

**SENATE BILL NO. 81**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

**BY SENATORS OLSON, Gray-Jackson, Myers, Holland, Shower, Revak, Begich, Wielechowski, Kiehl, Stedman, Bishop, Stevens, Hoffman, Kawasaki, Micciche**

**Introduced: 2/12/21**

**Referred: Community & Regional Affairs, State Affairs, Finance**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act requiring background investigations of village public safety officer applicants**  
2 **by the Department of Public Safety; relating to the village public safety officer program;**  
3 **and providing for an effective date."**

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 \* **Section 1.** AS 12.62.400(a) is amended to read:

6 (a) To obtain a national criminal history record check for determining a  
7 person's qualifications for a license, permit, registration, employment, or position, a  
8 person shall submit the person's fingerprints to the department with the fee established  
9 by AS 12.62.160. The department may submit the fingerprints to the Federal Bureau  
10 of Investigation to obtain a national criminal history record check of the person for the  
11 purpose of evaluating a person's qualifications for

12 (1) a license or conditional contractor's permit to manufacture, sell,  
13 offer for sale, possess for sale or barter, traffic in, or barter an alcoholic beverage  
14 under AS 04.11;

- 1 (2) licensure as a mortgage lender, a mortgage broker, or a mortgage  
2 loan originator under AS 06.60;
- 3 (3) admission to the Alaska Bar Association under AS 08.08;
- 4 (4) licensure as a collection agency operator under AS 08.24;
- 5 (5) a certificate of fitness to handle explosives under AS 08.52;
- 6 (6) licensure as a massage therapist under AS 08.61;
- 7 (7) licensure to practice nursing or certification as a nurse aide under  
8 AS 08.68;
- 9 (8) certification as a real estate appraiser under as 08.87;
- 10 (9) a position involving supervisory or disciplinary power over a minor  
11 or dependent adult for which criminal justice information may be released under  
12 AS 12.62.160(b)(9);
- 13 (10) a teacher certificate under AS 14.20;
- 14 (11) a registration or license to operate a marijuana establishment  
15 under AS 17.38;
- 16 (12) admittance to a police training program under AS 18.65.230 or for  
17 certification as a police officer under AS 18.65.240 if that person's prospective  
18 employer does not have access to a criminal justice information system;
- 19 (13) licensure as a security guard under AS 18.65.400 - 18.65.490;
- 20 (14) a concealed handgun permit under AS 18.65.700 - 18.65.790;
- 21 (15) licensure as an insurance producer, managing general agent,  
22 reinsurance intermediary broker, reinsurance intermediary manager, surplus lines  
23 broker, or independent adjuster under AS 21.27;
- 24 (16) serving and executing process issued by a court by a person  
25 designated under AS 22.20.130;
- 26 (17) a school bus driver license under AS 28.15.046;
- 27 (18) licensure as an operator or an instructor for a commercial driver  
28 training school under AS 28.17;
- 29 (19) registration as a broker-dealer, agent, investment adviser  
30 representative, or investment adviser under AS 45.56.300 - 45.56.350;
- 31 (20) licensure, license renewal, certification, certification renewal, or

1 payment from the Department of Health and Social Services of an individual and an  
 2 entity subject to the requirements for a criminal history check under AS 47.05.310,  
 3 including

4 (A) a public home care provider described in AS 47.05.017;

5 (B) a provider of home and community-based waiver services  
 6 financed under AS 47.07.030(c);

7 (C) a case manager to coordinate community mental health  
 8 services under AS 47.30.530;

9 (D) an entity listed in AS 47.32.010(b), including an owner,  
 10 officer, director, member, partner, employee, volunteer, or contractor of an  
 11 entity; or

12 (E) an individual or entity not described in (A) - (D) of this  
 13 paragraph that is required by statute or regulation to be licensed or certified by  
 14 the Department of Health and Social Services or that is eligible to receive  
 15 payments, in whole or in part, from the Department of Health and Social  
 16 Services to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of persons who are  
 17 served by the programs administered by the Department of Health and Social  
 18 Services;

19 **(21) employment as a village public safety officer under**  
 20 **AS 18.65.672 or certification as a village public safety officer under AS 18.65.682.**

21 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 18.65.080 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

22 (b) The Department of Public Safety shall investigate an individual who  
 23 applies to be employed as a village public safety officer under AS 18.65.672 or  
 24 certified as a village public safety officer under AS 18.65.682, upon receipt of the  
 25 materials listed in AS 18.65.674(a)(1) from a village public safety officer grant  
 26 recipient, to determine whether the individual has been convicted of a disqualifying  
 27 crime listed in AS 18.65.672(b).

