

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
March 21, 2022
1:05 p.m.

[1:05:57 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Bishop called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Click Bishop, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Donny Olson
Senator Natasha von Imhof
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator David Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman

ALSO PRESENT

Brix Hahn, Staff, Senator Donny Olson; Kelly Howell, Legislative Liaison, Department of Public Safety; Emma Torkelson, Staff, Senator Josh Revak; Andy Mills, Legislative Liaison, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Joe Hard, Director, Village Public Safety Officer Program, Department of Public Safety, Anchorage; John Knott, State Commander, Order of the Purple Heart, Fairbanks.

SUMMARY

SB 81 VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER GRANTS

SB 81 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 203 PURPLE HEART TRAIL

SB 203 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#sb81

SENATE BILL NO. 81

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

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Co-Chair Bishop asked the bill sponsor to provide a brief recap of the legislation.

SENATOR DONNY OLSON, SPONSOR, explained that the bill pertained to implementing eight of the nine recommendations made by the joint legislative Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) working group in a 2020 report. He detailed that the VPSO program was created in the 1970s and had been successful throughout the state; however, there had been difficulty with recruitment and retention in recent years as highlighted in the report. The bill worked to build the program back up. He asked his staff to come to the table.

BRIX HAHN, STAFF, SENATOR DONNY OLSON, introduced herself.

Senator Olson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment 1, 32-LS0362\I.17 (Radford, 3/21/22) (copy on file):

Page 1, line 2, following "Safety;":
Insert 11relating to fish and game enforcement;"

Page 3, following line 20:
Insert a new bill section to read:
"* Sec. 2. AS 16.05.150 is amended to read:
Sec. 16.05.150. Enforcement authority. The following persons are peace officers of the state and they shall enforce this title except AS 16.51 and AS 16.52:
(1) an employee of the department authorized by the commissioner;
(2) a police officer in the state;
(3) a village public safety officer;
(4) [(3)] any other person authorized by the commissioner."

Renumber the following bill sections accordingly.

Page 3, line 22, following "shall:
Insert "designate an authority within the department
to" 18

Page 6, lines 7 - 9:
Delete all material and insert:
"(i) A grant recipient may charge up to 30 percent of
its federally approved indirect costs to the village
public safety officer program. A grant recipient may
submit indirect expenses that exceed 30 percent to the
commissioner for approval on an individual basis. A
grant recipient may use an award only for purposes
related to village public safety officer activities."

Page 10, line 12, following "training":
Insert";
(iv) fish and wildlife enforcement training" 7

Page 11, line 4, following "professional":
Insert "approved by the department"

Page 11, line 5, following "requirements":
Insert "approved by the Alaska Police Standards
Council"

Page 14, line 11:
Delete "sec. 4"
Insert "sec. 5"

Page 14, line 12:
Delete "sec. 4"
Insert "sec. 5"

Page 14, line 16:
Delete "sec. 3"
Insert "sec. 4"

Page 14, line 20:
Delete "sec. 3"
Insert "sec. 4"

Page 14, line 21:
Delete "2021"

Insert "2022"

Page 14, line 22:

Delete "sec. 7"

Insert "sec. 8"

Co-Chair Bishop OBJECTED for discussion.

Senator Olson explained that Amendment 1 was a compilation of a number of amendments suggested by members of the prior committee that had heard the legislation. He relayed there should be an individual named Terry Shanigan online who could provide detail on the amendment.

Co-Chair Stedman asked who the person was and how they were involved with the bill.

Senator Olson relayed that Mr. Shanigan was the former chief of staff to Senator Mike Shower. He detailed that Mr. Shanigan had a law enforcement background and had been instrumental in other VPSO bills. Mr. Shanigan had spearheaded all of the amendments that had come forward.

Co-Chair Bishop asked to hear from the Department of Public Safety first.

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KELLY HOWELL, LEGISLATIVE LIAISON, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, deferred to a colleague.

JOE HARD, DIRECTOR, VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), communicated that he found most of the amendments to be benign.

Senator Olson requested to hear the explanation of the amendment prior to hearing from the department.

[1:12:00 PM](#)

AT EASE

[1:12:31 PM](#)

RECONVENED

SB 81 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

[1:12:59 PM](#)

AT EASE

[1:13:59 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb203

SENATE BILL NO. 203

"An Act designating portions of the Parks, Glenn, Seward, and Sterling Highways as a part of the State's Purple Heart Trail and relating to signage and informational displays for the trail."

