

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 4, 2021

3:31 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Mike Shower, Chair  
Senator Mia Costello  
Senator Roger Holland  
Senator Scott Kawasaki

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 7

"An Act requiring the Department of Public Safety to publish certain policies and procedures on the department's Internet website."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 12

"An Act relating to temporary courtesy licenses for military spouses; and relating to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 40

"An Act relating to veterans' benefits services and veterans' benefits appeal services."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 7

SHORT TITLE: STATE TROOPER POLICIES: PUBLIC ACCESS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) GRAY-JACKSON

01/22/21 (S) PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21

01/22/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/22/21 (S) STA, JUD  
03/04/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 12

SHORT TITLE: MILITARY SPOUSE COURTESY LICENSE

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) KAWASAKI

01/22/21 (S) PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21  
01/22/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/22/21 (S) STA, L&C  
03/04/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 40

SHORT TITLE: VETERANS' BENEFITS SERVICES; DISCLOSURE

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) REVAK

01/25/21 (S) PREFILE RELEASED 1/15/21  
01/25/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/25/21 (S) STA, L&C  
03/04/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of SB 7

DELANEY THIELE, Staff  
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented the sponsor statement for SB 7 on behalf of the sponsor.

RANDI BREAGER, Special Assistant to the Commissioner  
Department of Public Safety  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information related to SB 7.

SETH DUGAN, Staff  
Senator Josh Revak  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented SB 12 on behalf of the sponsor.

VERDIE BOWEN, Director  
Office of Veteran Affairs  
Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided supporting testimony on SB 40.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:31:54 PM](#)

**CHAIR MIKE SHOWER** called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kawasaki, Holland, Costello, and Chair Shower.

He reviewed the agenda.

**SB 7-STATE TROOPER POLICIES: PUBLIC ACCESS**

[3:32:50 PM](#)

**CHAIR SHOWER** announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 7 "An Act requiring the Department of Public Safety to publish certain policies and procedures on the department's Internet website."

He noted who was available to answer questions.

[3:33:28 PM](#)

**SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON**, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 7 introduced the legislation reading the following into the record:

First, I would like to thank the hard-working men and women peace officers and office staff who provide the services that protect lives and welfare of the people within Alaska's communities. Thank you all for your service.

The recent casualties surrounding civilians has drawn even greater attention to issues around policing and police to community relationships. This moment seems to have created real momentum to address one of the longest standing injustices in society.

During last summer and into the Fall, my office - along with Senator Begich's office - worked together to develop a series of bills. These bills were drafted by Legislative Legal as a bill packet that our offices

refer to as TPIP- Turning Pain into Progress. TPIP was crafted after the national 8 Can't Wait campaign which is eight specific policies that have been proven, with data, to reduce police violence by as much as 72 percent, when implemented. I recognize that the national campaign can't and shouldn't be applied to a place as unique as Alaska. Therefore, I spent a great deal of time talking to stakeholders and gaining input throughout the process of drafting these bills to ensure that the proposal would be fitting for Alaska. I am pleased to say that I have engaged public safety agencies to include the Anchorage Police Department, Anchorage Police Employees Association, Public Safety Employees Association, and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives during the process. Because of my proactive approach, I am confident in moving forward with the implementation of public safety policy changes that will benefit both the citizens of Alaska and our law enforcement officers.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON deferred to her staff to present the sponsor statement and sectional analysis.

[3:35:42 PM](#)

DELANEY THIELE, Staff, Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented the sponsor statement for SB 7.

SB7 "An Act requiring the Department of Public Safety to publish certain policies and procedures on the department's Internet website."

This bill would require that the Department of Public Safety publish on their website the department's current policies and procedures related to the conduct of peace officers employed or regulated by the department. The duty of the Department of Public Safety is to ensure public safety within our communities and, as such, the public must be able to easily access the current policies and procedures that requires peace officers regulated by the department to adhere to.

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MS. THIELE presented the sectional analysis for SB 7.

**Section 1:** Amends AS 44.441.020 to add the Department of Public Safety shall publish on their website the current policies and procedures related to the conduct of peace officers employed or regulated by the department.

CHAIR SHOWER asked if the members had questions or comments.

