

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE
February 20, 2020
8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair
Representative John Lincoln
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Dave Talerico
Representative Sarah Vance

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Zack Fields, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Andi Story
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Sarah Vance

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Representative Bryce Edgmon, Vice Chair

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Co-Chair
Representative Laddie Shaw

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: REAL ID IMPLEMENTATION

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JACOLINE BERGSTROM, Executive Director
Health Services
Tanana Chiefs Conference
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information during a presentation on REAL ID implementation.

CHARLIE NELSON, Vice President/Tribal Government Services
Administrator
Maniilaq Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information during a presentation on REAL ID implementation.

MELANIE BAHNKE, President
Kawerak Non-Profit
Nome, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information and answered questions during a presentation on REAL ID implementation.

RICHARD PETERSON, President
Central Council of Tlingit and Haida
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information and answered questions during a presentation on REAL ID implementation.

JENNA WAMSGANZ, Deputy Director
Division of Motor Vehicles
Department of Administration
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered a PowerPoint presentation on REAL ID implementation.

KELLY TSHIBAKA, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Administration
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during a presentation on REAL ID implementation.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:29 AM](#)

CHAIR TIFFANY ZULKOSKY called the joint meeting of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs and the House State Affairs

Standing Committee to order at 8:04 a.m. From the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs, Representatives Ortiz, Kopp, Talerico, Vance, and Zulkosky were present at the call to order. Representative Lincoln arrived as the meeting was in progress. From the House State Affairs Standing Committee, Representatives Hopkins, Thompson, and Fields were present at the call to order. Representative Story arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: REAL ID IMPLEMENTATION

[8:06:13 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY opened public testimony on the topic of REAL ID Implementation.

[8:06:48 AM](#)

JACOLINE BERGSTROM, Executive Director, Health Services, Tanana Chiefs Conference, let the committee know that Tanana Chiefs Conference [TCC] is a tribal health consortium of 37 federally recognized tribes serving 39 villages in the Interior of Alaska which are spread out over about 235,000 square miles. Only a handful of TCC communities are connected to the road system, and are only accessible by boat or plane, Ms. Bergstrom stated. She added that for the majority of rural communities, TCC, which serves 17,000 people and is a member of the Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS), is the only health care provider.

MS. BERGSTROM said that while TCC delivers many services in person and through telemedicine whenever possible, it happens routinely that patients are required to fly from their home communities to a larger city for specialty care services. When a patient who has had to use Medevac Alaska Air Ambulance ("Medevac") in the event of a life-threatening emergency gets better, he or she then has to take a regular flight home. These air travel scenarios [will require after October 1, 2020,] that patients have a compliant REAL ID. Currently TCC has been able to facilitate travel for Alaska Native and American Indian beneficiaries as part of Senate Bill 74, Medicaid Reforms [passed during the Twenty-ninth Alaska State Legislature]. However, Ms. Bergstrom imparted, beginning October 1, travelers may not be able to receive medical care or return home without problems.

[8:10:35 AM](#)

MS. BERGSTROM shared with the committee some of the challenges faced by tribal members and others in rural communities in trying to obtain a REAL ID. She admitted that the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has a long list of documents that could qualify when one applies for a REAL ID, but in some cases, elders in rural communities were never issued a birth certificate and may not have baptismal records. Challenges also abound, she stated, when people have changed their name due to marriage or to divorce and do not have the correct papers in order. Ms. Bergstrom added that the required documents often show a residential address, but in rural communities off the road system there are no street names and people get mail delivered to a Post Office Box or via general delivery. Furthermore, some people cannot show utility bills because there are no water or sanitation hookups to individual homes, and, in some cases having built their own homes, folks do not have a mortgage or homeowner's insurance that is tied to a physical address.

MS. BERGSTROM communicated that though these issues have been presented, there have not yet been reasonable solutions put forth by the DMV. She related also that there have been mixed reports from folks traveling with the tribal IDs [a federally recognized form of identification which can substitute for the REAL ID]. Sometimes the U.S. Transport Security Administration (TSA) will accept a tribal ID and sometimes it will not, she explained: some tribal IDs do not contain a photo of the passenger and therefore will not be accepted as a valid substitution for a state-issued REAL ID. Some tribes do not want to take on the expense of getting tribal IDs issued before they know whether those IDs will be accepted or whether getting them would be a waste of resources, Ms. Bergstrom added.

