acts, but are courageously responding.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 2 to SB 152, page 1, lines 9-10, after the word "providers," delete the language "from violent acts."

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD objected and offered her belief that there must be a definition of "protecting us from something" and she wanted to open the conceptual amendment up for discussion.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER explained that the conceptual amendment goes to his desire that certain people are not excluded. He acknowledged that many people stand on the frontlines, sometimes in a violent attack and/or actual terrorism, but there are others, such as healthcare providers who stand ready to cure and protect people through public health immunizations, public health, and environmental protections against disease. The military's very presence deters violent acts from actually taking place, "I guess if you actually have to go to weapons free, you've lost the first engagement." He reiterated that the military's presence not only protects against violent acts, it deters violent acts from taking place in the first place, and the conceptual amendment is a desire for the legislation to be broader and more encompassing.

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CHAIR TUCK referred to SB 152, page 1, lines 6-9, and commented that he understands that "to serve and protect our nation" could be simply security, which is serving and protecting the nation, watching the nation's borders, protecting its borders, surveillance and/or anything else.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER remarked that a great number of people enlisted following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, much as when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD withdrew her objection. Although, she said, she does not know whether this was intended to be specifically for people who have suffered acts of violence, and she was not sure whether the conceptual amendment might broaden the language too much.

CHAIR TUCK stated that the objection to Conceptual Amendment 2 was removed. There being no objection, Conceptual Amendment 2 was adopted.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted some confusion as to whether the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, should be celebrated as "9/11 Day or Patriot Day." Everyone who observed the awful terrorist attacks appreciates the service to our country by healthcare providers, military, and law enforcement, and he said he appreciates the chance to clearly label this day as Patriot Day.

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REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX moved to report SB 152 30-LS1014\A, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal notes. There being no objection, House CS for Senate Bill 152 (MLV) moved from the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

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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 1:36 p.m.