[3:37:05 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO asked if there was any objection to the bill.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON answered that she worked diligently with all the agencies and revised the bill to include the feedback. She said she did not believe there was any objection to the bill at this time.

CHAIR COSTELLO asked what feedback she received and how she changed the bill to respond to the feedback.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON replied there wasn't much feedback because both the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Anchorage Police Department (APD) already have their policies and procedures online.

CHAIR SHOWER asked if the Alaska State Troopers had any feedback or concerns with the bill.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON replied her office worked with the Public Safety Employees Association (PSEA), which the Troopers fall under, and their questions were answered. She did not hear from them again and she assumes that they have no additional concerns.

CHAIR SHOWER asked Ms. Breager if she had any comments on SB 7.

[3:39:42 PM](#)

RANDI BREAGER, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Department of Public Safety, Anchorage, Alaska, expressed appreciation that the sponsor proactively worked with the department to answer their questions on the bill package. She confirmed that DPS policies already are public. She noted that the department did advise the sponsor that the Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC) falls under DPS, but they have no authority to require local police agencies to publish their policies. However, she believes that most agencies would comply since the law defines these records as public and available to request.

[3:40:41 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER asked for confirmation that this policy is for more than just troopers, but it will not apply to jurisdictions that are not under DPS direct supervision or authority.

MS. BREAGER answered yes; their assessment is that DPS would not have the authority to require other departments to comply. The Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC) regulates the certification of police officers but not police departments so DPS would have to work with individual police departments to encourage them to publish their policies.

[3:41:29 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER asked if it was her intent that by regulation or policy decision of the administration APSC could publish the information.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON replied that was the intent.

[3:42:21 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER held SB 7 for future consideration.

**SB 12-MILITARY SPOUSE COURTESY LICENSE**

[3:42:33 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 12 "An Act relating to temporary courtesy licenses for military spouses; and relating to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development."

[3:42:54 PM](#)

SENATOR SCOTT KAWASAKI, as sponsor, introduced SB 12 paraphrasing the following sponsor statement:

In 2011, House Bill 28 was passed into law to provide expedited temporary courtesy licenses to eligible individuals transferred to Alaska with their active duty service member spouse, so they can practice their trade without experiencing extensive wait times for licensure approval while they complete state requirements. For a military spouse, expedited temporary courtesy licenses are the fastest method of obtaining licensure so they can get to work quickly after relocating to Alaska.

Many states have passed similar legislation into law. However, states such as Washington and Connecticut

also included a reporting mechanism so the Legislature and Joint Armed Services Committee equivalent in that state could track the executive branch's progress of implementation. HB 28 did not include a reporting requirement when it was passed.

Senate Bill 12 would require the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development to prepare an annual report of courtesy licenses issued the previous fiscal year. This simple reporting mechanism will help facilitate communication between occupational boards, the state agency, the U.S. Department of Defense who assists in relocating service members and families, as well as Alaska legislators with service members in their districts. The bill will also aid in making occupational board staff and legislators more aware of what opportunities are available for helping military spouses enter the Alaska the workforce.

Other states have implemented a similar expedited licensing program to allow military spouses to transfer their professional credentials quickly and contribute to the local economies. While Alaska's program is a model for other states, its implementation has stalled with few eligible professionals taking advantage of the program and spouses reporting delays despite the program being in effect for eight years. Senate Bill 12 would help identify inefficiencies in the program before they cause delays in productivity and ensure the program is working as intended.

Introduced in 2018 as House Bill 262, the bill passed the House unanimously and gained bipartisan support in the Senate before it failed to reach the floor for a vote. The concept of this bill is listed as a priority for the U.S. Department of Defense by the state liaison serving Alaska.

The passage of SB 12 would improve communication between state and federal government agencies and active duty families. By improving efficiency and awareness about what opportunities are available, the bill will help welcome military families to Alaska. I respectfully urge your support of SB 12, a corrective bill that will help ease the transition of military

families and get more licensed professionals to work in our communities near military installations.

[At ease 3:43:42 pm to 3:43:58]

[3:45:50 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI summarized that SB 12 is pro-military, pro-economy, pro-jobs, and it ensures that service members and their spouses are treated well when they serve their duty in Alaska.