8:14:15 AM

CHARLIE NELSON, Vice President/Tribal Government Services Administrator, Maniilaq Association, informed the committee that Maniilaq Association ("Maniilaq") is a regional nonprofit association providing health, social, and tribal services to residents in the Northwest Arctic Borough. Similar to TCC, Mr. Nelson continued, Maniilaq serves about 8,000 tribal and non-tribal citizens between its clinics and hospital.

MR. NELSON informed the committee that, in anticipation of the REAL ID deadline coming up, proactive steps in promoting education have been taken. Community members have been informed that the earlier they are able to get the REAL ID, the better

off they will be, but he admitted this stance is also not without its problems. He echoed Ms. Bergstrom when he mentioned that some residents do not have access to the DMV; there is one DMV in Kotzebue, Alaska, a shared position between the DMV and the administrative assistant for the state trooper, open just four hours a day. Of course, Mr. Nelson added, there are also times [DMV personnel at the Kotzebue location] cannot work for personal or for business reasons, leaving residents without regular access and thus making applying for a compliant REAL ID a major challenge.

8:16:58 AM

MR. NELSON let committee members know that [Northwest Arctic Borough and Point Hope] residents' electronic profiles have been modified so that they each show a physical address, which has been accepted in lieu of a utility bill, the latter usually only providing one household member's name and thus not helping the other generations oftentimes living under the same roof. Mr. Nelson aligned himself with TCC in terms of the expansion of the number of tribal members on Medicaid; some of the challenges [in obtaining a REAL ID] therein, however, including the timing of appointments, flight schedules, and, again, truncated DMV hours. He mentioned that it may be helpful for the committee to work with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to help loosen some of the requirements, even if it is on a temporary basis, so that those trying to obtain a REAL ID are not bound by strict Medicaid rules which stipulate those traveling for medical must leave on the next possible flight after an appointment, as the DMV isn't open long enough even for those who are trying hard to get REAL IDs.

MR. NELSON told the committee that Maniilaq has been able to provide financial assistance to three tribes in the service area, and two other tribes had to purchase equipment to issue tribal ID cards with pictures. These [tribal IDs] have been met with a moderate level of success between Kotzebue and Anchorage, he added, but when the tribal IDs have been used other places a disruption in verifying the IDs' REAL ID-compliance has ensued. Mr. Nelson let the committee know that Maniilaq has since made for TSA a list of all federally recognized tribes in the region, but that he hasn't heard reports of the list's success outside of Kotzebue.

8:22:26 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked Mr. Nelson whether he could verify that it is true that while some tribal IDs with photos from the Northwest Arctic Borough region have been accepted by TSA, there have also been some instances in which they have not been accepted, and also that there is some anxiety and apprehension about acceptance of the tribal ID beyond the region as well as outside of Alaska, where TSA agents may be more familiar with what a tribal ID from the region would look like.

[8:23:04 AM](#)

MR. NELSON agreed with Representative Zulkosky's summation.

[8:23:19 AM](#)

MELANIE BAHNKE, President, Kawerak Non-Profit ("Kewarak"), informed the committee of what has been happening in the Bering Strait Region, which includes the hub community of Nome and fifteen outlying villages, only one of which is accessible via Nome, to ensure federal REAL ID compliance. The Bering Strait Region does not have a local DMV, she imparted, and flights via contractor are about \$400-\$600. Because the contractors only fly in the afternoons, travelers would most likely need to book a hotel as well as provide for meals, she added. If no relatives were in town to assist the travelers, the trip would likely cost \$600-\$800. Ms. Bahnke let committee members know that the Bering Strait region had been working on the REAL ID "issue" for several years, and that she does believe the state and tribes are partners on the unfunded mandate endeavor which faces them both.

[8:25:20 AM](#)

MS. BAHNKE told the committee that at least \$200,000 has been spent thus far in ensuring the REAL ID-issuing machines and systems were up to date. She suggested the state make the DMV link more prominent on its own homepage or, better, make it so those wishing to obtain a REAL ID could begin the process online as is being done in California and Virginia. Outreach, having a 1-800 number, and appropriating funding so that villages have a technician fly to the community were all ideas Ms. Bahnke suggested to the state to ensure REAL IDs are obtained.

[8:29:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked Ms. Bahnke if he was correct to assume that folks having to be transported via Medevac from the Bering Strait Region to Anchorage and Seattle were in the minority.

