

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

May 3, 2022

3:42 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Mike Shower, Chair  
Senator Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair  
Senator Mia Costello  
Senator Roger Holland  
Senator Scott Kawasaki

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION(S): PACIFIC DATAPORT

- HEARD

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 297(HSS) (TITLE AM)  
"An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Family and Community Services; relating to child protection; and relating to children of active duty military members."

- HEARD & HELD

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 234(STA) AM(EFD FLD)  
"An Act relating to political contributions; relating to the location of offices for the Alaska Public Offices Commission and the locations at which certain statements and reports filed with the commission are made available."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 297

SHORT TITLE: MILITARY MEMBER CHILD PROTECTION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HOPKINS

|          |     |                                 |
|----------|-----|---------------------------------|
| 01/31/22 | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 01/31/22 | (H) | MLV, HSS                        |

02/22/22 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 02/22/22 (H) Heard & Held  
 02/22/22 (H) MINUTE (MLV)  
 02/24/22 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 02/24/22 (H) Moved CSHB 297 (MLV) Out of Committee  
 02/24/22 (H) MINUTE (MLV)  
 02/28/22 (H) MLV RPT CS (MLV) 6DP  
 02/28/22 (H) DP: CLAMAN, TARR, STORY, NELSON, SHAW,  
 TUCK  
 03/08/22 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106  
 03/08/22 (H) Heard & Held  
 03/08/22 (H) MINUTE (HSS)  
 03/10/22 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106  
 03/10/22 (H) Moved CSHB 297 (HSS) Out of Committee  
 03/10/22 (H) MINUTE (HSS)  
 03/14/22 (H) HSS RPT CS (HSS) 5DP 2NR  
 03/14/22 (H) DP: MCCARTY, SPOHNHOLZ, FIELDS,  
 ZULKOSKY, SNYDER  
 03/14/22 (H) NR: KURKA, PRAX  
 03/24/22 (H) SESSION CANCELED 3/23 - ON 3/24  
 CALENDAR  
 03/24/22 (H) TECHNICAL SESSION 3/24 - ON 3/28  
 CALENDAR  
 03/28/22 (H) ADJOURNED TO 3/29 CALENDAR  
 03/31/22 (H) SESSION CANCELED 3/29 - ON 3/30  
 CALENDAR  
 03/31/22 (H) SESSION CANCELED 3/30 - ON 3/31  
 CALENDAR  
 03/31/22 (H) TECHNICAL SESSION 3/31 - ON 4/4  
 CALENDAR  
 04/04/22 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
 04/04/22 (H) VERSION: CSHB 297 (HSS) (TITLE AM)  
 04/06/22 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 04/06/22 (S) STA, HSS  
 05/03/22 (S) HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 05/03/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: HB 234

SHORT TITLE: POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION LIMITS

SPONSOR (s): REPRESENTATIVE (s) SCHRAGE

01/18/22 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/7/22  
 01/18/22 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 01/18/22 (H) STA  
 02/01/22 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 02/01/22 (H) Heard & Held  
 02/01/22 (H) MINUTE (STA)

02/10/22 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 02/10/22 (H) Heard & Held  
 02/10/22 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 02/15/22 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 02/15/22 (H) Heard & Held  
 02/15/22 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 03/01/22 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 03/01/22 (H) Moved CSHB 234(STA) Out of Committee  
 03/01/22 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 03/02/22 (H) STA RPT CS(STA) 2DP 1DNP 2NR 2AM  
 03/02/22 (H) DP: CLAMAN, KREISS-TOMKINS  
 03/02/22 (H) DNP: EASTMAN  
 03/02/22 (H) NR: TARR, STORY  
 03/02/22 (H) AM: KAUFMAN, VANCE  
 03/14/22 (H) BEFORE HOUSE IN SECOND READING  
 03/14/22 (H) SUSTAINED RULING OF CHAIR Y22 N15 E3  
 03/14/22 (H) SUSTAINED RULING OF CHAIR Y21 N16 E3  
 03/14/22 (H) BEFORE HOUSE IN SECOND READING  
 03/14/22 (H) SUSTAINED RULING OF CHAIR Y20 N17 E3  
 03/14/22 (H) SUSTAINED RULING OF CHAIR Y20 N17 E3  
 03/14/22 (H) SUSTAINED RULING OF CHAIR Y22 N14 E4  
 03/14/22 (H) SUSTAINED RULING OF CHAIR Y20 N16 E4  
 03/16/22 (H) BEFORE HOUSE IN THIRD READING  
 03/16/22 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
 03/16/22 (H) VERSION: CSHB 234(STA) AM(EFD FLD)  
 03/18/22 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 03/18/22 (S) STA  
 04/07/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 04/07/22 (S) Heard & Held  
 04/07/22 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
 04/12/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 04/12/22 (S) Heard & Held  
 04/12/22 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
 05/03/22 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SHAWN WILLIAMS, Vice President  
 Government Affairs and Strategy  
 Pacific Dataport  
 Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Delivered the presentation titled Connecting Rural Alaska with LEO & GEO HTS Satellite Middle Mile.