[1:14:26 PM](#)

EMMA TORKELSON, STAFF, SENATOR JOSH REVAK, explained the legislation. She detailed that since 1992, the Purple Heart Trail system of highway designations had extended across the nation honoring service men and women who had been wounded or killed in service to the nation. She elaborated that in 2008, former Senator Johnny Ellis's bill SB 216 designated the highway between the Alaska/Canada border to Fairbanks as the Purple Heart Trail. Since that time, signs along the highway stood as a thank you to veterans and as a reminder of the sacrifices made by individuals serving the United States. The bill would extend the Purple Heart Trail from Fairbanks to Homer, connecting the Purple Heart cities of North Pole, Fairbanks, Wasilla, Soldotna, and Homer. She highlighted that Alaska had a strong military tradition with an estimated 65,000 resident veterans and approximately 21,000 active duty military members. Signage drawing attention to the designation would be placed at appropriate intervals along the highway to stimulate thought and discussion amongst adults and children about the history of the country and individuals who had made significant sacrifices for the country.

Co-Chair Bishop asked to hear the sectional analysis.

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Ms. Torkelson reviewed the sectional analysis (copy on file):

Section 1. Amends AS 35.40.210(a) to extend the Purple Heart Trail designation to include the ~590 miles of highway from Fairbanks to the End of the Road in Homer. With this extension, the Purple Heart Trail will, in its entirety, be made up of:

- the Alaska Highway from the Alaska-Canada Border to Delta Junction - existing
- the Richardson Highway between Delta Junction and Fairbanks - existing
- the George Parks Highway between Fairbanks and Wasilla - new
- the Glenn Highway between Wasilla and Anchorage - new
- the Seward Highway between Anchorage and the Seward-Sterling highway junction - new
- the Sterling Highway to its termination at the end of the Homer Spit - new

Section 2. Amends AS 35.40.210(b) to require the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities erect appropriate "Purple Heart Trail" signage at the Veterans Memorial at Byers Lake, Wasilla, Anchorage, the junction of the Seward and Sterling highways, Soldotna, and Homer.

Removes the existing language requiring signage be placed at points "halfway between" these locations and replaces it with language that allows the department to determine the most appropriate locations for additional signage.

Section 3. Amends AS 35.40.210(c) to increase to six the number of required informational displays at pull-outs along the Purple Heart Trail. The Border to Fairbanks trail has three displays, so this will require that at least three displays be erected on the new portion of the Purple Heart Trail between Fairbanks and Homer.

Section 4. Amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska to ensure that DOTP&F has the authority to accept gifts, donations, and grants from a person or agency for the purpose of providing signage and informational displays required by AS 35.40.210(b) and (c).

Section 5. Amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska to clarify that DOTP&F has the flexibility to erect the signs and informational displays as funds are available, without waiting to receive all the funds needed to complete the entire project required by AS 35.40.210(b) and (c).

[1:18:54 PM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop asked if the department agreed with the bill sections and that it could move quickly to make the changes proposed under the legislation.

ANDY MILLS, LEGISLATIVE LIAISON, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES, explained that most signage took the department four to six weeks to craft. He noted that the sign design was already complete and was included in members' bill packets. He stated it would be an "easy lift" for the department to produce and install the signs. The department's fiscal note reflected the full amount detailed in the bill; however, general funds would be offset by donations if received. He added that any donations would be recognized as a contribution to the effort.

Co-Chair Bishop moved to invited testimony.

JOHN KNOTT, STATE COMMANDER, ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), relayed the Order of the Purple Heart had three chapters in Alaska. He spoke in support of the legislation and relayed it would mean tremendous pride for his organization, active duty military, and veterans in Alaska. He detailed that the signs reflected continued patriotism and showed respect for individuals who had sacrificed with blood and their lives. He elaborated that the signs brought up conversations and emotions. He stated the signs recapped everything people lived for in the United States: freedom. He pointed out that freedom was not free. He thanked the committee for hearing the legislation.

Co-Chair Bishop thanked Mr. Knott for his testimony and service to the country.

Co-Chair Bishop OPENED and CLOSED public testimony.

Co-Chair Stedman suggested including the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) and perhaps adding a plaque on each of the ferries.

Co-Chair Bishop thought it was a good idea. He remarked that AMHS served some communities with the highest veteran population per capita. He noted that the amendment deadline was March 23 at noon.

Co-Chair Stedman added there were many military members traveling from Bellingham to Haines [on the ferry] to reach their post in Fairbanks and Anchorage. He would discuss the idea with the bill sponsor.

SB 203 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Bishop reviewed the schedule for the following day.

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ADJOURNMENT

1:23:47 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 1:23 p.m.