28 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 18.65.670 is repealed and reenacted to read:

29 **Sec. 18.65.670. Village public safety officer program.** (a) The village public  
 30 safety officer program is created in the Department of Public Safety, with funding  
 31 appropriated to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic

1 Development and disbursed through grants made under this section. The purpose of  
2 the program is to appoint, train, supervise, and retain persons to serve as village public  
3 safety officers.

4 (b) With funds appropriated for that purpose, the commissioner of commerce,  
5 community, and economic development shall, in coordination with the commissioner  
6 of public safety, provide grants to nonprofit regional corporations and Alaska Native  
7 organizations for training and employment of village public safety officers. If a  
8 nonprofit regional corporation for a village or Alaska Native organization declines a  
9 grant under this subsection, the commissioner may provide the grant to a municipality  
10 with a population of less than 10,000 willing to administer the grant for the village.  
11 Before awarding a grant to a municipality, the commissioner of commerce,  
12 community, and economic development shall consult with the commissioner of public  
13 safety and the nonprofit regional corporation or Alaska Native organization that  
14 declined the grant.

15 (c) The Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development  
16 shall annually accept applications from entities described in (b) of this section for  
17 village public safety officer grants. Grant applicants may apply to employ village  
18 public safety officers in participating villages located in the applicant's region. An  
19 application must include

20 (1) a projected budget, including administrative costs;

21 (2) a list of villages in which the applicant plans to employ village  
22 public safety officers; and

23 (3) other information required by the Department of Commerce,  
24 Community, and Economic Development.

25 (d) The Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development  
26 shall enter into a written agreement with a grant recipient before providing grant  
27 funding. The agreement must require the grant recipient to

28 (1) comply with state and federal law;

29 (2) provide a salary and benefit schedule for the village public safety  
30 officer;

31 (3) be named as the employer of the village public safety officer; and

1 (4) maintain insurance, independently or with the assistance of the  
2 Department of Public Safety, that includes coverage for premiums as follows:

3 (A) workers' compensation insurance as required under  
4 AS 23.30;

5 (B) comprehensive general liability insurance, including  
6 professional practice insurance for police with

7 (i) a limit not less than \$1,000,000; and

8 (ii) the state, including an officer, employee, or agent of  
9 the state, listed as an additional named insured.

10 (e) An award of grant funding, depending on the funds awarded, must provide  
11 for at least one village public safety officer for each village included in a grant  
12 agreement entered into under (d) of this section. A grant recipient may assign more  
13 than one village public safety officer to a village and request additional funding for the  
14 additional village public safety officer. The Department of Commerce, Community,  
15 and Economic Development may approve the request for additional funding if the  
16 grant recipient provides justification reasonably related to the duties of a village public  
17 safety officer and other public safety needs.

18 (f) A grant recipient may assign a traveling village public safety officer to  
19 serve multiple villages within the grant recipient's region.

20 (g) A grant recipient shall

21 (1) keep original financial, personnel, and other records relating to a  
22 village public safety officer for at least three years after the officer's termination of  
23 employment and, upon request, provide that information to the Department of  
24 Commerce, Community, and Economic Development or the Department of Public  
25 Safety;

26 (2) provide annual financial audits to the Department of Commerce,  
27 Community, and Economic Development;

28 (3) facilitate site visits by the Department of Public Safety to monitor  
29 public safety officer performance and compliance with state and federal law;

30 (4) notify the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic  
31 Development if the grant recipient fails to comply with state or federal law;

1 (5) timely notify the Department of Public Safety if a village public  
2 safety officer resigns or vacates a position; and

3 (6) timely notify and submit a written report to the Department of  
4 Public Safety if a village public safety officer points a firearm in the direction of  
5 another person or discharges a firearm while on duty.

