

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

February 6, 2018

3:35 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Click Bishop, Chair
Senator Anna MacKinnon
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 2 (MLV)

"An Act relating to a voluntary preference for members of the national guard and veterans by private employers."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 2

SHORT TITLE: PRIV EMPLOYER VOLUNTARY VET PREFERENCE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) TUCK

01/18/17	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/17
01/18/17	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/17	(H)	MLV, L&C
01/24/17	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
01/24/17	(H)	Heard & Held
01/24/17	(H)	MINUTE(MLV)
01/31/17	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
01/31/17	(H)	Moved CSHB 2(MLV) Out of Committee
01/31/17	(H)	MINUTE(MLV)
02/03/17	(H)	MLV RPT CS(MLV) NT 6DP
02/03/17	(H)	DP: RAUSCHER, REINBOLD, LEDOUX, SADDLER, PARISH, TUCK
02/22/17	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124

02/22/17	(H)	Heard & Held
02/22/17	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
02/24/17	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
02/24/17	(H)	Scheduled but Not Heard
03/10/17	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/10/17	(H)	Moved CSHB 2(MLV) Out of Committee
03/10/17	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
03/13/17	(H)	L&C RPT CS(MLV) NT 7DP
03/13/17	(H)	DP: STUTES, WOOL, BIRCH, KNOPP, JOSEPHSON, SULLIVAN-LEONARD, KITO
03/24/17	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
03/24/17	(H)	VERSION: CSHB 2(MLV)
03/27/17	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/27/17	(S)	CRA, L&C
02/06/18	(S)	CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE CHRIS TUCK
 Alaska State Legislature
 Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 2.

BOB DOEHL, Deputy Commissioner
 Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
 JBER, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 2.

BERNADETTE WILSON, Owner
 Denali Disposal
 Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 2.

DALE VANDE HEY, Liaison
 State Liaison Office
 U.S. Department of Defense
 San Antonio, Texas
POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 2.

ACTION NARRATIVE

3:35:55 PM
CHAIR CLICK BISHOP called the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gardner, Stedman,

Hoffman, and Chair Bishop. Senator Mackinnon joined shortly thereafter.

HB 2-PRIV EMPLOYER VOLUNTARY VET PREFERENCE

[3:37:05 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP announced the consideration of HB 2. [CSHB 2(MLV, version 30-LS0071\D), was before the committee.]

[3:37:31 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP said he had experience dealing with veteran preference in his past career as it related to Helmets to Hardhats, a program that allowed registered apprenticeship programs "to pierce their list" to bring veterans into registered apprenticeships. It worked very well.

[3:38:39 PM](#)

At ease.

[3:40:01 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP called the meeting back into order.

[3:40:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CHRIS TUCK, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of HB 2 said the bill would allow for an optional veteran hiring preference for private employers by taking advantage of an option that is available under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Section 11 of the act allows special rights for preferences to be granted to veterans if they are authorized under federal law, state law, or local law. Currently 37 states have adopted similar legislation and five other states, including Alaska, are considering it. The bill is a nationwide effort by the U.S. Department of Defense. All 50 states and D.C., Guam, and Puerto Rico award preferences to veterans for initial hiring for public employment.

[3:42:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK said however, private employers are prohibited from establishing comparable business hiring practices unless specific legislation is passed allowing this option. The road to employment can be difficult for veterans returning to civilian life. A 2012 survey of veterans from all areas found that for two-thirds, finding a job was the greatest challenge for transitioning. Alaska has one of the highest percentages of veterans per capita. About 14 percent of adults in Alaska, over 72,000 people, are veterans.

[3:42:47 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK said that as of November 2016, the national Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the jobless rate of male veterans ages 18 to 24 still exceeds that of their civilian counterparts. Alaska prides itself in being a leader in supporting veterans and active duty military. The bill allows private employers to adopt a veteran hiring preference.

[3:44:18 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP opened public testimony.

[3:44:34 PM](#)

BOB DOEHL, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, supported HB 2. He said the department supports HB 2 for two reasons. The private sector can compete with the public sector, which already can give a veteran preference. Second, it enables the private sector to hire veterans, if employers want to.

[3:46:03 PM](#)

BERNADETTE WILSON, Owner, Denali Disposal, supported HB 2. She shared, in the interests of full disclosure, that she is in a relationship with the bill sponsor and they have a child, but she is appearing as a witness in the role of president and owner of Denali Disposal, a commercial refuse company servicing Girdwood, Anchorage, Eagle River, and the surrounding area. She related a story of hiring two people, one a veteran and one not. The veteran did not have the relevant job experience, and the other person, on paper, was highly qualified. A year later the on-paper, highly qualified person was let go. The 24-year veteran is now the operations manager and a critical component to the company. As a small employer, they have seen first-hand that veterans are easy to train, have experience working with other people, and are very dependable.

[3:48:54 PM](#)

DALE VANDE HEY, Liaison, State Liaison Office, U.S. Department of Defense, supported HB 2. He said he was speaking on behalf of Military Community and Family Policy. This is one of the key quality of life issues for the Department of Defense. This would be of great benefit to veterans. It equals the playing field and allows them to get a job when they exit the military.

[3:49:52 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP noted they had received many letters of support for the bill.

[3:50:26 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP closed public testimony.

[3:50:45 PM](#)

SENATOR STEDMAN asked why it has taken so long to get this issue to the legislature.

[3:50:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK said it was perhaps lack of awareness, but he doesn't know why the veteran preference was not extended from public employers to private employers previously.

[3:52:20 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP held HB 2 in committee.

[3:52:36 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Bishop adjourned the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee at 3:52 p.m.