

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

March 19, 2019

2:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Chair
Representative Geran Tarr
Representative Sharon Jackson
Representative George Rauscher

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Chris Tuck, Vice Chair
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Steve Thompson

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."

- RESCINDED ACTION OF 3/14/19; MOVED HB 71 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 12

Supporting the completion of the Northern Rail Extension; supporting the increase in defensive capabilities at Fort Greely, Alaska; and encouraging the development of critical Arctic infrastructure.

- 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
03/12/19	(H)	Heard & Held
03/12/19	(H)	MINUTE (MLV)
03/14/19	(H)	MLV AT 2:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

03/14/19 (H) Moved HB 71 Out of Committee
03/14/19 (H) MINUTE (MLV)
03/19/19 (H) MLV AT 2:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HJR 12

SHORT TITLE: NORTHERN RAIL EXTENSION
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) TALERICO

03/13/19 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/13/19 (H) MLV, TRA
03/19/19 (H) MLV AT 2:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE DAVE TALERICO
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HJR 12 as the sponsor of the resolution.

THOMAS STUDLER, Staff
Representative Dave Talerico
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on HJR 12 on behalf of the resolution sponsor, Representative Talerico.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[2:02:59 PM](#)

CHAIR GABRIELLE LEDOUX called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. Representatives LeDoux, Tarr, Rauscher, and Jackson were present at the call to order.

HB 71-STATE PERSONNEL ACT: VETERANS' EXPERIENCE

[2:04:02 PM](#)

CHAIR LEDOUX announced that the first 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."

[2:04:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR made a motion to rescind the committee's action on 3/14/19 in reporting HB 71 from committee. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

CHAIR LEDOUX asked if there were any questions regarding the fiscal note for HB 71.

[2:05:31 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR moved to report HB 71 from committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being no objection, HB 71 was moved from the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

HJR 12-NORTHERN RAIL EXTENSION

[2:05:58 PM](#)

CHAIR LEDOUX announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 12, Supporting the completion of the Northern Rail Extension; supporting the increase in defensive capabilities at Fort Greely, Alaska; and encouraging the development of critical Arctic infrastructure.

[2:06:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DAVE TALERICO, Alaska State Legislature, paraphrased from the Sponsor Statement, which read [original punctuation provided]:

Completing the Northern Rail Extension to Fort Greely and Delta Junction would support Military operations, mining, and agricultural in the Interior of Alaska.

In the Act of 1914, the United States Congress authorized the construction of a railroad in Alaska. The railroad was to connect one or more open harbors in Alaska, with the Interior of Alaska, to develop agricultural and mineral resources of Alaska, and the settlement of people on public lands therein, to provide transportation of fuels for the Military, transporting troops, arms, munitions, the mail, and other governmental and public uses. Unfortunately, that dream was never realized.

The Alaska Railroad Transfer Act (ARTA) of 1983, the U.S. Congress again recognized the importance of the railroad in providing freight and passenger rail service to Alaska. Congress also found that continuation of services and the expansion of those services are necessary to achieve Federal, State, and private objectives. The State's continued operation together with expansion of the railroad constitutes an appropriate public use of the rail system. Once again, the dream of expansion was unrealized.

Finally, in 2013, almost one hundred years later, the Northern rail expansion was proposed by Alaska Railroad in conjunction with the Department of Defense, the four phased plan was completed. Phase one, Crossing the Tanana River, was completed. The remaining three phases need to be accomplished before we can realize completion of the Northern rail expansion.

With the expansion of the Fort Greely missile complex and expanded training ranges, increased agriculture in Delta Junction, and increased mining operations in the area. This resolution supports critical infrastructure development, national security, economic development, and natural resource development in the State of Alaska. The Northern Rail Extension project would provide essential freight and passenger service to support transportation and mobility needs of the region.

This is a project long overdue for Alaska and I ask for your support for this resolution.

[2:11:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked why this project was never completed and whether there were any objections for completion.

[2:11:26 PM](#)

THOMAS STUDLER, Staff, Representative Dave Talerico, Alaska State Legislature, explained that the initial funding by the Department of Defense had been for completion of the bridge so the military could access the training areas in the Tanana Flats. He reported that the second phase was intended to lay

rail across the bridge, the third phase was intended to lay rail to Delta, and the fourth phase was intended to come across the river into Delta Junction and Fort Greely.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked if, after the initial funding, there had been an intention for completion of the project.

MR. STUDLER replied that he was not aware for the reasons to the lack of follow through by the Department of Defense. He added that this was the reason for the proposed resolution asking the Department of Defense to provide the funding.

[2:13:03 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked if Phase one and Phase two had been completed.

MR. STUDLER, in response, explained that Phase one had been completed with the construction of the access route and the bridge, and that the yet to be completed Phase two was to lay the rail on that access route from Eielson Air Force Base through Salcha, across the river, to a staging area on the training grounds. He added that Phase 3 was intended to complete the 38 miles of rail from the staging area to Delta and that Phase 4 was to go back across the river into Delta Junction and Fort Greely.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR shared her understanding that the Feed and Fertilizer Coop in Delta Junction had been built where the railway had been intended to allow for rail shipments.

[2:14:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked if the right of way had already been purchased for the project.

MR. STUDLER explained that, as the right of way was military land, the access had already been granted to the railroad.

[2:15:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked if this project would affect private property owners.

MR. STUDLER offered his belief that this would not be the case as the access across the river was directly into Fort Greely and there was not any private property affected.

[2:16:22 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[2:17:52 PM](#)

CHAIR LEDOUX opened public testimony.

[2:18:10 PM](#)

CHAIR LEDOUX closed public testimony.

[2:18:31 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO thanked the committee for hearing the resolution.

[2:18:47 PM](#)

CHAIR LEDOUX said that HJR 12 would be held over.

[2:19:10 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 2:19 p.m.