6 (h) The commissioner of public safety may, in consultation with grant  
7 recipients, as provided in (k) of this section, adopt regulations related to village public  
8 safety officers, including establishing minimum standards and training, physical  
9 fitness requirements, criteria for participation by a community, a municipality, an  
10 Alaska Native organization, or a corporation, and the interaction between the  
11 Department of Public Safety and village public safety officers. If the commissioner of  
12 public safety adopts regulations regarding training for village public safety officers,  
13 the training must be consistent with the standards in AS 18.65.676 and disability  
14 training under AS 18.65.220(3). The commissioner of corrections may, in consultation  
15 with grant recipients, adopt regulations related to the functions of village public safety  
16 officers providing pretrial, probation, and parole supervision.

17 (i) A grant recipient may charge its federally approved indirect costs to the  
18 village public safety officer program grant if the statewide average of indirect costs  
19 does not exceed 35 percent.

20 (j) The Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development  
21 may not withhold, without reason, approval of a funding request made under a grant  
22 award. The Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development shall  
23 timely disburse grant funds. A grant recipient may use funding for items reasonably  
24 related to public safety and village public safety officer duties under AS 18.65.670 -  
25 18.65.688.

26 (k) The commissioner of public safety, commissioner of commerce,  
27 community, and economic development, and commissioner of corrections shall

28 (1) ensure all relations with a federally recognized tribal government  
29 that is the incorporator of a nonprofit regional corporation are conducted on a  
30 government-to-government basis;

31 (2) ensure the Department of Public Safety and the Department of

1 Commerce, Community, and Economic Development consult with a grant recipient

2 (A) before implementing a policy or regulation that affects the  
3 recipient and as early as possible in the development of a new or revised policy  
4 or regulation;

5 (B) on the state policies and regulations the grant recipient  
6 considers necessary, as well as the substance of the policies and regulations;

7 (3) to the extent possible, use consensual mechanisms to develop  
8 policies and regulations, including negotiated rulemaking processes;

9 (4) respect tribal sovereignty in consultations with grant recipients;

10 (5) ensure consultations with grant recipients are open and candid to  
11 enable interested parties to accurately assess potential effects; and

12 (6) ensure the removal of procedural impediments to working directly  
13 and effectively with grant recipients on programs that affect the governmental rights  
14 of a tribe.

15 (l) The commissioner of public safety and the commissioner of commerce,  
16 community, and economic development shall designate an official within each  
17 department who has the primary responsibility for compliance with this section. The  
18 official shall develop and annually review departmental procedures for compliance  
19 with this section. The Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic  
20 Development and the Department of Public Safety shall provide to all grant recipients  
21 the results of the annual review and post the results on the Internet websites of the  
22 Department of Public Safety and the Department of Commerce, Community, and  
23 Economic Development.

24 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 18.65 is amended by adding new sections to read:

25 **Sec. 18.65.672. Village public safety officer qualifications.** (a) A grant  
26 recipient may employ a person as a village public safety officer if the individual

27 (1) is at least 21 years of age;

28 (2) is a citizen of the United States or a resident alien;

29 (3) is of good moral character;

30 (4) has obtained a high school diploma or a general education  
31 development diploma or its equivalent;

1 (5) satisfies the physical requirements established in regulation by the  
2 Department of Public Safety;

3 (6) has not been previously convicted

4 (A) of a felony;

5 (B) of a sex offense as defined in AS 12.63.100;

6 (C) of a misdemeanor crime involving domestic violence  
7 unless at least 10 years have passed since the date of the conviction, the  
8 conviction was not for an offense against an intimate partner, spouse, child, or  
9 parent, and the Department of Public Safety grants a waiver allowing the  
10 individual to access the criminal justice information system;

11 (D) of a misdemeanor if less than five years has elapsed since  
12 the individual's date of conviction for the offense;

