

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

April 17, 2018

3:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Kevin Meyer, Chair
Senator David Wilson
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator John Coghill
Senator Dennis Egan

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CS FOR HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 19 (CRA) AM
Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order
recognizing a linguistic emergency.

- HEARD & HELD

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 97 (STA)

"An Act repealing the insurance tax credit for gifts to the
Alaska fire standards council; and providing for an effective
date."

- MOVED CSHB 97 (STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 7 (CRA)

"An Act relating to the exhibition of marked ballots and the
prohibition on political persuasion near election polls."

- HEARD & HELD

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 235 (STA)

"An Act creating the North Star Medal."

- MOVED CSHB 235 (STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HCR 19

SHORT TITLE: GOVERNOR: AK NATIVE LANGUAGES EMERGENCY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) ORTIZ

02/16/18 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/16/18 (H) CRA
03/06/18 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
03/06/18 (H) Heard & Held
03/06/18 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
03/08/18 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
03/08/18 (H) Moved CSHCR 19(CRA) Out of Committee
03/08/18 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
03/09/18 (H) CRA RPT CS(CRA) 5DP
03/09/18 (H) DP: SADDLER, DRUMMOND, LINCOLN,
RAUSCHER, PARISH
03/19/18 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
03/19/18 (H) VERSION: CSHCR 19(CRA) AM
03/21/18 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/21/18 (S) CRA, STA
04/03/18 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/03/18 (S) Heard & Held
04/03/18 (S) MINUTE(CRA)
04/10/18 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/10/18 (S) Moved CSHCR 19(CRA) AM Out of Committee
04/10/18 (S) MINUTE(CRA)
04/11/18 (S) CRA RPT 3DP
04/11/18 (S) DP: BISHOP, GARDNER, HOFFMAN
04/17/18 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: HB 97

SHORT TITLE: REPEAL AK FIRE STANDS. COUNCIL TAX CREDIT

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) THOMPSON

02/01/17 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/01/17 (H) STA, FIN
02/28/17 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/28/17 (H) Heard & Held
02/28/17 (H) MINUTE(STA)
03/02/17 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/02/17 (H) Moved CSHB 97(STA) Out of Committee
03/02/17 (H) MINUTE(STA)
03/06/17 (H) STA RPT CS(STA) 5DP
03/06/17 (H) DP: JOHNSON, WOOL, BIRCH, TUCK, KREISS-
TOMKINS
03/12/18 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS ROOM 519
03/12/18 (H) Moved CSHB 97(STA) Out of Committee
03/12/18 (H) MINUTE(FIN)

03/14/18 (H) FIN RPT CS(STA) 10DP 1NR
03/14/18 (H) DP: GARA, WILSON, THOMPSON, PRUITT,
ORTIZ, GRENN, GUTTENBERG, TILTON,
SEATON,
03/14/18 (H) FOSTER
03/14/18 (H) NR: KAWASAKI
04/09/18 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/09/18 (H) VERSION: CSHB 97(STA)
04/10/18 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/10/18 (S) STA
04/17/18 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: HB 7

SHORT TITLE: MARKED BALLOT PHOTOS; PERSUASION AT POLLS
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KREISS-TOMKINS

01/18/17 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/17
01/18/17 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/17 (H) STA, CRA
01/31/17 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
01/31/17 (H) Heard & Held
01/31/17 (H) MINUTE(STA)
02/02/17 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/02/17 (H) Moved CSHB 7(STA) Out of Committee
02/02/17 (H) MINUTE(STA)
02/06/17 (H) STA RPT CS(STA) NT 7DP
02/06/17 (H) DP: JOHNSON, WOOL, LEDOUX, KNOPP,
BIRCH, TUCK, KREISS-TOMKINS
02/18/17 (H) CRA AT 10:00 AM BARNES 124
02/18/17 (H) Moved CSHB 7(CRA) Out of Committee
02/18/17 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
02/22/17 (H) CRA RPT CS(CRA) NT 3DP 2NR
02/22/17 (H) DP: WESTLAKE, DRUMMOND, PARISH
02/22/17 (H) NR: TALERICO, FANSLER
03/01/17 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
03/01/17 (H) VERSION: CSHB 7(CRA)
03/03/17 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/03/17 (S) CRA, STA
03/21/17 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/21/17 (S) Heard & Held
03/21/17 (S) MINUTE(CRA)
03/13/18 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/13/18 (S) Moved CSHB 7(CRA) Out of Committee
03/13/18 (S) MINUTE(CRA)
03/16/18 (S) CRA RPT 2DP 1DNP
03/16/18 (S) DP: BISHOP, GARDNER
03/16/18 (S) DNP: MACKINNON

04/10/18 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/10/18 (S) Scheduled but Not Heard
04/17/18 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: HB 235

SHORT TITLE: NORTH STAR MEDAL

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KREISS-TOMKINS

04/16/17 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/16/17 (H) STA
04/18/17 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/18/17 (H) Heard & Held
04/18/17 (H) MINUTE(STA)
04/20/17 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/20/17 (H) Moved CSHB 235(STA) Out of Committee
04/20/17 (H) MINUTE(STA)
04/21/17 (H) STA RPT CS(STA) 4DP
04/21/17 (H) DP: JOSEPHSON, BIRCH, TUCK, KREISS-
TOMKINS
05/01/17 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
05/01/17 (H) VERSION: CSHB 235(STA)
05/08/17 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/08/17 (S) STA
04/10/18 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/10/18 (S) Scheduled but Not Heard
04/17/18 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE DAN ORTIZ
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HCR 19.

JODIE GATTI, Staff
Representative Ortiz
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an overview of HCR 19 and answered questions.

REPRESENTATIVE STEVE THOMPSON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 97.

GORDON DESUTNER, Fire Training Administrator

Department of Public Safety
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions regarding HB 97.

REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN KREISS-TOMKINS

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 7, provided an overview.

NOAH STAR, Staff

Representative Kreiss-Tomkins
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an overview of HB 7 and answered questions.

ANDERS MARIUS, representing self

Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 7.

BRIAN JACKSON, Program Manager

Alaska Division of Elections
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions regarding HB 7.

REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN KREISS-TOMKINS

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 235, provided an overview.

GRIFFIN PLUSH, Staff

Representative Kreiss-Tomkins
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an overview of HB 235 and answered questions.

WALT MONEGAN, Commissioner

Alaska Department of Public Safety
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 235.

JACOB WILSON, Business Agent

Alaska Correctional Officers Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 235.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:32:41 PM](#)

CHAIR KEVIN MEYER called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Giessel, Wilson, Egan, Coghill, and Chair Meyer.

HCR 19-GOVERNOR: AK NATIVE LANGUAGES EMERGENCY

[3:33:37 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER announced the consideration of House Concurrent Resolution 19 (HCR 19).

[3:34:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DAN ORTIZ, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HCR 19, provided an overview as follows:

Over ten thousand years ago anthropological evidence suggests that the first human beings began migrating into the area we now call the State of Alaska, and when they migrated, they brought with them, of course, their culture, their language, and it became the initial, these different languages and these different cultures became the foundation of what we now have as Alaskan culture.

Over the years and in more recent history, we've seen an increasing problem in that key elements of that culture of language are beginning to disappear. This resolution is attempting to at least bring light to that particular problem.

The state has moved in the right direction by acknowledging and recognizing the 20 Alaska native languages as official languages of the state; however, recognition is just the first step.

The intent of this resolution is the heed the suggestions put forth by the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC). The council strongly urges the governor to issue and administrative order recognizing the linguistic emergency that exists and state that it's the policy of the State of Alaska to actively promote the survival and continued use of all 20 Alaska native languages.

In ANLPAC's biennial 2018 report to the governor and Legislature, ANLPAC warned that all 20 Alaska native languages are in crisis and most are predicted to become extinct or dormant by the end of 21st century. The State of Alaska can no longer sustain these rates of language loss unless policy changes are enacted that support people who are learning and speaking Alaska native languages throughout the state. The loss of language represents the loss of a critical piece of our history, culture and traditional way of life.

I respectfully request that the Legislature join me in the support of ANLPAC and the languages that represent intergenerational knowledge.

As an added note, in 2008, we the State of Alaska lost last Eyak fluent speaker we now have Tanana language have only one speaker left who is now 93 years old, so that is two specific examples of where we truly are looking at a crisis or looking at the prospect of losing some of these key languages that are part of our Alaskan culture.

SENATOR COGHILL asked what the process would be if an emergency administrative order was put forward.

[3:38:21 PM](#)

JODIE GATTI, Staff, Representative Ortiz, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, addressed ANLPAC's 2018 biennial report and noted five specific recommendations by the council as follows:

1. Support for emersion programs.
2. Statewide assessment program.
3. Official apology from the State of Alaska.
4. Language normalization activities such as recognizing indigenous place names.
5. Language restoration by making Alaska native languages a requirement for high school graduation.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ added that the intent of the resolution was not necessarily for the governor to specifically adopt any type of recommendations, but to submit a plan to deal with the issue.

[3:40:01 PM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL disclosed that he was raised in a village and noted his historical understanding and desire to keep languages

but remarked that he would not raise the issue to an emergency level. He continued as follows:

I would say it is definitely a cultural priority, there's no doubt about it; in fact, when we debated whether they should be official languages, I debated them on whether that was going to get them what they really wanted to do, and I think I was somewhat vindicated on that, but the question really is if we do an emergency rather than, let's just say we stop the resolution at the second resolve, to me that would compel us to some action, but when I think you put an emergency on it, you are asking for drama that may not do well in this arena.

I'm just giving you my thinking on this, that's why I wanted to know what the emergency recommendations might look like; for example, I was born and raised here, many of us were born and raised here, but my population up in the Fairbanks area turns over 20 percent every year, sometimes 30 percent. To ask them to apologize for something that happened 100 years ago may very well be a tall ask and may not raise to the level of an emergency; however, if there are things as a state can do to facilitate the growth of that language, most of us would be willing to do that.

So, when you ask for an emergency, I begin to ask the drama questions because that's exactly what you are doing, you are raising it to a level of drama that I don't know it's going to be beneficial. I'm just bringing that point up because if the governor then writes out an emergency order and we don't act like it's an emergency, then I think those who would expect something to happen might actually feel a backlash that would be less than productive. I'm just giving you my opinion after having been through several discussions on native language issues. I agree, let's keep the language rich and the culture rich, but I think by demanding this dramatic language, I just haven't bought into that part yet.

[3:42:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ replied as follows:

I fully appreciate the point that you are making with the point that you just made and understand it and get

it in terms of what it is you are saying. I think the word "emergency" as a part of the title was more not in the sense of trying to, it's just more of a recognition that it's happening right now; in other words, these languages are disappearing, it's just a fact that they are disappearing. So, it was more in recognition of that and knowing that if we don't do everything that we can, I don't think that this resolution is saying that it's the state's responsibility to deal with the issue. I think it's calling on the state to do everything that it can to facilitate, like you say, to facilitate activities and to promote actions that help to address the issue because 2 years ago or back when we adopted the 20 Alaska native languages, that was done, that was positive, I think that was under the Parnell Administration, it was very positive but we still have the problem.

The reason for the resolution was to address that fact that we still have a problem in that the problem is probably only increased since that time. The sense of, for a lack of a better word, sense of "emergency" has increased since that time because we are seeing concrete examples now where the threat is very real, perhaps more real than it was a couple of years ago.

