

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

March 12, 2019

2:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Chair
Representative Chris Tuck, Vice Chair
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Geran Tarr
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Sharon Jackson
Representative George Rauscher

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 71

"An Act relating to hiring for positions in state service based on substitution of military work experience or training for required civilian work experience or training."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 71

SHORT TITLE: STATE PERSONNEL ACT: VETERANS' EXPERIENCE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STORY

02/25/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/25/19	(H)	MLV, STA
03/12/19	(H)	MLV AT 2:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 71 as the sponsor of the bill.

GREG SMITH, Staff
Representative Andi Story

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on HB 71 on behalf of the bill sponsor, Representative Story.

PAM DAY, Manager
Classification Services
Division of Personnel and Labor Relations
Department of Administration
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during discussion of HB 71.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[2:05:14 PM](#)

CHAIR GABRIELLE LEDOUX called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. Representatives LeDoux, Rauscher, Jackson, Thompson, Kopp, and Tuck were present at the call to order. Representative Tarr arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 71-STATE PERSONNEL ACT: VETERANS' EXPERIENCE

[2:05:57 PM](#)

CHAIR LEDOUX announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 71, "An Act relating to hiring for positions in state service based on substitution of military work experience or training for required civilian work experience or training."

[2:07:09 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, Alaska State Legislature, paraphrased from a Sponsor Statement [Included in members' packets], which read:

Members of the military bravely serve our nation and protect our nation's values around the world. The rigors of the battlefield can be immense, yet the transition back to civilian life often proves to be another battle. In a 2012 survey, two-thirds of veterans named finding a job as the greatest challenge in transition from military to civilian life.

House Bill [71] attempts to ease this transition by allowing veterans, former prisoners of war or members of the national guard to substitute documented military experience for published minimum qualifications for state classified positions. Numerous states, including Alaska, provide veterans hiring benefits and employment preferences; House Bill [71] would provide additional support to our veterans by allowing their previous military work experience to carry over into the civilian world.

Allowing the use of military experience for state job qualifications is currently allowed in Alaska's personnel policy. House Bill [71] would enshrine this current practice into law, ensuring those who have sacrificed for our nation will have better access to employment irrespective of changes in administrations.

I appreciate your consideration of this legislation and ask for your support in its passage.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY shared her background serving on the school board, noting that, although policies could change from administration to administration, statutes remained in place through these transitions.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON asked for clarification whether the discussion was for proposed bill HB 71, as the sponsor statement referenced HB 76 and HB 165.

[2:09:41 PM](#)

GREG SMITH, Staff, Representative Andi Story, Alaska State Legislature, in response to Representative Thompson, acknowledged that an incorrect version of the sponsor statement had been sent to committee members, and he offered his belief that a correct version had since been sent. He clarified that the discussion was for proposed HB 71.

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REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON referenced previous legislation that military experience and professional certifications were carried over to civilian positions. He pointed out that this had also included certification for military spouses. He asked how the proposed bill related to this previous legislation.

[2:11:04 PM](#)

MR. SMITH explained that the previous legislation covered other benefits and preferences by the state to veterans in transition to civilian life. He stated that the proposed bill was "another tool" to help with veterans' employment.

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REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked if there was a specified time frame for a transfer of credits.

MR. SMITH offered his belief that experience gained during internships, volunteerism, and work allowed an applicant to meet minimum qualifications. He offered his understanding that the hiring policy allowed "a bit of back and forth" to an applicant for the relevancy of experience, and not to a time period.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON, offering an example of a quartermaster in military service, asked whether this experience would include older military personnel and would not have a time limit.

MR. SMITH offered his understanding that this was correct.

[2:14:21 PM](#)

PAM DAY, Manager, Classification Services, Division of Personnel and Labor Relations, Department of Administration, expressed her agreement that this was correct that "it doesn't matter how old the experience is, we still will qualify and look at it. We're mainly looking for the relevance of the experience towards the minimum qualifications of the job."

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked if this included state government positions.

[MS. DAY indicated her agreement.]

[2:15:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER referenced the supporting document [Included in members' packets] from the National Conference of State Legislatures, dated October 18, 2013, and asked about the point system and the matriculation of points toward education in other states.

MS. DAY replied that she was not familiar with this system.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked if the State of Alaska had a point system for veterans' preference.

MS. DAY asked if he was referencing veterans' preference.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER said that he was "talking about preference anywhere in the State of Alaska. I'm sure there's a point system if you're filling out an application, depending on what type of category you fall into, may determine how many points advantage you have at a particular job." He asked for an explanation.

[2:16:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP explained that Alaska statute did allow for a veterans' preference, opining that 10 points, or 10 percent of total allowable points on an application, were given for disabled veterans. He offered his belief that there was also a 5 percent veterans' preference. He stated that Alaska had long supported veterans' preference in many job classes, and that it was dependent on the class of disability.

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CHAIR LEDOUX asked if the proposed bill had been introduced in a previous legislature.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY offered a history of the proposed bill. She reported that the representative from her district in the previous legislature had introduced this bill and, although it had passed unanimously in the House, it was not passed through the Senate. The prior representative had asked her to "champion" the bill and bring it "through to fruition." She expressed her agreement to the importance of the proposed bill.

CHAIR LEDOUX expressed her agreement that the proposed bill had seemed "so familiar."

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REPRESENTATIVE TUCK stated that all veterans' issues were a "no brainer." He directed attention to the "Education Credits for Military Training" handout [Included in members' packets], noting that it had taken three legislatures before House Bill 2 was passed, even though it was sent to the Senate each year. He

questioned why the veterans' hiring preference was mandated for state employees but not required for private employers.

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CHAIR LEDOUX opened public testimony.

[2:20:59 PM](#)

CHAIR LEDOUX closed public testimony.

[2:21:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed her appreciation to the veterans and their service to the State of Alaska, and she emphasized that Alaska should, in statute, give them preference for their military service.

[2:21:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK acknowledged that there had been prior legislation concerning the application of military training for college degrees and apprenticeship programs. He acknowledged the difficulty for implementation of this "to the fullest extent possible." He offered his belief that there had been earlier proposed legislation which had insured that the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development would transition to make the law effective for previous experience to be credited. He asked that the committee continue to push for the use of veterans' experience in job applications.

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REPRESENTATIVE KOPP added that this was a piece of legislation to protect military families as many spouses were both veterans. When one spouse retired, while the other remained in active military, the civilian spouse would often have difficulty finding a job as their work experience was just military. He noted that this could put a strain on the relationship. He declared that the proposed bill would help military families.

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REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON offered her appreciation for the proposed bill and opined that it would "open a door for community businesses to get involved and do more hiring, as well."

2:24:40 PM

CHAIR LEDOUX said that proposed HB 71 would be held over until the next committee meeting on Thursday [March 14] and she asked that any proposed amendments be sent to her office by 5:00 p.m. tomorrow [Wednesday, March 13].

2:25:07 PM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.