13 (E) two or more times of

14 (i) misdemeanor operating a vehicle, aircraft, or  
15 watercraft while under the influence of an alcoholic beverage, inhalant,  
16 or controlled substance under AS 28.35.030;

17 (ii) misdemeanor refusal to submit to a chemical test  
18 under AS 28.35.032; or

19 (iii) a combination of the offenses in (i) and (ii) of this  
20 subparagraph;

21 (F) of manufacturing, transporting, or delivering an alcoholic  
22 beverage in violation of a local option under AS 04.11 or a municipal  
23 ordinance or a controlled substance, unless at least 10 years has elapsed; or

24 (G) of possession of a controlled substance as defined in  
25 AS 11.71.900, other than marijuana, unless the individual was under 21 years  
26 of age at the time of the possession and the possession occurred more than 10  
27 years before the date of hire;

28 (7) has not been denied a village public safety officer certification or  
29 had a certification revoked; and

30 (8) has not been denied police officer certification, had a certificate  
31 revoked, or surrendered a certificate in this state or another jurisdiction.

1 (b) A grant recipient may not use grant money to employ a village public  
2 safety officer for a period of more than 24 months unless the officer obtains a village  
3 public safety officer certificate from the Department of Public Safety under  
4 AS 18.65.682. Upon written application from a grant recipient, the Department of  
5 Public Safety may, in its discretion, extend this period up to six months to permit the  
6 officer to complete the training required under AS 18.65.676, if the officer is unable to  
7 do so in the first 24 months of employment because of an illness, injury, or  
8 emergency.

9 (c) In this section,

10 (1) "good moral character" means the absence of acts or conduct that  
11 would cause a reasonable person to have substantial doubts about an individual's  
12 honesty, fairness, and respect for the rights of others and for the laws of this state and  
13 the United States; for purposes of this section, a determination of lack of good moral  
14 character may be based on a consideration of all aspects of a person's character;

15 (2) "previously convicted" means having been convicted of a crime  
16 described in (a) of this section or a law or ordinance of another jurisdiction with  
17 elements similar to the crimes listed in (a) of this section. A conviction for which the  
18 person received a suspended entry of judgment, suspended imposition of sentence,  
19 expungement, or pardon is a conviction for purposes of this section, unless the  
20 conviction was for a misdemeanor crime committed by the individual when the  
21 individual was under 21 years of age.

22 **Sec. 18.65.674. Background investigations.** (a) Before employing an  
23 individual as a village public safety officer, a grant recipient shall

24 (1) submit to the commissioner of public safety the individual's

25 (A) completed application and personal and medical history, on  
26 forms prepared by the Department of Public Safety;

27 (B) proof of age, citizenship status, and education; and

28 (C) fingerprints, the fees required by the Department of Public  
29 Safety under AS 12.62.160 for criminal justice information and a national  
30 criminal history record check, and other information sufficient to complete a  
31 background check consisting of a fingerprint check of national criminal

1 records and criminal records of the state or states in which the individual has  
 2 resided for the past 10 years; the Department of Public Safety shall conduct a  
 3 criminal justice information and national criminal history record check under  
 4 AS 12.62;

5 (2) review the criminal justice information and national criminal  
 6 history record check completed by the Department of Public Safety; and

7 (3) review the results of the individual's physical examination and  
 8 physician certification.

9 (b) Personnel and training information that the Department of Public Safety or  
 10 a grant recipient receives about a village public safety officer is confidential and  
 11 available only for review by a grant recipient, the Department of Public Safety, or that  
 12 officer. A village public safety officer or an individual who applies for employment as  
 13 a village public safety officer may not review information that another individual  
 14 supplied with the understanding that the information or its source would remain  
 15 confidential, unless the information serves as the basis for a decision to deny or revoke  
 16 a certificate under AS 18.65.684.