[3:44:58 PM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL replied as follows:

Only two things, first of all you are asking the administration to declare a linguistic emergency, I struggle with that; and then I remember the debate on the language issue and they were put in the official language section and the argument I remember very clearly because I had to deal with it is they said it was going to be very symbolic so that we could actually get some of these things done, now we are coming back stepping on the fact that they are official, not symbolic, but official and that we are going to now require an emergency.

So, I just struggle with those kind of approaches and I know, I've already stuck my finger into the politically correct light socket, but at the same time I tend to appreciate the language. I was raised around the Athabascan language and I spoke Gwich'in language

as a kid, I loved it, and I loved the culture that went along with it, and our school didn't promote it, they didn't forbid it, there was a generation before me that did forbid it, I get that, but it is also true that since probably the Native Claims Settlement Act, there are now more native speakers in my home town than when I was a kid, and I spoke it. I think we are doing what we can, but I just don't know that I want to put an emergency moniker on it, that's all.

[3:46:36 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER noted that the previous year the governor declared an opioid emergency, an act that allowed access to federal dollars to help with the crisis. He asked Representative Ortiz if he anticipated and federal dollars coming from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) or somebody if an emergency is declared.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ answered that he has not considered Chair Meyer's question and does not know how to answer.

CHAIR MEYER opined that using the word "emergency" that the intent is to get somebody's attention, like what the governor had done with opioids where the federal government agreed and provided monies to help with the crisis. He said he was wondering if BIA maybe had a similar program.

[3:48:08 PM](#)

MS. GATTI specified that what the governor did for the opioid crisis was issue a disaster declaration which is different from HCR 19 where the resolution is an administrative order.

CHAIR MEYER asked Ms. Gatti to repeat what the governor issued.

MS. GATTI specified that the governor announced a disaster declaration, which is probably the reason he was able to leverage federal funding.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ stated that he failed to note that Ms. Gatti is a First Alaskan intern and that she has been the main driver for HCR 19 and has done an amazing job pushing the legislation.

[3:49:19 PM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL commented as follows:

Following up with Senator Coghill's comments, the word "emergency" appears in here twice at least as far as I

can see, the last word and of course the last word in the title. Emergencies typically mean eminent danger of life and limb, so after a flood or an earthquake we declare a state of emergency, people are dying, we need federal money, we need troops to come in, the National Guard; but, what you are describing is actually a need for urgent action, right, because that is a word you keep using is "urgent" and I get that, that's actually what you are portraying here. So, would it be more helpful to with the last words of this recognizing a "linguistic preservation urgency" versus an "emergency" which portrays that life is in danger, because I think the word "urgency" actually gets to what you want, and it portrays the need for focus on the subject, quickly, a suggestion.

3:50:51 PM

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ replied that he would not be opposed to the proposed change. He agreed with Senator Giessel that what he and the committee members are talking about is an urgent problem.

SENATOR GIESSEL reminded Representative Ortiz that he is a legislator and sometimes legislators defer too much.

SENATOR WILSON shared his background when moving to Alaska when he was 18. He noted that all Alaskan educators must take an Alaska Studies course, a course that he had taken because his intent was to become a teacher. He revealed that his wife is from the Lower Yukon area and her sister-in-law is fluent in Yup'ik and works with schools. He disclosed that he had met Ms. Jones, the last Yup'ik speaker before she died in the early 2000s. He referenced the Alaska Native Language Center in Fairbanks as an institution that has started documenting the languages. He said he was not sure that the state has had a lot of cultural emergency programs. He explained that he was trying to figure out what more the State of Alaska can do with the emergency identified in HCR 19 and queried what the administration is being asked to do by issuing the emergency order.

3:53:43 PM

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ replied that he did not have a specific goal in his vision for the resolution in terms of having the governor dedicate funds. He specified that his intent was to bring light to the issue and to encourage the governor to issue an urgent order, if the resolution becomes an urgent order rather than an emergency order, and to bring together a group of

interested people that would look at the issue again to submit a report on recommendations. He said he did not know if the report would recommend money to be included. He conceded that there would be great hesitancy in dedicating monetary resources due to the state's fiscal situation.

SENATOR WILSON asked if he was looking for more than a proclamation but less than an emergency declaration.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ commented as follows:

The issue of the word "emergency" was brought before me for the first time today. In the previous bill hearings that we had nobody that I can recall brought up the issue of the word "emergency" versus "urgent," so that just came to me today. I do think that Senator Giessel makes a good point in the sense that really we are talking about an urgent problem, so I am open to that idea, but in terms of what my goal in bringing this forward is something, I think it's making a little bit too much of an interpretation, I didn't even come up with the concern about "emergency" until just ten minutes ago.

SENATOR WILSON asked if his intent was to receive more than a proclamation from the governor.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ answered correct.

[3:56:58 PM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL asked Ms. Gatti to confirm that the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council was still an authorized body.

MS. GATTI answered correct.

SENATOR COGHILL inquired if the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council was about to bring forward some recommendations.

MS. GATTI answered yes.

SENATOR COGHILL asked if recommendations from the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council will be ongoing. He inquired if the council is a 501(c)(3) organization. He requested that Ms. Gatti help him understand the council's structure a bit more.

MS. GATTI explained that the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council was a state council created in 2012 from SB 130.

SENATOR COGHILL replied that he recalled the bill. He asked if the council was given a sunset date or a charge in perpetuity.

[3:58:21 PM](#)

MS. GATTI replied that there is no sunset date.

SENATOR COGHILL explained that the reason why he asked will be part of the ongoing conversation. He inquired if Senator Olson was on the council.

CHAIR MEYER asked if Representative Kreiss-Tompkins was also on the council.

SENATOR COGHILL continued as follows:

I'm then trying to then correlate why we would have the governor sign something unless they are not empowered to do something similar and so can you help me understand what the governor could do to either empower them or add extra drive to what they are doing.