REPRESENTATIVE GRIER HOPKINS  
 Alaska State Legislature  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of HB 297.

TANYA CLUCAS, Staff  
Representative Grier Hopkins  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 297 on behalf of the sponsor.

TAMMIE PERREAULT, Northwest Regional Liaison  
Defense-State Liaison Office  
U.S. Department of Defense  
Washington, D.C.

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided supporting information during the hearing on HB 197.

JENNIFER FRYSZ, LCSW  
Social Worker  
Family Advocacy Program (FAP)  
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 297.

REPRESENTATIVE CALVIN SCHRAGE  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of HB 234.

ERIC GUNDERSON, Staff  
Representative Calvin Schrage  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information on behalf of the sponsor during the hearing on HB 234.

TOM LUCAS, Attorney  
Alaska Public Offices Commission  
Department of Administration (DOA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered legal questions during the hearing on HB 234.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:42:48 PM](#)

**CHAIR MIKE SHOWER** called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:42 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators, Reinbold, Kawasaki, and Chair Shower. Senators Costello and Holland joined the committee shortly thereafter.

PRESENTATION: PACIFIC DATAPORT

[3:43:33 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER announced a presentation from Pacific Dataport. He thanked Mr. Williams for taking the time to brief the committee on how Pacific Dataport's statewide Aurora Network will complement or overlap fiber optic.

[3:45:01 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND joined the committee.

[3:45:21 PM](#)

SHAWN WILLIAMS, Vice President of Government Affairs and Strategy, Pacific Dataport, Anchorage, Alaska, delivered the presentation Connecting Rural Alaska with LEO & GEO HTS Satellite Middle Mile. He stated that Microcom is a family-owned business that has been selling Alaskans satellite broadband TV for 27 years. In 2017 they decided to address the growing problem of insufficient capacity by launching two satellites to connect every unserved rural household in Alaska for about \$99 per month. That was the start of Pacific Dataport, a wholesale supplier of capacity to tribes, tribal consortiums, and telecoms. During this process, OneWeb reached out to ask for help launching their worldwide project, starting in Alaska.

[3:46:42 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS reviewed the definitions of last mile and middle mile on slide 3:

DEFINITIONS:

- Internet (less than 25X3)
- Broadband (25X3 and faster)
- 2.5 GHz Tribal Spectrum (Issued by the FCC)
- WISP (Wireless Internet Service Provider)
- Last Mile (community connection to the home)
- Middle Mile (Lower 48 Internet to community - could be fiber, microwave or satellite)

He turned to slide 4 and described different business models that provide an internet path to the customer. The red path of

boxes are the traditional way that companies like Microcom, local entrepreneurs, tribes, and telecoms have the last mile connection with customers. The orange boxes describe a company like Starlink, which sells directly to customers.

[3:47:42 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS pointed to the graphic on slide 5 that illustrates the LEO MIO and GEO types of satellites. The GEO orbits the farthest out and the LEO has the closest orbit.

He turned to slide 7 and explained that the image shows the middle mile that existed as of December 2021. He identified the blue lines that reflect the Tera network; the Quintillion network in the northwest; the new MTA AlCan ONE fiber along the Dalton Highway to the east; and the four submarine fibers going to Seattle. Two of submarine fibers are owned by GCI and two are owned by Alaska Communications. He said it's worth noting that each company owns one cable that was built in 1999 and that the useful life of submarine cables is about 25 years.

[3:48:58 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS explained that the next images, which were recently pulled from the NTIA website, show the marked difference between the served and unserved in the continental US and that the communities of Anchorage, Wasilla, Palmer, Juneau, and Fairbanks are all well connected with broadband. He said a question that should be asked is why more communities aren't served if the Tera network is covering Southwest Alaska and fiber is running up the middle of the state.

He reviewed the broadband facts on slide 9.