17 **Sec. 18.65.676. Training.** (a) A village public safety officer basic training  
 18 program must provide

19 (1) a physical training program that includes instruction in physical  
 20 methods of arrest, use of batons, use of chemical defensive weapons, and electronic  
 21 control weapons;

22 (2) at least 826 hours of instruction as follows:

23 (A) 650 hours of instruction in

24 (i) Alaska criminal and procedural law;

25 (ii) the Alaska criminal justice system;

26 (iii) police procedures;

27 (iv) disabilities under AS 18.65.220(3);

28 (v) domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and

29 response procedures; and

30 (B) 176 hours of instruction in

31 (i) emergency trauma technician training;

1 (ii) search and rescue training;

2 (iii) rural fire protection specialist training.

3 (b) An individual seeking a village public safety officer certificate under  
4 AS 18.65.682 shall attend all sessions of the basic training required under (a) of this  
5 section, unless the director of the training program approves an absence. An individual  
6 who is absent for more than 10 percent of the total hours of instruction has not  
7 successfully completed basic training.

8 (c) An individual who fails to comply with the attendance and performance  
9 requirements of the training program may be dismissed from the training. The  
10 Department of Public Safety may not consider a dismissed individual to have  
11 successfully completed basic training.

12 (d) If a village public safety officer receives training that the Department of  
13 Public Safety did not provide and the entity conducting the training provides a  
14 description of the training to the department, the department may take that training  
15 into account in determining the completion of basic training and accept other police  
16 officer or firefighter training and experience that equals or exceeds the hours and  
17 covers the subject matter required under (a) of this section.

18 **Sec. 18.65.678. Firearms training.** (a) A village public safety officer may not,  
19 except in an emergency, carry a firearm in the performance of the officer's duties until  
20 the officer has successfully completed

21 (1) a basic firearms training program that is certified by the Alaska  
22 Police Standards Council or substantially similar training as determined by the  
23 Department of Public Safety;

24 (2) a psychological examination conducted by a mental health  
25 professional; and

26 (3) all annual firearm qualification requirements.

27 (b) In determining the successful completion of basic firearms training, the  
28 Department of Public Safety may consider previous training and experience that is  
29 substantially similar to the training required under (a) of this section.

30 **Sec. 18.65.682. Village public safety officer certification.** The Department of  
31 Public Safety shall issue a village public safety officer certificate to an individual who

1 (1) has satisfactorily completed 12 months as a full-time paid village  
2 public safety officer without a break in service longer than 90 consecutive days or  
3 nonconsecutive breaks in service totaling 120 or more days;

4 (2) meets the standards in AS 18.65.672;

5 (3) has successfully completed

6 (A) a basic training program that meets the requirements under  
7 AS 18.65.676; and

8 (B) a background information check under AS 18.65.674(a);  
9 and

10 (4) attests to the law enforcement code of ethics.

11 **Sec. 18.65.684. Denial, revocation, or lapse of certificate.** (a) The  
12 Department of Public Safety may deny an individual's application for a village public  
13 safety officer certificate or revoke a village public safety officer certificate in  
14 accordance with AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act) if

15 (1) the individual knowingly makes a false statement in an application  
16 or other document required for employment or certification; or

17 (2) after the date of hire, has

18 (A) been convicted of a

19 (i) felony;

20 (ii) misdemeanor crime involving domestic violence; or

21 (iii) misdemeanor crime of dishonesty, a crime that  
22 resulted in serious physical injury to another person, or of operating a  
23 vehicle, aircraft, or watercraft while under the influence of an alcoholic  
24 beverage, inhalant, or controlled substance two or more times;

25 (B) illegally used, possessed, manufactured, transported, or  
26 delivered an alcoholic beverage in violation of a local option under AS 04.11  
27 or a municipal ordinance or a controlled substance; or

28 (C) used, sold, cultivated, transported, manufactured, or  
29 distributed marijuana.

30 (b) The commissioner of public safety is not required to deny an individual's  
31 application for a certificate or revoke a certificate if the individual or holder of the

1 certificate establishes by clear and convincing evidence that, in connection with a  
 2 conviction for a misdemeanor crime involving domestic violence, the individual or  
 3 holder of the certificate

4 (1) was not represented by counsel and did not, by guilty plea or  
 5 otherwise, knowingly waive the right to counsel;

6 (2) was entitled to a jury trial, did not receive a jury trial, and did not,  
 7 by guilty plea or otherwise, knowingly waive the right to a jury trial; or

8 (3) is not subject to a court order that expressly prohibits the officer  
 9 from shipping, transporting, possessing, or receiving firearms, and the underlying  
 10 conviction

11 (A) has been expunged or set aside;

12 (B) is for an offense for which the officer has been pardoned;

13 or

14 (C) is for an offense for which the officer has had civil rights  
 15 restored that were lost upon the conviction.