MS. GATTI replied that the council has six members with one member that is employed through the state. She specified that council members are essentially volunteers, native language experts from different regions throughout the state.

SENATOR COGHILL commented as follows:

The reason I'm asking is they are actually doing the work. I was just wondering if we do ask the governor to sign a proclamation of some kind, just name it: emergency, urgency, whatever it is. What do you expect that that might do there? Do you think that that would empower them differently or if it did, what would be maybe a responsibility the state might take on more? Just from your perspective of somebody who has worked, looks like you have worked this issue between them and us, so I'm just trying to get a feel for what you might expect that would happen within that council.

[4:00:32 PM](#)

MS. GATTI replied as follows:

The council was created to advise the governor and the Legislature on programs, policies and projects to provide for programs and recommendations that would enhance and revitalize Alaska native languages. The structure that they are currently housed under, to my understanding, can be prohibitive to their efforts in some ways. So, they are only allowed one-fulltime staff and they are only allowed one-paid trip each year. Certainly, part of it could be them being empowered, but again, I would have to go back to what the representative said about the governor consulting a group of people.

SENATOR COGHILL explained that he was trying to get a context for the council. He asserted that the council was trying hard under austere circumstances, but so was everybody in Alaska.

SENATOR GIESSEL shared that she just looked up the council and shared that one Senate member and one House member are part of the council. She conceded that she did not know who the people are that serve on the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council.

SENATOR EGAN noted that Senator Olson is a member.

SENATOR GIESSEL reiterated that she was not sure and noted that she would like to hear from the senator and representative as far as what the council was doing. She continued as follows:

I'm not sure where the group is going in terms of recommendations. The staff read some recommendations, one of which was suggesting that native language proficiency be part of graduation requirements, that's a bit far in my opinion, and it's not possible to execute that. I'm just trying to get more information about something that we're wishing to be more empowered and I want to know more about who's there, what they are doing, and I'd like to hear from the senator that is on this council.

[4:03:21 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER asked who the representative is that serves on the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council. He assumed that Senator Olson serves on the council.

MS. GATTI replied correct, Senator Olson serves on the council. She said to her knowledge there is not a representative that serves on the council.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ responded that he did not know.

CHAIR MEYER remarked that Senator Giessel brought up a good point. He asked if anyone had contacted Senator Olson to see what the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council is doing and if they agreed with the resolution.

MS. GATTI noted that the committee members received a copy of the biennial report that was recently released by the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council.

[4:04:30 PM](#)

At ease.

[4:05:40 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER called the committee back to order.

SENATOR GIESSEL detailed that the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council is under the Division of Community and Regional Affairs, which is part of the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development. She said the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council is an advisor council that currently has six members, one of which is Senator Olson. She pointed out that council members are appointed by the governor and serve three-year terms. She noted that she did not recall having a confirmation hearing for anyone appointed to the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council.

[4:06:24 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER opened and closed public testimony.

[4:07:26 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER held HCR 19 in committee.

[4:07:34 PM](#)

At ease.

HB 97-REPEAL ALASKA FIRE STANDARDS COUNCIL TAX CREDIT

[4:08:44 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER called the committee back to order and announced the consideration of House Bill 97 (HB 97).

[4:09:19 PM](#)

FORREST WOLFE, Staff, Representative Thompson, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, announced his availability to answer questions regarding HB 97.

[4:09:26 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STEVE THOMPSON, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HB 97, provided an overview as follows:

House Bill 97 would repeal the Alaska Fire Standards Council tax credit program that was established back in 2000, it came about because we've been reviewing the indirect expenditure reports. The tax credit was intended to provide a funding mechanism for the Alaska Fire Standards Council via donations from the insurance companies and these insurance companies would then be able to take a tax credit against their Alaska tax; but in the mean time before this bill passed, the Alaska Fire Standards Council found their own funding mechanism through a certification fee schedule from all of their members.

The 2015 Legislative Finance Indirect Expenditure Report recommended that the tax credit be reviewed to determine if it was still applicable and potentially terminated if the credit is deemed ineffective. While the original legislation was no doubt well intended, it's proven to not only be ineffective but unnecessary as well and therefore it should be repealed and removed from statutes. In the 18 years that it has been in statutes there have been no donations made, no tax credits issued under this program. So, House Bill 97 would take the tax credit established under AS 21.96.075 out of the statute books and not have it be printed every year.

CHAIR MEYER asked if he said the Alaska Fire Standards Council's tax credit has never been used.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON answered that since 2000, no one has ever donated or applied for a tax credit under the statute. He reiterated that the Alaska Fire Standards Council found their own funding mechanism through member fees.

[4:11:40 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER asked when the tax credit expires.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON answered that with HB 97 the tax credit would expire January 1, 2019.

CHAIR MEYER asked when the tax credit would expire without HB 97.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON answered that there is no expiration date or sunset.

SENATOR WILSON asked why the sunset date is effective January 1, 2019 rather than upon passage.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON explained that the effective date was in the bill as a pre-file in 2017 with the thinking that the bill would pass in 2017. He specified that the intent was to ensure there were no problems with the bill until the expiration on January 1, 2019.

SENATOR WILSON admitted that his fear is someone will rush to file and take advantage of the tax credit prior to its expiration date.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON replied that he assumed because the Alaska Fire Standards Council has its own funding and the tax credit has never been used that it was time to get rid of the credit.

SENATOR WILSON thanked Representative Thompson and opined that the Legislature should go through the statutes more often to find out what is being used and what is not being used.

CHAIR MEYER asked if Representative Thompson could find more statutes that addressed expenditures.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON replied that House Bill 97 also addresses indirect expenditures.

CHAIR MEYER asked if there was any interest in the tax credit program prior to expiration.