[8:30:24 AM](#)

MS. BAHNKE said that she wasn't sure but with two flights daily probably everyone's reasons were not medical.

[8:30:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether there was a significant number of people traveling on a commercial jet to Anchorage to seek medical care.

[8:30:35 AM](#)

MS. BAHNKE said that there were.

[8:30:57 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked which states made it easier for people to preload information to their DMV systems in their quest to obtain a REAL ID.

[8:31:15 AM](#)

MS. BAHNKE replied that in California and Virginia it was very easy to submit the majority of one's information online, and that it wouldn't be difficult for Alaskans to figure out as most Alaskans file for their permanent fund dividend (PFD) online.

[8:32:12 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked whether Nome had a DMV.

[8:32:18 AM](#)

MS. BAHNKE replied that Nome does not have a DMV, but there is a private contractor available Monday through Friday, 1 p.m. until 5 p.m. A Kewarak employee sent randomly to check on the situation, Ms. Bahnke related, was given an estimated wait time of 300 minutes.

[8:33:09 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY mentioned that the legislature has been hearing about a lot of alternative options to both the tribal IDs and the REAL IDs, and asked Ms. Bahnke to talk about the process of applying for a passport in the Bering Strait Region.

8:33:41 AM

MS. BAHNKE replied that the villages have zero access to passport photography, so folks would have to fly to Nome and then send original documents to Seattle.

8:34:48 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP added that if the state had been partnering with tribes, there would not have been such a significant opportunity cost. Tribal council would verify who lived in the village and where and, in many cases, who came in under what circumstances.

8:37:35 AM

RICHARD PETERSON, President, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida ("Tlingit and Haida"), informed the committee that Tlingit & Haida is the largest tribe in Alaska with over 31,000 enrolled tribal citizens across the state, nation, and world, only a handful of whom are connected to the road system. Tlingit & Haida represents over 65,000 Alaskans from Ketchikan to Kotzebue, he imparted, and represents over 100 rural communities, all of which are provided service by the tribe. Mr. Peterson stated that the REAL ID issue is a prime example of what the tribe's top coalition priorities - regional equity, and budgeting - look like in practice.

MR. PETERSON informed the committee that state services should be available to residents of Alaska regardless of where they reside. Tlingit & Haida took steps to issue top of the line tribal IDs for its citizens, and there are still reports that TSA won't accept them. Tlingit & Haida's IDs are federally compliant and meet the REAL ID requirement, and yet oftentimes it comes down to the training that the TSA employees have, he stated.

8:40:50 AM

MR. PETERSON let the committee know that an elder's original marriage license of fifty years was not accepted [in REAL ID application] because, although it had a number, it did not have

the Washington State seal, so the elder had been required to send a registered copy via United Parcel Service, which costs \$57. Applying for the REAL ID is \$40, so it cost \$97 altogether. Mr. Peterson echoed other testifiers' remarks about difficulties of applying for REAL IDs without proof of physical address, as well as those who have changed their names due to marriage or divorce, and gave some specific examples of these cases of which he was aware. Last, he added, when there is a situation where someone needs to use Medevac, it is common that no one thinks to collect the correct documentation before boarding the helicopter, leaving the patient potentially without a way home after an already arduous journey.

MR. PETERSON added that it was good to see the DMV in the Ted Stevens International airport in Anchorage, and that Fairbanks and Juneau could probably benefit from a DMV presence in their airports as well. He suggested also that the state coordinate with Census takers already in rural communities, who would perhaps be able to verify folks' identity when there is no street address or birth certificate available.

[8:45:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked Mr. Peterson whether Tlingit & Haida had reached out to TSA with regard to the latter's not recognizing the tribal IDs.

[8:46:00 AM](#)

MR. PETERSON replied that Tlingit & Haida had reached out to TSA, and that they had also reached out to the Congressional delegation, but the problem is that new hires working "off-hours" were not "up to speed."

[8:46:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE mentioned that [tribal IDs not being accepted by TSA] highlighted the tribes' lack of recognition in general, and that it seemed unfortunate that this lack of recognition was perpetuated in something as simple as going through the airport and using identification.

[8:47:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked Mr. Peterson what percentage of Tlingit & Haida members have tribal IDs and to describe the process of getting one.

