

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE

February 27, 2017

1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator David Wilson, Chair
Senator Natasha von Imhof, Vice Chair
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2
Proclaiming April 2017 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SCR 2

SHORT TITLE: SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH: APRIL 2017

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) MEYER

02/08/17	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/08/17	(S)	STA, HSS
02/24/17	(S)	STA REFERRAL WAIVED
02/27/17	(S)	HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR KEVIN MEYER
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SCR 2.

ALIZA KAZMI, Policy Specialist
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SCR 2.

JAYNE ANDREEN, Interim Executive Director
Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SCR 2.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:30:22 PM](#)

CHAIR DAVID WILSON called the Senate Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Giessel, Begich, von Imhof, and Chair Wilson. Senator Miccichi arrived during the meeting.

SCR 2-SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH: APRIL 2017

[1:30:55 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced the consideration of SCR 2.

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SENATOR KEVIN MEYER, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided a sponsor's statement as follows:

SCR 2 would proclaim April 2017 as "Sexual Assault Awareness Month;" this is part of a national campaign to raise public awareness about sexual assault and educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence. As you all know, sexual violence is a serious problem in the state of Alaska, unfortunately; but, we bring this resolution forward every year and actually I've been doing this since 2001. I used to serve on the [Standing Together Against Rape] (STAR) Board of Directors when I was on the Anchorage Assembly; this is something that I feel strongly about, not only as a parent with two daughters, but as an Alaskan. We have thought actually about not doing a resolution every year and putting it in statute and just making April the sexual assault awareness month, but so many folks have said it's good to bring this up every year and just remind folks that we still have a problem with sexual assault. Probably until sexual assault awareness goes away Mr. Chairman, I will be bringing this forward every year.

Again, this is part of a national campaign to raise public awareness and also to let folks know that there's various groups out there that are also trying to educate on this topic: Alaska's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and STAR.

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SENATOR MEYER reviewed sexual assault statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) as follows:

- 1-in-5 women and 1-in-70 men in the U.S. have been victims of violent sexual assault in their lifetime.
- The 2015 Alaska Victimization Survey reports that almost a third of all adult women in Alaska have experienced sexual violence.

He summarized as follows:

Sexual assault is preventable; it's a social, public, health, criminal justice, human rights issue; it's something we just need to keep bringing out to the public, educate the public that this is not acceptable and that there are things to do to report this and to stop this. So this year, 2017 Sexual Assault Awareness Month focuses on engaging new voices to broaden the scope of prevention and we hope that SCR 2 will help to strengthen that effort across our state.

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CHAIR WILSON opened public testimony on SCR 2.

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At ease.

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CHAIR WILSON called the committee back to order.

[1:37:03 PM](#)

ALIZA KAZMI, Policy Specialist, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), Juneau, Alaska, read a statement from ANDVSA in support of SCR 2 as follows:

We offer our full support for SCR 2, Sexual Assault Awareness Month for April 2017. Our member programs and affiliates which are 24-victim-service providers

from around the state, prioritize intervention and experiences of sexual assault as well as upstream-violence prevention efforts; however, Alaskans continue to experience unacceptably high levels of sexual assault, as Senator Meyer stated.

The 2015 Alaska Victimization Survey showed that out of every 100 adult women who reside in Alaska, 33 experience sexual violence and 50 experience intimate partner violence, sexual violence or both. Every day emergency service provisions through our member agencies engage as advocates, medical professionals and law enforcement to establish immediate safety and longer-term support for victims of sexual assault, including through legal advocacy during prosecution as well as assisting with accessing basic social services. Our member agencies continuously strive to conduct broad and effective outreach, and work in conjunction with community partners.

In spite of strained resources, our member agencies do everything in their power to serve victims. Prevention of sexual assault is rooted in educational advocacy. Evidence based and comprehensive prevention engages multiple stakeholders to build knowledge and tools which in turn enables Alaskans to build community partnerships around the response to and prevention of sexual assault, this is critical in dismantling the cultural normativity of sexual assault as well as the culture of victim blaming; for example, the Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault has recently expanded its prevention work focused on youth to include an emphasis on both teen dating violence as well as healthy sexuality education alongside sexual health, this expansion recognizes that many teen relationships involve sexual intimacy and that youths need specific tools on how to establish personal boundaries to promote healthy relationships.

In an interview conducted for a recent lead on youth-summit planning, which is just an annual program that we do, one teen remarked, "Sexual health is something that is not often discussed among my peers and I think it would be pretty cool to start those discussions so people become more comfortable around sexual health; however, in order to educate others accurately, I need to be educated myself."

Indeed, ending sexual assault is a priority not only for individuals, but also within and among communities throughout our state. Victims' service providers always benefit from greater and enhanced community awareness and collaboration around this issue. Each and every Alaskan must be informed and empowered to work together to end sexual assault through a rigorous, comprehensive and ongoing process of community-based intervention and prevention, which we feel that this bill really highlights.

We are grateful to Senator Meyer and his staff for proposing the bill and we really urge you to support it and help continue expanding awareness and resources in order to end sexual assault in Alaska.