[4:13:47 PM](#)

GORDON DESUTNER, Fire Training Administrator, Department of Public Safety, Anchorage, Alaska, replied that he has not received any letters of interest. He noted that the Alaska Fire Standards Council did opt to send letters out to all the

insurance companies that were operating in the state in 2016 and no meaningful responses were received.

SENATOR GIESSEL commended Representative Thompson for going through the indirect expenditure documents that all legislators receive. She said she appreciated the representative finding obsolete tax credits and for bringing the bill forward.

[4:14:50 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER opened and closed public testimony.

[4:15:24 PM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL moved to report the committee substitute for House Bill 97, [CSHB 97(STA)], version 30-LS0180\D from committee with individual recommendations and attached zero fiscal note.

[4:15:42 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER announced there being no objection, the motion carried.

[4:15:49 PM](#)

At ease.

HB 7-MARKED BALLOT PHOTOS; PERSUASION AT POLLS

[4:16:41 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER called the committee back to order and announced the consideration of House Bill 7 (HB 7).

[4:17:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN KREISS-TOMKINS, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HB 7, provided an overview as follows:

This bill would officially allow Alaska voters to take and share "ballot selfies" – the photos that people take of themselves or their ballots in the voting booth. Technically, it's illegal to share one in Alaska right now, though in practice, the law goes unenforced.

Sharing ballot photos was traditionally prohibited to prevent voter intimidation and vote buying (e.g., someone tells or pays you to vote a certain way, and makes you show a picture of your ballot to prove you did). But technology and the internet have changed the

reasons we take and share pictures: ballot selfies have become a common way to express support for a candidate, a cause, or the act of voting itself.

Alaska would be stepping into well-charted territory by allowing ballot selfies. Many other states recognize ballot selfies as a form of political speech, protected under the First Amendment. Bans on selfies have been struck down as unconstitutional in New Hampshire, Indiana, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Michigan, California, and Utah, joining states like Washington, Oregon, California, and Montana which never outlawed selfies to begin with.

There's no evidence to suggest ballot buying is a widespread problem in Alaska: the state does not enforce the current law that bans ballot photos. If ballot selfies are legalized, standing laws which criminalize voting interference would remain (AS 15.56).

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS summarized that "ballot selfies" is technically illegal but is not enforced and arguably unconstitutional. He noted that the law has never been challenged in court. He set forth that HB 7 effectively brings the law into alignment with what is currently happening while acknowledging and recognizing the "ballot selfies" practice is legal and an expression of free speech. He added that the law results in ambiguity where the Division of Election receives calls who might have posted a photo of their ballot to enquire if their act was illegal.

SENATOR WILSON noted that Section 1(a)(2) pertains to the prohibition of political persuasion near election polls as follows:

Physically display a photo, video, or other image of the person's or another person's market ballot in an attempt to persuade a person to vote for or against a candidate, proposition, or question.

He asked if the intent of the section is to address a person that displays their selfie photo.

[4:19:29 PM](#)

NOAH STAR, Staff, Representative Kreiss-Tomkins, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, answered as follows:

What that section allows is for someone to share a photo of their ballot with another person or with the public on line 11. So, if I were to take a picture of my ballot, I could post it on Instagram or Facebook, or share it with my friend, "Hey, this is my ballot selfie, this is who I vote for, I'm very excited about it," after I left the polling place.

CHAIR MEYER noted that Anchorage has gone to a ballot by mail and asked what would happen if a person takes a selfie with their ballot.

MR. STAR replied that the prohibition only deals with voting in the polling place. He added that there is a separate section of election statutes that talks about absentee law, but the proposed prohibition does not apply to the absentee section of law.

CHAIR MEYER asked if the proposed bill would not be necessary if the state goes to a mail-in ballot.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS answered correct. He disclosed that he is on the elections working group with Senator Stevens and noted that the group has been contemplating how things have worked for the Municipality of Anchorage. He opined that if Alaska ever considered vote by mail, the system would likely be a hybrid that continues to incorporate polling places.

CHAIR MEYER asked if allowing selfies in polling places would be disruptive.

[4:22:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS noted that selfies were currently happening. He remarked that it is hard to say within a ballot booth if a person is taking a long time to contemplate their ballot or taking a photo.

CHAIR MEYER pointed out that currently a poll worker could tell a person they could not take a selfie whereas there is nothing a poll worker could do should the proposed bill pass.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS answered as follows:

Right now I'm not sure there is any scenario in which a poll worker can, I mean if someone is taking a lot of time in the ballot box I'm not sure anyone is able

to because you're not allowed to look in, whether they are just reading every last word at excruciatingly slow pace of a ballot initiative or a constitutional amendment or whether it's because they are taking a photo, I'm not sure what recourse exists if somebody is taking a long time in a ballot box, I've actually never contemplated the question. I can say it hasn't come up thus far as an issue or concern, at least from the Division of Elections, not to say that it isn't happening out there somewhere.

SENATOR GIESSEL asked for a sectional analysis because she was not clear what the bill is doing

[4:24:58 PM](#)

MR. STAR provided the sectional analysis for HB 7 as follows:

Section 1

Amends AS 15.15.170 to prohibit any attempt to persuade other voters through the physical display of a photo, video, or other image of a person's ballot in a polling place or within 200 feet of any entrance to a polling place.

Section 2

Conforming change to existing AS 15.15.280 due to the new subsection created in section 3.

Section 3

This section is the central policy change. Amends AS 15.15.280 to exempt "ballot selfies" from the statutory prohibition on exhibiting marked ballots. A new subsection (b)(2) allows a voter to share a photo, video, or other image of her or his own marked ballot with the public, if they so choose, subject to the restriction established in section 1.

He summarized that the bill creates a narrow exception to the existing prohibition on exhibiting a marked ballot. He specified that the exception is authorized in section 3.