[8:48:31 AM](#)

MR. PETERSON replied that probably 30-40 percent of Tlingit & Haida members have tribal IDs and that the tribe is expending great effort trying to get enrollment staff to communities. To obtain an ID, he continued, members must supply a certificate that they have Indian blood from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

[8:50:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked Mr. Peterson whether he thought the state had a responsibility to make REAL ID sign-up available in rural communities, whether through the DMV or tribal partnership.

[8:50:25 AM](#)

MR. PETERSON answered yes, absolutely, and that his [Mr. Peterson's] presence at the hearing was indicative of the state having come up with another "cookie-cutter process" that didn't work for everybody. He imparted that there are folks in Tlingit & Haida communities who don't leave the community itself, which would be fine, except sometimes they have to, and they are out in the "big bad world ... stuck." Federal requirements require federal funding, he added.

[8:51:33 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked Mr. Peterson to speak to the total cost to the tribe in obtaining the software, infrastructure, and staff to supply its members with REAL IDs.

[8:52:03 AM](#)

MR. PETERSON said that he couldn't give an exact number but that he would estimate around \$150,000.

[8:52:35 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked Mr. Peterson to speak to the difference in capacity for Tlingit & Haida's ability to provide resources in comparison with tribes in other parts of Alaska.

[8:53:01 AM](#)

MR. PETERSON replied that some tribes have been eligible for grants and that they get money for citizens for whom they

provide services, called the "service area." The tribe does not get any money for citizens outside the service area, he explained, but uses its own funds so serve them. So, the resources look quite a bit different when it is taken into consideration the numbers of members in a particular area, he added.

[8:54:55 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that the legislature has been told that the DMV is awaiting requests from tribes in order to go out into the communities and provide REAL ID-compliant services, and asked Mr. Peterson whether this has been the case with Tlingit & Haida.

[8:55:23 AM](#)

MR. PETERSON answered that the DMV had not reached out to Tlingit & Haida but that he had heard it had reached out to other tribes and requested the IDs be at the tribes' own expense.

[8:55:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY commented that she would like to think that the state were closer to making things easier for everyone and that she felt encouraged to hear the solutions brought forward.

[8:57:27 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked Mr. Peterson whether he had heard anything about tribal IDs being accepted at military bases after the October deadline.

[8:57:51 AM](#)

MR. PETERSON replied that he has not heard that they will not be.

[8:58:25 AM](#)

JENNA WAMSGANZ, Deputy Director, Division of Motor Vehicles, Department of Administration, began a PowerPoint presentation on REAL ID implementation and ongoing compliance by informing the committee that REAL ID was enacted after the [the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001]. The federal government would set standards for identification such as driver's licenses, and

residents would need to provide documentation in person to prove identity and lawful status, social security number, and principal residency, she put forth. State-issued ID cards would be accepted only if those cards come from a REAL ID-compliant state, she added.

[9:01:03 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked Ms. Wamsganz, referencing slide 3, to talk about what it meant to achieve Department of Homeland Security (DHS) compliance in 2019.

[9:01:15 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ replied that the process to achieve compliance was "a little bit backwards" as REAL IDs were issued before DHS would evaluate the program and determine whether a state was in compliance with the REAL ID Act [passed by Congress in 2005].

[9:01:30 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked whether there was a more specific date or time frame within 2019 that Alaska received its compliance.

[9:01:28 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ replied that REAL IDs were issued in January 2019 and compliance was issued in April 2019. Ms. Wamsganz then informed the committee that that REAL ID requirements included an applicant's understanding of the options for drivers' licenses at the time of issuance, as well as an understanding of the type of driver's license the applicant was selecting. Furthermore, she imparted that it was required that a REAL ID applicant must clearly request a driver's license that was federally compliant in order to obtain a REAL ID, and that a state or a municipal government may not require a person to possess or use a driver's license that is federally compliant [slide 4].

[9:02:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked Ms. Wamsganz why the applicant must choose between a regular driver's license and a REAL ID and why it was highlighted that the person must understand the options.

[9:03:13 AM](#)

KELLY TSHIBAKA, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Administration, replied that the biometric identification being captured for the REAL ID was used to compare facial features of Alaskans against data that is captured in federal databases across the country. She added that REAL IDs are intentionally being used for data gathering against U.S. citizens, so since citizens are turning over a significant amount of data to the federal government and this was an invasion of privacy, citizens needed to understand what they were doing.