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JAYNE ANDREEN, Interim Executive Director, Alaska's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA), Juneau, Alaska, testified in support of SCR 2 as follows:

The council (CDVSA) as well as the network (ANDVSA) supports SCR 2 and the whole concept of sexual assault awareness month; this is something that has been happening nationally since the 1970s and Alaska, as you have heard, still ranks highest in the country for the state's sexual assault rates.

It's important to note from our 2015 Alaska Victimization Survey that our rates have gone down for the number of women who are reporting having been sexually assaulted in the previous year by over 30 percent. We are making progress, yet Alaska is the highest in the nation, so anything that we can do to shed light to this problem, to increase the awareness and prosecutions of these cases of holding offenders accountable is going to be for the benefit of Alaska as a whole.

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CHAIR WILSON closed public testimony on SCR 2.

SENATOR GIESSEL noted that Ms. Andreen mentioned prosecuting afterwards, something that she agreed with; however, she asked Ms. Andreen and Ms. Kazmi to share their knowledge on the root

cause of sexual assault and how the Legislature can get to the actual root of the problem.

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MS. KAZMI agreed that there definitely needs to be an emphasis on prevention and response after the fact. She said healthy sexuality education and other measures beginning when children are just in the school system needs to be emphasized in addition to what health relationships looks like. She noted that the council (CDVSA) and network (ANDVSA) have various programs. She added that an annual summit invites high school students to hone on the question of respect and how each student can really be active in protecting themselves; but more importantly, to foster the culture of respect.

MS. ANDREEN opined that the root cause really has to do with gender roles and people's perceptions. She continued as follows:

One of the root elements of sexual assault is power and control, it isn't as much about the sexual gratification. So it's important to get people to be thinking from that broader perspective. Both the council (CDVSA) and the network (ANDVSA) as well as a number of our partners across the state have a whole comprehensive sort of web of primary prevention programming that is happening. A lot of it is really focused on our youth, because we see that as they are starting to get into, you know, separate from the family, getting into their own relationships, that's a prime time for them to either start to engage in abusive relationships and or choose not to. What I really like, which Ms. Kazmi was talking about the whole lead-on concept and "Stand Up, Speak Up Alaska", all of these youth-driven initiatives are youth-led, we kind of guide them with the information, but they are the ones that decide what's the best way to change their norms, to change their culture, to get others to engage with them, and it's part of this bigger picture that we have that is moving us forward.

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SENATOR GIESSEL noted that she attended the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) convention and young people from one of the Interior communities did a drama on sexual assault that was incredibly moving, at the end they said, "This has to stop because it is destroying us."

SENATOR GIESSEL stated that she appreciated the resolution. She pointed out that SCR calls on page 2, lines 16-18, "Coaching boys into men." She remarked that there are so many single parent families now where fathers are absent and noted that a teacher in a rural community has taken in several young men who lost their fathers and raised the boys who are now adults who understand appropriate relationships. She said the increase in single parents boils down to the loss of positive modeling for the state's young people, but organizations that Ms. Kazmi and Ms. Andreen noted are trying to do their best at replacing.

She remarked that another aspect is mental health. She noted that mental-health providers should be considered and noted that Anchorage has mental-health providers in their schools. She disclosed that she was a clinician in schools around the state and explained that many times just interacting with the child allows for perceiving something that has happened to a young person. She suggested that allowing mental-health services in schools is another avenue that can be pursued.

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SENATOR MICCICHE joined the committee meeting.

CHAIR WILSON added that he is familiar with programs that can help mentor and teach young males. He said the hardest piece is providing long-term prevention data; for example, middle-school intervention that plays out in adulthood.

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SENATOR BEGICH disclosed that he is an adult advisor for the Mayor's Commission on Youth in Anchorage and was told at a recent meeting that youth training from Green Dot Alaska was denied due to Green Dot not having appropriate methodology. He said his is hopeful that the resolution might have an impact on Green Dot training for youth.

He called attention to the 2015 Alaska Victimization Survey and asked Ms. Andreen to address the survey's report that the number of women reporting sexual assaults is down 30 percent from the previous year and the primary reason for the reduction.

MS. ANDREEN replied that CDVSA's belief is the reduction is from comprehensive prevention programming that started 10 years ago. She noted that during the same time frame the level of reporting sexual assault has gone up, which she believes is a positive.

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SENATOR BEGICH asked to confirm that even though reporting is up, the reduction in the number of incidents being reported represents an even greater change.

MS. ANDREEN replied that Senator Begich's assumption is appropriate. She said CDVSA thinks that because people are becoming more aware of domestic violence and sexual assault, more victims are coming forward with a report; however, the crime is probably one with the lowest conviction rate.

CHAIR WILSON added that a lot of what Ms. Andreen mentioned has to do with some of the newer programs like Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) being developed statewide. He conceded that the SART program takes a lot of funding to operating, but noted that a lot of communities have become more creative in funding their own services. He set forth that activity awareness of programs like SART is up and noted that the SART program in the Mat-Su has doubled in the past year.

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CHAIR WILSON [held SCR 2 in committee.]

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There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Wilson adjourned the Senate Health and Social Services Committee at 1:55 p.m.