16 (c) The holder of a certificate shall immediately return the certificate to the  
 17 Department of Public Safety upon notification of the revocation.

18 (d) An individual who is denied a certificate or a holder whose certificate is  
 19 revoked may appeal to the commissioner of public safety for reversal of the denial or  
 20 revocation. The appeal must be received in writing within 30 days after the date of the  
 21 notice of denial or revocation and must set out the reasons for the appeal. The  
 22 commissioner of public safety or the commissioner's designee shall issue a written  
 23 decision within 45 days after receipt of the appeal.

24 (e) A certificate lapses if the holder is not employed as a full-time village  
 25 public safety officer for a period of 12 consecutive months.

26 (f) An individual may request reinstatement of a lapsed certificate after  
 27 undergoing additional training as determined by the Department of Public Safety and  
 28 serving an additional probationary period of up to 12 months, at the discretion of the  
 29 commissioner of public safety in consultation with the grant recipient. A certificate  
 30 may not be reinstated if the certificate has lapsed for more than 10 years.

31 **Sec. 18.65.686. Powers and duties of village public safety officers.** A village

1 public safety officer who is certified under AS 18.65.682 has the power of a peace  
2 officer of the state or a municipality and is charged with

3 (1) the protection of life and property in the state, including through

4 (A) fire prevention and suppression;

5 (B) provision of emergency medical services; and

6 (C) participation in and coordination of search and rescue  
7 efforts for missing or injured persons;

8 (2) providing pretrial, probation, and parole supervision to persons  
9 under supervision by communicating with and monitoring the activities and progress  
10 of these persons at the direction of pretrial services, probation, and parole officers;

11 (3) conducting investigations;

12 (4) enforcing

13 (A) the criminal laws of the state or a municipality;

14 (B) statutes or ordinances of the state or municipality  
15 punishable as a violation if the certified village public safety officer has  
16 completed training in that field of violation enforcement;

17 (5) providing local training programs on public safety; and

18 (6) the powers usually and customarily exercised by a peace officer.

19 **Sec. 18.65.688. Definitions.** In AS 18.65.670 - 18.65.688,

20 (1) "Alaska Native organization" means an organization listed in  
21 AS 47.27.070(a);

22 (2) "crime involving domestic violence" has the meaning given in  
23 AS 18.66.990;

24 (3) "marijuana" has the meaning given in AS 11.71.900;

25 (4) "village" means a community with a population less than 2,500  
26 based on the most recent federal census.

27 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 44.33.020(a) is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

28 (45) administer the village public safety officer grant program under  
29 AS 18.65.670 through grant application review, compliance monitoring, and  
30 consultation and mediation of disputes between grant recipients.

31 \* **Sec. 6.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to

1 read:

2           TRANSITION. Notwithstanding the requirements in AS 18.65.672 and 18.65.676,  
3 enacted by sec. 4 of this Act, a person employed as a village public safety officer on the day  
4 before the effective date of sec. 4 of this Act may continue to be employed as a village public  
5 safety officer without meeting the requirements in AS 18.65.672 and 18.65.676.

6       \* **Sec. 7.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
7 read:

8           TRANSITION. In implementing AS 18.65.670(h), added by sec. 3 of this Act, the  
9 Department of Public Safety shall continue to comply with regulations adopted under  
10 AS 18.65.670(c) regarding interactions between the Department of Public Safety and the  
11 village public safety officers.

12       \* **Sec. 8.** AS 18.65.670(b) - (g), as repealed and reenacted by sec. 3 of this Act, take effect  
13 July 1, 2021.

14       \* **Sec. 9.** Except as provided in sec. 8 of this Act, this Act takes effect immediately under  
15 AS 01.10.070(c).