[9:04:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether the applicant was provided a list of options by the DMV, which would clarify what the options are.

[9:05:29 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said that it was clear on the form whether the person was choosing a federally compliant ID or a non-compliant ID. She said the DMV has also started passing out a list of 30 other federally compliant acceptable forms of identification for TSA [slide 5].

[9:06:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP highlighted that REAL IDs only do what passports already do, albeit on a state basis. Traveling internationally has required this level of security for decades, he added.

[9:07:02 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ responded that 350,000 Alaskans have passports; 65,000 have military IDs; and 67,000 have veteran IDs.

[9:07:49 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked Ms. Wamsganz the extent to which the DMV was aware that TSA's recognition of tribal IDs was uneven.

[9:08:06 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ replied that the DMV had been assured by TSA officials that tribal IDs with a photo are "absolutely accepted" at TSA checkpoints across the nation. She added that TSA has committed to increasing agents' training "as much as they can."

[9:09:18 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked whether the DMV had sent information to tribes across Alaska informing them what they needed to do to meet TSA's requirements.

[9:09:55 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ replied that the only parameters TSA had been given are that the tribe is federally recognized and that the ID card contains a photo.

[9:10:10 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that it can be a little bit confusing accessing the DMV's information because it states there is additional criteria tribal IDs must meet. She asked again if that criteria had been communicated to tribes by the DMV.

[9:10:33 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ answered that when the DMV has conversations with the tribes, the same information [that Ms. Wamsganz shared to the committee] is shared, but the DMV must be careful not to speak on behalf of TSA. Since the DMV is not TSA, she continued, it would not be appropriate to distribute official correspondence across Alaska on behalf of TSA.

[9:10:58 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that it was a little concerning that the DMV didn't take on a communication responsibility to help share what the standards are. She added that if the information were being shared with a group of legislators, then it could also be shared via a "Dear Tribal Leader" letter so people would know what opportunities there were to meet other standards, specifically if the DMV is relying on tribal IDs as an alternative option to REAL IDs.

[9:11:29 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said that the DMV did have the information as well as a link to TSA's website on its website, and that "if anyone asks," the DMV does offer the information.

[9:11:48 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that it may be more appropriate, when looking at an October 1, 2020, deadline, for the DMV to be proactive in sharing information, rather than reactive, so that Alaskans are not stranded at an airport or trying to get into a federal facility, and tribes do not have to go through [the experience of being turned away by TSA].

[9:12:24 AM](#)

MS. TSHIBAKA said that she thought Representative Zulkosky's idea [about the "Dear Tribal Leader" letter] was "very creative" and the DMV would deliberate about it.

[9:12:50 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that oftentimes federal departments send letters to notify tribes that regulations are being considered or that changes are going to be made.

[9:13:22 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ informed the committee that in 2019 Alaska issued almost 100,000 REAL IDs; through February 15th, 2020, 115,000 REAL IDs had been issued total. She referred to a chart on slide 6 of her presentation to show how many REAL IDs have been issued in each individual month in 2019 and the first two months of 2020. A red line signified a REAL ID "take rate," which showed the number of folks who had a REAL ID credential [as opposed to leaving the DMV with the card in hand]. She told the committee it was important to recognize the demand for REAL IDs is down in Alaska because of the alternative federally recognized identifications discussed.

[9:14:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Ms. Wamsganz whether the information was broken down by region and place due to the difficulty in rural areas of obtaining REAL IDs.

[9:14:56 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said the DMV did have that data and that she would touch on it in a forthcoming slide.

[9:15:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked Ms. Wamsganz whether tribes had the ability to issue federally compliant tribal IDs and, if so, how many had it.

[9:15:14 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ responded that she thought they were all allowed to [issue federally compliant tribal IDs], but she said she didn't know how many had the infrastructure in place.

[9:15:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked what the DMV's plan was for obtaining that information.

[9:16:00 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said that she would go into outreach later in her presentation.

[9:16:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS said he hoped the DMV was focusing outreach accordingly, because in some cases the DMV would probably have to travel to regions that did not have the means to put REAL ID-issuing infrastructure in place.

[9:17:03 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said the DMV had a multi-layered plan focused on reaching out to Alaskans through multiple platforms to "spread the word about the upcoming [REAL ID] enforcement date." In 2019 a partnership was formed between the DMV, the airports in Anchorage and Fairbanks, and statewide aviation, she informed the committee, with the aim of posting literature, conducting press conferences, and increasing [the DMV's "REAL ID"] social media presence. Ms. Wamsganz directed the committee's attention to a picture of a REAL ID-issuing station in the Anchorage airport [slides 7-8].