[4:26:17 PM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL addressed section 2 as follows:

So, it says here that the voter cannot display a photograph of the ballot that would enable another person to ascertain how the voter marked the ballot.

Is that a correct interpretation of the words written on that section?

MR. STAR answered yes. He added that the "B" point in section 3 establishes the exception.

SENATOR GIESSEL continued as follows:

Right, I'm sticking to section 2 right now. So, they can take a picture of themselves with a ballot but not the actual marked areas of the ballot?

MR. STAR answered yes. He said section 2 says that a person cannot take a picture of their ballot so that one could figure out how a person marked their ballot.

SENATOR GIESSEL continued as follows:

Okay, that's correct, that's what I just said and I'm asking you if that's a correct interpretation?

Now I'm going to ask you about section 3. So, what section 3 seems to be saying is once you leave the polling place, you can send that picture that you've taken that does not show how you marked your ballot, but you can send it after you leave the 200 feet from the entrance of the polling place.

MR. STAR replied as follows:

If I'm understanding correctly, I think I'd only amend what you said to say that you can take a picture of the ballot and once you leave the polling place this section 3 allows you to post that picture and share your marked ballot on the internet or with someone else.

SENATOR GIESSEL responded as follows:

Which is what I think I just said but perhaps I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is when you say, "marked ballot," the person who receives this picture regardless of where you are standing or what time of day it is, cannot ascertain how you voted on that ballot.

[4:28:18 PM](#)

MR. STAR explained as follows:

You can post a picture of your ballot in such a way that shows who you voted for as established by section 3, that's what the exception allows and apologizes if I'm not understanding properly what you are suggesting, but what section 3 allows is that you can post a picture of your ballot in such a way that it does show who you voted for.

SENATOR GIESSEL replied as follows:

This seems to want it both ways then. So, it says in section 1 that the person who receives this photograph can't tell how you marked the ballot, that's what it says, excuse me, section 2 says, you are not able to ascertain how the voter marked the ballot. So, I'm confused, it says the voter can exhibit the voter's ballot, so you can't tell how it is marked, now you are saying in section 3, "Oh, well yes you can." Can you explain that?

MR. STAR explained as follows:

AS 15.15.280 in section 2 establishes a general prohibition saying that in most cases one cannot display their marked ballot by photo or whatever reason. Section 3 establishes a narrow exception to that general prohibition saying that if you are requesting assistance under AS 15.15.240 in order to vote, or if you are not posting a photo, video or other image of your marked ballot in the polling place within 200 feet then you are okay, it is legal for you to post that photo, video or other image.

SENATOR GIESSEL replied that Mr. Star's explanation made no logical sense to her.

CHAIR MEYER commented as follows:

If I'm understanding this correctly, and I may not be either, is that once I get outside of the 200 feet of the polling place then I can post that picture in how I voted, how I marked the ballot, is that correct?

MR. STAR answered correct. He specified that section 1 was meant to prohibit someone with malicious intent, taking a picture of

their ballot in the privacy of the voting booth, coming outside waiving their photo around to show what he or she voted for. He emphasized that the intent of the bill was to prohibit the behavior he previously described. He specified that the intent of HB 7 was to allow an individual to post a picture of their ballot on social media once they leave the polling place.

[4:31:02 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER asked if it is currently illegal for him to post a photo of how he voted within 200 feet of the high school where he voted.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS explained as follows:

I believe the origin of the 200-foot language relates to election law that presently exists and you can't have signs, etc. The thought is that if you have this image on your phone and you are showing it to other people, that kind of falls in the same class of behavior, but to answer your question, if you are posting that photo on your phone or showing to other people, that is prohibited until you are 200 feet from the doors of your high school.

CHAIR MEYER inquired when a person would know when they are able to post a picture.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS replied as follows:

I think the same way that people need to if they are wearing the button of a candidate they are supporting, I think what happens in a lot of Alaskan communities in my experience is they've got poll workers that remind people when they see them, they are not necessarily on specific perimeter patrol exactly 200 feet from the door of the polling place, but if they get close and a polling person is around they would say as a general reminder that an individual has to take their political display down because it is the law. I would be surprised if it is enforced in overwhelming precision but probably the spirit of the law was what really matters.

SENATOR EGAN disclosed that he has received photos from "friends and enemies" showing how they voted. He pointed out that the bill just tries, "To make it a little more legal if they follow the law."

4:33:29 PM

CHAIR MEYER argued that poll workers currently can say, "Don't do that because it is illegal."

SENATOR EGAN noted that poll workers have yet to tell someone not to take a photo. He pointed out that no one knows what a person is doing in a voting booth once the curtain is drawn.

CHAIR MEYER noted that the bill says, "within 200 feet."

SENATOR EGAN explained that a person can send their photo when they are 200 feet away from the polling station.

CHAIR MEYER pointed out that a person taking a selfie when they enter a polling station is illegal.

SENATOR EGAN agreed and asked Representative Kreiss-Tomkins to confirm that

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS answered correct.

CHAIR MEYER noted that there was a question brought up about whether to allow selfie photos would be based on freedom of speech.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS commented as follows:

My recollection is that a similar law was challenged in New Hampshire and was struck down as unconstitutional on First Amendment grounds.

SENATOR COGHILL remarked as follows:

I think with our right to privacy in Alaska and your ability to be private within the voting booth it would be quite a stretch to be able to prohibit it in the polling booth, but what you could do is keep people from playing a video or something as soon as they got out of it. I think it's the impact of influencing other people over against your private life. I think they probably would never stop it if it was happening in the polling booth, but if you came out and started running a video of you doing it, you would probably be asked to leave and shut it off. Even bumper stickers, people drive up to a polling booth with bumper stickers and they will genteelly ask you to cover it

up or take it off. I think that is the issue here and it looks like an artful way of doing it and yes, I think it's one of those things where you are trying to guard people's privileges of expressing themselves while protecting those from being unduly overly influenced. It's just an artful way of dealing with the technology that we have to deal with in our world. The 200-foot limit probably is going to be a problem because it used to be just sign-waving, that was the big deal, but they could get themselves a little blue tooth speak and put it out there, so I think 200 feet is probable okay.