[3:46:15 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND asked for confirmation that the bill is solely about occupational licenses.

SENATOR KAWASAKI answered yes; the bill is about professional licenses issued through the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED).

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SENATOR COSTELLO expressed appreciation for the legislation and related that the Labor and Commerce had heard a lot about how long it takes military spouses to receive their licenses even though they are expedited. She related that Sara Chambers has explained that an expedited license means the application is moved to top of the list. She offered her office and the Labor and Commerce Committee's help on this bill and noted that her office was also working with Senator Revak's office on a licensure bill.

SENATOR KAWASAKI thanked her for the help and highlighted that the process for all licenses could be streamlined.

CHAIR SHOWER offered that as a military spouse his wife, who is a nurse, has been faced with licensure challenges.

He offered his understanding that the committee would not take up the sectional analysis.

[JOE HAYES] explained that the bill was short and simple and a sectional analysis was not necessarily warranted.

[3:50:20 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER accepted the answer and stated that he would hold the bill for future consideration.

**SB 40-VETERANS' BENEFITS SERVICES; DISCLOSURE**

[3:50:40 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 44 "An Act requiring the Board of Fisheries to prioritize personal use fisheries when implementing fishing restrictions to achieve a management goal."

He noted who was available to answer questions.

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SETH DUGAN, Staff, Senator Josh Revak, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented SB 12 on behalf of the sponsor reading the following into the record:

SB 40 is an act relating to veteran benefits and veteran benefit services. SB 40 seeks to protect Veterans and their families from a person who provides veteran benefits services or veteran benefits appeal services for compensation.

This will require these providers to notify veterans and their families about the free services provided by veteran service organizations before they take them on as a client. The veteran must sign and date a disclosure form affirming that they know free services are available. This will create increased awareness among Veterans, their dependents, and their survivors of the available services.

There is a statewide network of advocates available to assist them in obtaining the benefits they have earned. Providers who fail to comply are subject to a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 dollars for each violation.

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CHAIR SHOWER asked if there was a sectional analysis.

MR. CRAFT answered that the bill is just one section and an analysis was not prepared.

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked if there were businesses that do this work.

MR. CRAFT said yes.

[3:54:20 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked how a veteran would know these services were available free of charge.

[3:54:42 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER reminded the members about a meeting last year of 40-50 people who discussed how to get information to veterans who have fallen through the cracks. He confirmed that there are organizations that help veterans but they charge for the service. He related that most veterans receive "out briefing" when they leave the military but for a number of reasons many do not take advantage of the free services. When they realize they need help, they may find someone who takes advantage of them.

[3:56:58 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND added that many agencies like the American Legion, the VFW, and Disabled American Veterans help veterans without cost but many also do it at cost and that may be what a veteran finds first.

MR. CRAFT suggested that Mr. Bowen could add to the discussion.

[3:58:23 PM](#)

VERDIE BOWEN, Director, Office of Veteran Affairs, Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA), Anchorage, Alaska, described the different ways that for-profit organizations and attorneys seek and reach out to veterans. He said veterans who sign with these individuals or organizations lose a percentage of their disability payment. The highest loss his office has seen was \$20,000 and the veteran did not remember talking to the attorney. He described it as positive that his office has only heard about attorneys from out-of-state who have taken advantage of veterans who are living in Alaska.

He explained that the Appeals Modernization Act allowed attorneys to register within the VA system and receive payment for their services before the veteran. SB 40 ensures that veterans receive information up front about free services. He acknowledged that some people will still sign with for profit attorneys and organizations but he believes the numbers would be more limited once veterans know they can receive the same benefits without charge.

CHAIR SHOWER commented on the difficulty getting a claim through the VA.

[4:01:16 PM](#)

MR. CRAFT added that this is a growing movement nationwide. Iowa, Minnesota, California, and Washington have adopted similar legislation and other states are considering it.

CHAIR SHOWER noted that legislation passed several years ago to protect unwary members of the military from loan sharks.

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CHAIR SHOWER held SB 40 in committee for future consideration.

[4:03:10 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Shower adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 4:03 p.m.