[9:17:56 AM](#)

MS. BAHNKE, responding to Representative Fields' question, said that by April 2021, the 19 tribes in the Bering Strait Region that compact with Kewerak should have REAL ID-compliant software. Her question, she added, was with regard to TSA's

acceptance of the 500-plus tribal nations' IDs throughout the U.S.

[9:19:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS checked with Ms. Bahnke that her position was that the state should make a REAL ID available in the Bering Strait region just as it is in Anchorage.

[9:19:54 AM](#)

MS. BAHNKE said people in the Bering Strait region would really appreciate the opportunity, as it's a mutual burden when people are "stuck."

[9:21:08 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ informed the committee the DMV is starting a partnership with Alaska Airlines to educate [airline employees] what cards could be used for travel after October 1, 2020, and that the DMV believed partnering with stakeholders like the airlines and the airports were "one of the best ways" the DMV could contribute to Alaskans' preparation for TSA's federally mandated travel requirements. She said that the partnerships were key because "they engaged those who were most likely to be traveling through TSA checkpoints" after October 1. She added that she was happy to report that TSA was also "ramping up" its own outreach efforts in terms of social media outreach, public service announcements, and airport advertising.

MS. WAMSGANZ told the committee that there were about 47,553 Alaskans living in communities without a DMV [slide 9], that 2,750 REAL IDs had been issued in those communities as of February 2020, and that the forecasted adult Medicaid travel from those areas from late February 2020 through September 2020 [before REAL IDs are required in October 2020] was 9,976. The significance of the forecasted Medicaid travel was that those folks would be traveling to a community with a DMV and could potentially obtain a REAL ID at that time, she reiterated.

[9:23:47 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that she noticed that the slide was not specific in terms of which rural communities were assessed, and that her office had the number of Alaskans without access to a DMV closer to 64,000. She added that what was most concerning was the number of Alaskans within certain regions had REAL IDs

issued, and that it would be interesting to see that number in a statewide breakdown, rather than just a breakdown by sector.

[9:25:00 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said she would be happy to provide a statewide breakdown.

[9:25:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS said that he would like to express concern that 6,751 was a "gross undercounting" of the need for REAL IDs in rural Alaska when it was taken into consideration that there were approximately 200 communities without access to a DMV. Pointing out another problematic aspect of slide 9, Representative Fields added that since a tribal ID may not be an adequate substitute for a REAL ID, he stated that he would also not deduct Nome area tribal IDs from the population still in need of REAL IDs.

[9:26:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY added that those traveling for health probably should not be deducted either when earlier testimony regarding limited DMV hours was taken into consideration, but that an encouraging solution would be partnering with the federal Medicaid program to receive a waiver for travel restrictions.

[9:26:46 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said that she thought it was a great solution to partner with Medicaid and that the DMV would follow up on it.

[9:27:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE said perhaps DHSS could offer a temporary extension of travel time for those traveling for medical reasons so they would have time to make it to the DMV if they so desired.

[9:27:56 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked Ms. Wamsganz, on the topic of Alaskans without consistent and/or reliable access to the DMV, in Bethel and Nome, for example, what the DMV's plans were regarding staff being sent to those regions.

9:29:10 AM

MS. WAMSGANZ replied that the DMV would take each community one at a time starting with Bethel, which had an unexpected closure in January due to family emergency, followed by scheduled leave in February. In summer 2020 the DMV intended to hire another short-term, non-permanent employee for the Bethel office to help with DMV traffic, which is "seasonal." Ms. Wamsganz added that this coming summer will be a "historic" summer for the DMV. She also imparted that Nome has a commission agent open half days as the winter is the slow time. That agent, who is also looking to hire someone for the "summer rush," has also been in communication with Kewerak to try to do "some sort of a summer road show" to surrounding villages.

9:30:34 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that after hearing from leaders of the communities it seemed like a real opportunity lost to wait until summer to provide an additional non-permanent position within each DMV if they are not consistently open now, and there could be more proactive outreach into respective subregions to answer questions and to be able to keep regular open office hours. She asked Ms. Wamsganz whether the DMV would be opposed to providing these positions now rather than waiting until summer when the October 1 deadline would be much closer.