[4:36:46 PM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL commented as follows:

I just have a comment in response to what Senator Coghill has just said about freedom of expression, and the sponsor and his staff saying you can't come out of the voter's booth and try to influence other people. Now, as I look at this section you've given us of HB 7 testimonies, of course most of the testimony comes from Juneau, which is interesting, there's one here from Anchorage and this looks like a young woman who is 18. I appreciate the power of social media over young people, that to me speaks to influence and undue influence, in my opinion. We know that social media has caused a lot of behavior that we in this body, certainly, and society would not condone. I do believe that it is a very powerful media that drives people to do things that they don't think about. I don't share Senator Coghill's feeling that this is harmlessly constitutional.

SENATOR WILSON asked why consideration was not given to include absentee or mail-in ballots.

[4:38:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS explained as follows:

My understanding is that presently it is not illegal or criminal if you have an absentee ballot for that ballot to be displayed to another person. Presently, ballot parties or just for non-Anchorage elections, if a husband and wife both get their absentee ballots before going off on a trip that is going to prompt to be gone on election day, it's not illegal for them to

fill it out at the same time and if they want to show the other who they are voting for, they are able to do so and it's not technically against the law. We're just not going there and changing that law one way or the other given that all of that is presently legal. I haven't been made aware of any problems with the status quo.

SENATOR WILSON asked if photos during early voting was included in the legislation.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS replied as follows:

My understanding is the real demarcation line is whether or not you are at a polling place and since early voting happens at a polling location, a ballot selfie or taking an image and sharing it with other people is technically illegal or criminal. So, even though it is not election day because you are at a polling place, that's the criteria that is really at play.

[4:40:57 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER opened public testimony.

[4:41:08 PM](#)

ANDERS MARIUS, representing self, Sitka, Alaska, testified in support of HB 7. He said being allowed to take a picture of your ballot and posting it is a personal choice and a personal freedom that would be granted by HB 7.

[4:42:29 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER closed public testimony.

He asked the Alaska Division of Elections if taking photos in voting booths was an issue.

[4:43:01 PM](#)

BRIAN JACKSON, Program Manager, Alaska Division of Elections, Juneau, Alaska, answered as follows:

I don't know that I would necessarily call it an issue, but the Division of Elections does receive phone calls in the election cycle asking about the legality of this. Obviously as Senator Egan spoke people are doing this, taking selfies of themselves and sharing it with others.

CHAIR MEYER asked if poll workers currently can tell someone not to take a photo.

MR. JACKSON replied that poll workers could address the issue if someone was identified.

CHAIR MEYER asked if the bill would make it legal for voters to take a photo of their ballot in the ballot booth.

MR. JACKSON answered that taking a photo would be legal under the proposed legislation, but if someone were to come out of the ballot booth and display their ballots to anybody within the 200 foot range then the poll worker would identify that and they would have to "spoil the ballot," then the voter could have a second attempt at voting without displaying their ballot.

CHAIR MEYER replied as follows:

When you say, "spoil the ballot," what if they are just taking a picture of it, doing a selfie?

MR. JACKSON answered that if the person voting does not display their ballot within the 200-foot range, then taking a ballot selfie would be allowed under the proposed legislation.

CHAIR MEYER commented as follows:

How would you know that? Sometimes when you are waiting in line you've got your iPhone out and you are looking at it, that person could be displaying their ballot to somebody in the line, how would you know?

MR. JACKSON answered as follows:

The poll worker would be able to identify that at the time, more than likely. If they recognized it as displaying their ballot to others in the polling location, then they work with them to "spoil" their ballot.

4:46:05 PM

CHAIR MEYER asked if the Division of Elections has a position on the bill.

MR. JACKSON answered that the Division of Elections does not oppose HB 7.

[4:46:58 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER held HB 7 in committee.

He remarked that the bill is confusing as written as to what a person can or cannot do and the legislation would be addressed at the next committee meeting.

SENATOR WILSON asked if the Division of Elections has considered allowing voters to use "sample ballots" in the interim to take photos with should the legislation not pass.

MR. JACKSON answered that the Division of Elections could discuss Senator Wilson's proposal. He noted that the "sample ballot" idea might create more work for poll workers and pointed out that some polling stations are busy.

SENATOR WILSON opined that taking pictures of your sample ballot would be perfectly legal.

MR. JACKSON replied that a person could take a photo of a sample ballot unless the polling station ran out of ballots. He noted that there is a provision for polling stations to utilize sample ballots as official election ballots should the polling station run out of ballots.

HB 235-NORTH STAR MEDAL

[4:49:31 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER announced the consideration of HB 235.

[4:49:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN KREISS-TOMKINS, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HB 235, referenced the sponsor statement for HB 235 as follows:

HB 235 creates a rare and high honor to be awarded by the State of Alaska to first responders who are injured or killed while exhibiting great courage in the service of their fellow Alaskans. The North Star Medal is reserved for firefighters, peace officers, first responders, and search and rescue volunteers.

The idea for the bill came from Representative Bob Lynn, the former chair of the House State Affairs Committee, who envisioned the award as "a small

thanksgiving" for the valor and sacrifice shown by these men and women.

One comparable award currently exists. The State Medal for Heroism was created by the Legislature in 1965 to recognize the heroic and valorous deed of saving a life. In contrast to the North Star Medal, the Medal for Heroism can be awarded to any Alaskan and has been awarded to individuals of all ages for what are often spontaneous acts of bravery. For example, the Medal for Heroism was awarded to a 10-year-old boy in Nome who lost his life rescuing a woman from a burning house in 1984, and to others who have saved people from drowning, or from death and injury in the aftermath of airplane and car crashes.