9:31:25 AM

MS. WAMSGANZ answered that the DMV is not opposed to providing the additional positions, but that the department had not yet seen the volume to warrant them.

9:31:36 AM

REPRESENTATIVE STORY also urged "more employees sooner" because their training is critical. She added that perhaps new employees could work on improving the DMV website if there is down time during training.

9:32:10 AM

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked what the options were for rural communities who don't have a regular road system and addresses.

9:33:00 AM

MS. WAMSGANZ responded that there was a system in place where verified leaders could attest in writing to the description and location of a resident's home.

[9:33:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether there is anything besides a physical address, such as the proof tribal members have to provide to the Bureau of Indian Affairs that could verify identity.

[9:35:01 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ answered that DHS left it up to the states. In this way, the DMV has been able to determine creative solutions to problems unique to Alaska. She admitted that gathering up the documents and getting the REAL ID can be challenging. Since the REAL ID requires original, certified documents, in some cases it makes more sense to suggest tribal members get tribal IDs, which is why that is the course the DMV has been following in certain instances.

[9:36:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP said that he wanted to compliment the Department of Administration (DOA) for the residency description improvements for the PFD. He mentioned that it was "vastly more descriptive."

[9:36:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether there was a way for a letter to be sent with an individual verifying that person's address.

[9:37:10 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ confirmed that the DMV will accept such letters.

[9:37:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS requested that information about the DMV accepting letters be included in the address verification literature tribes will receive.

[9:37:31 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said that the DMV is currently working with the Alaska Federation of Natives to create a newsletter, and that these types of concerns would be spelled out therein.

[9:37:48 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that after having heard overwhelming testimony from folks living and working in rural Alaska and the cost of travel from a village in a particular sub-region to a hub city, she wished to return to the statement about not seeing the demand for additional DMV staff in rural areas. "Ramping up" may be difficult during summer with it being the subsistence season and folks being engaged in traditional gathering to offset costs on their family throughout the winter season, she added. Regarding the lack of request to the community for additional DMVs in certain areas, Representative Zulkosky said that her office was starting to see formal requests for those services. She then asked Ms. Wamsganz whether it was the DMV's expectation and/or requirement that tribes and villages should be submitting letters of request to bring DMV services to their villages, and if that is indeed the expectation, whether that had been communicated as such.

[9:39:37 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ, referencing slide 12 in her presentation, said that step one would be teaching the community about its options for federally compliant IDs. After learning all of the options, some communities would determine there is not much need for REAL IDs as they would have their tribal IDs, she stated. Others would go back and survey their communities, she continued, which was really important as communities cannot request the DMVs to come; the request must come from the applicants themselves. After the community surveys are completed, a document checker would check that everyone had what they needed to have a successful travel trip, Ms. Wamsganz informed the committee.

[9:41:09 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY checked with Ms. Wamsganz that she was saying it was the DMV's belief that because there was not a DMV in a community there must be a formal request to provide what are otherwise basic state-funded services in other parts of Alaska.

[9:41:33 AM](#)

MS. TSHIBAKA said that the DMV was trying to comply with the statute that there is an "organized way of making sure" an individual has requested a REAL ID and understand that neither their community nor the state were requiring them to obtain a REAL ID.

9:42:06 AM

CO-CHAIR FIELDS said that based on earlier testimony he might request a different approach in which access to basic state documents is the default. If there were a community that did not want such services, the DMV could in that case look at not providing those services. When there are elections, he pointed out, it costs more to provide polling places, and yet it is done because there are citizens living in those communities. He added that it did not make sense to wait until a specific request was received when [federally recognized identification] is a very basic state service that should be provided.

9:43:17 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY added that the fact that the DMV would go out to a rural community doesn't necessarily compel someone to apply for a REAL ID if that person doesn't want one. There is a difference in expectation of what equitable access could and should provide from the DMV, she pointed out. She echoed testifiers who said that all Alaskans were still Alaskans regardless of where they lived and pointed out that with a firm deadline of October 1, with its real implications for movement of Alaskans, the expectation needed to be revised.

9:44:15 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP added that one of the reasons DOA is in a "no-man's land" with regard to REAL ID is because in 2018 it was optional, meaning it was not meant to make people feel as though it were their only option. Now, as it has evolved, he continued, it has become apparent how many people need to travel, it has become mandatory, especially in certain areas of the state, but it didn't start out that way.

9:46:45 AM

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE admitted that REAL ID is still optional, but that one of the larger concerns was Alaska residents getting stuck because they lacked proper identification. She asked whether there were a "temporary turnaround" to REAL ID that

could help in an emergency situation, and whether it would be helpful to the DMV for the committee to try to come up with something.

[9:48:18 AM](#)

MS. TSHIBAKA said that the DMV was in active discussions regarding an expansion location in Southwest Alaska targeting 20 communities [slide 10]. She then directed the committee to slide 15, which showed that there were DMV locations in "hub" [TSA screening checkpoint] cities. Obtaining a REAL ID currently takes two days; Ms. Tshibaka asked Ms. Wamsganz what it would require in order for the DMV to give Alaskans the option of a 24-hour return time.

[9:51:40 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ replied that it would require some minor programming and operational changes, and an expedited REAL ID would be at an additional cost. Referencing slide 16, Ms. Wamsganz added by way of summary that the DMV was tasked with implementing an unfunded federal mandate that was imposed on Alaska. The DMV is responsible for providing REAL IDs to Alaskans who want the ID because they don't have an alternative form of identification or they want an additional form. She continued that the DMV's plan was to continue to take on additional duties, such as education and outreach, engaging with rural communities, and partnering with different stakeholders and advocacy groups to inform Alaskans of their options.

[9:54:02 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked whether the personnel cost covered the non-permanent positions Ms. Wamsganz spoke of earlier.

[9:54:12 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ replied that it did not and that those positions would be at an additional cost.

[9:54:17 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked how the DMV planned to prioritize outreach to rural Alaska if there were only \$1000 to spend for the remainder of fiscal year 2020 (FY 20).

[9:54:41 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said that for the rural REAL ID outreach the DMV had mirrored another of their policies it had done "for quite some time" in which it didn't offer certain services, such as road testing, but in which services could instead be requested by communities. The communities would be responsible for the travel expenses such as airfare, lodging, meals, and incidentals. RavnAir Alaska airline had also offered to cover travel to "most" communities, she added.

[9:55:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether parts of the state that are on the road system, such as Anchorage, Fairbanks, or the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, paid the DMV to implement REAL ID.

[9:56:29 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ replied that those municipalities did not pay the DMV to implement REAL ID.

[9:56:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS suggested revisiting the requirement that rural communities pay for a service that the DMV pays for in urban Alaska.

[9:56:58 AM](#)

MS. TSHIBAKA replied that the DMV is revisiting this topic, as well as trying to get the word out that DHSS is paying \$19 million for 9,375 adults from rural communities to come into hub locations. She added that if the DMV could get "really effective" messaging to those adults traveling before the October 1 deadline, then they can come into the DMV where there wouldn't be issues with the camera, and it would be confirmed they had the right paperwork. She added that the effective messaging campaign would be a much better use of state money when it came to those adults getting their REAL IDs in time.

[9:58:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS said he is glad that policy is being revisited as the committee has heard that many rural communities do not have the capacity to pay for REAL ID infrastructure. He also noted that in 2019 Alaska saved \$45.7 million in travel for healthcare, up from \$10.5 million in 2017 and \$28.8 million in

2018. It costs money to issue REAL IDs, he continued, but when it is looked at in terms of Medicaid financing and the 100 percent Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) rate, the return on investment should be clear, even moving beyond the state's obligations to its citizens.

[9:59:00 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked for background on whether the DMV is net revenue positive or net revenue negative every fiscal year and, if it is positive, how much is returned to the general fund each year.

[9:59:16 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ said that she did not have the number that the DMV returned to the general fund, but she noted that the budget was \$17 million and the DMV brought in close to \$60 million.

[9:59:35 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that between \$38 million to 42 million is returned to the general fund every year.

[9:59:39 AM](#)

MS. WAMSGANZ responded that is correct.

[9:59:40 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said that the committee had heard the facts about the numbers that are saved in general funds through partnerships with tribes every year. She went on to say she appreciated Ms. Tshibaka's willingness to revisit the cost for rural communities to provide travel and access to the DMV for individuals, especially when the DMV is willing to request \$500,000 to move the Anchorage DMV to a new location but has only budgeted \$1,000 for rural outreach for the remainder of FY 20.

[10:01:34 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committees, the joint meeting of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs and the House State Affairs Standing Committee was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.