The North Star Medal does not duplicate this award; while the recipients of the State Medal for Heroism have responded to extraordinary events with courage, the North Star Medal honors those individuals who show up each day knowing that they could be asked to give their lives to protect and serve their fellow Alaskans. Other states such as Idaho, Illinois, Oregon, and Texas have similar awards that honor first responders for meritorious conduct and/or death or injury in the line of duty.

Nominations for the North Star Medal can originate within communities and organizations and will be passed on to the highest-ranking supervisor in the department or organization, who will then make recommendations to the Commissioner of Public Safety. After consideration, the Commissioner of Public Safety will submit the names of the nominees for the award to the governor.

At a ceremony held no more than once a year, the governor will present the recipient of the North Star Medal with a ribbon, a medal, and a citation. If the honoree is no longer living or cannot accept the award, the next of kin may accept it on their behalf.

The North Star Medal is a sign of gratitude from the people of Alaska to first responders whose dedication is a constant in a changing world.

[4:50:20 PM](#)

GRIFFIN PLUSH, Staff, Representative Kreiss-Tomkins, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, summarized that the North Star Medal would be a regular award given by the governor to first responders from nominations submitted by departments and organizations throughout the state to recognize the sacrifices made by first responders.

CHAIR MEYER asked if the governor has currently a way of recognizing people who have done a great job whether they are police officers, fire fighters or school teachers.

MR. PLUSH explained as follows:

There are several different awards, for heroism specifically there is only one comparable award and that is the Alaska Medal for Heroism; however, that award is an award that is awarded to any Alaskan based on an individual heroic deed or valor [inaudible] and it is something that is not awarded very frequently.

The North Star Medal on the other hand is something that would be more regular and specifically for our first responders, for our police officers, firefighters, corrections officers, and search and rescue volunteers that are making that daily sacrifice. So, it's a medal that is more specific to those first responders and more awarded more regularly.

[4:53:16 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER noted that there is some overlap between the two medals and asked Mr. Plush to confirm that there is a difference.

MR. PLUSH answered as follows:

Yes, specifically awarded for displays of extreme bravery and heroism, and awarded by the governor; those are kind of the two main categories where there is overlap, but the medals are substantially different.

CHAIR MEYER noted Mr. Lynn's comments that he calls the North Star Medal the "Purple Heart."

MR. PLUSH explained as follows:

Yes, that's language the we've been using as well, and I think that is sort of a fitting description of it as well, sort of a "Purple Heart" for our first responders. There are military honors, of course, like the "Purple Heart" that are awarded as well, but this is specifically for our civilian first responders, public servants who are putting their lives at risk.

CHAIR MEYER asked why Representative Lynn was not able to get the legislation passed.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS said he did not believe Representative Lynn ever introduced legislation to establish the North Star Medal.

CHAIR MEYER asked if Representative Lynn would have won his reelection that he would have probably introduced that legislation.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS answered that was his understanding from his conversation with Representative Lynn.

[4:56:01 PM](#)

WALT MONEGAN, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Public Safety, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of HB 235 as follows:

When this idea, this medal was first introduced or brought to my attention, it made a lot of sense in regard to that we have many people out there, not only in the police and fire realm, but also in the volunteers that we have with search and rescue, pretty much all over the state. Barring anybody getting hurt or worse, I think this award is something that they can put on the wall or their family can have on the wall as a very poignant reminder of their efforts.

On a personal note, my father was killed in combat in Korea and his Medal of Honor is hanging on our wall as a daily reminder of what sometimes we are called to do.

I support this concept and I want to speak for all of the people out there who work for the safety of everybody out there.

CHAIR MEYER asked if an individual can currently receive a medal for heroism. He added that if so, how often do individuals currently received medals for heroism.

COMMISSIONER MONEGAN answered as follows:

The last time we presented a medal of sorts was in action in a state trooper medal and it was to our BPO that was shot and wounded in the Bethel area about a year or so ago. So, this particular medal would be something that would be bestowed upon him or her by the governor as opposed to something from the Alaska State Troopers or myself. I think it is significant and hopefully we don't have to present too many of them because usually it involves somebody being hurt.

He continued as follows:

I like it because it goes beyond the uniform services, it goes to the search and rescue folks that do this as volunteers. I think it is very significant and it is honoring those who spend their time helping others.

[4:59:36 PM](#)

JACOB WILSON, Business Agent, Alaska Correctional Officers Association, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of HB 235 as follows:

I wanted to echo the commissioner's comments on behalf of correctional officers. We have about 860 members now and on behalf of those members we absolutely support HB 235 and the intent of the legislation to recognize peace officers in Alaska who die or are seriously injured in the line of duty.

As peace officers, Alaska's correctional officers place their lives on the line "24/7," and unfortunately at times, correctional officers and other law enforcement officers around the state are seriously injured on a line of duty and in rare occasions lose their lives while performing their jobs. While nothing can replace their loss or can replace the fact that some people will never be the same after an on-the-job injury, the public recognition of the sacrifice that they made will provide some consolation to the surviving relatives or

the injured worker who is the recipient of the North Star Medal.

We appreciate the steps that this legislation takes to recognize our brave and selfless women and men who go to work everyday not knowing if they are going to return home safely.

[5:01:25 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER closed public testimony.

[5:01:51 PM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL moved to report CSHB 235(STA), version 30-LS0816\J from committee with individual recommendations and attached zero fiscal note.

[5:02:07 PM](#)

CHAIR MEYER announced that there being no objection, the motion carried.

[5:02:26 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Meyer adjourned the Senate State Affairs Committee at 5:02 p.m.