#### **Today's Alaska Broadband Facts**

- 36.3% of rural Alaskans still have no wired broadband (25X3 or faster) connection\*
- No rural Alaska school meets the FCC's educational goals of 1 Mbps per student
- Anchorage pays ~\$.24 for a GB of data - Adak pays ~\$22.22
- Even where a fiber runs down the middle of the road, residents are often bypassed as potential customers
- Off the Northern coast of Alaska, 25X3 fiber broadband service is offered at \$499 per month. Using satellite, Akiak is paying

- Rural Alaska schools and health clinics often pay \$40,000 to \$60,000 per month for 25X3 service (each school)
- Approximately 90 rural Alaska villages are unserved (no internet) or underserved (less than 25X3)
- There is currently NO long-term plan to reach the remaining unserved and underserved in rural Alaska except the Pacific Dataport plan

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MR. WILLIAMS stated that the middle mile and retail pricing charts on slide 10 show that the Aurora network will bring significant drops in both wholesale and retail costs. Using Anchorage as the benchmark at \$0.24 per gigabyte (GB), the retail chart shows that the Aurora Network will offer \$0.66 per GB statewide compared to consumer costs in some rural areas that have been as high as \$22.22 per GB for 5 X 5 service. He added the side note that if one lived in Adak and wanted to download a two hour movie, it would take 48 hours and cost an additional \$125 for the month.

MR. WILLIAMS addressed the questions about the time and money it will take to cover Alaska with broadband quickly and which method is affordable.

He said a method the USDA, FCC, and the Alaska telecoms prefer is to run fiber or microwave. He reviewed the cost data of the Yakutat microwave project on slide 12:

The "Fiber Telecom Method": Using fiber or microwave, terrestrial or submarine (USDA Yakutat Project)

- 270 Households for equipment and installing microwave, towers, shelters, etc.
- TOTAL Funding \$25M or \$92,592 each household
- \$18,800,000 or \$69,629 each location USDA Funds
- \$6,200,000 or \$22,963 each location Cordova Telecom Cooperative Funds
- TOTAL time to deploy in Yakutat = 24-36 months
- Community Benefits:
- Able to cruise the Internet, streaming, and two-way video conferencing

MR. WILLIAMS reviewed the cost and time data on slide 13 of the Akiak tribe satellite method of providing broadband:

The "Akiak Tribe Satellite Method": Using 2.5 GHz Tribal spectrum and satellite backhaul (LEO or GEO HTS)

- 105 Households
- TOTAL Funding = \$610,000 or \$5,809 each household
- TOTAL time to deploy in Akiak = 4 months
- Community Benefits:
- Minimum 25X3 service and maximum 170X35 service available
- Quick deployment
- Able to cruise the Internet, streaming, and two-way video conferencing
- Affordable at ~\$150 per month for broadband

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SENATOR COSTELLO joined the committee.

[3:54:06 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS summarized the data on slide 14 about the method Alaska can afford.

MR. WILLIAMS reported that Alaska telecoms receive about \$400 million in subsidies annually, 90 percent of which is OPEX and user subsidies to bring the cost down. This leaves just 10 percent for buildout and to connect more rural Alaskans.

The in-house estimate is that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding will bring between \$500 million and \$700 million. He said most of the money is shared nationwide and even the feed funding is based on the approximately 100,000 unserved Alaskans versus the unserved in the Lower 48. Before any of this can happen, third-party mapping must be completed.

MR. WILLIAMS reviewed the data on slide 15 to demonstrate that with the anticipated money coming to states, Alaska can afford neither the time nor money to deploy fiber statewide.

MR. WILLIAMS relayed that to calculate the cost to connect everyone in rural Alaska, Pacific Dataport used the FCC data of 105,000 unserved Alaskans divided by an average household of three which equals about 31,000 unserved households. Multiplying 31,000 by \$5,800 yields \$183,000, which is what it would cost to serve all Alaska's unserved using the Akiak tribe method. The fiber telecom method of \$92,000 per household would cost about

\$3 billion to serve all unserved Alaskans. This is provided there was enough fiber and that the 10-20 year timeline for completion was acceptable. The chart of the CAPEX federal funding that is expected through 2026 totals about \$730 million. He said this clearly demonstrates that satellite is the only rational method.

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MR. WILLIAMS displayed slide 16 that shows Pacific Dataport's three projects: OneWeb Network; Aurora Phase 1 - Aurora 4A; and Aurora Phase 2 - Aurora IV.

#### **OneWeb Network**

- ~15 Gbps
- LEO Satellite
- Statewide Coverage
- Operational Q4 2021
- ~15,000 Consumers

MR. WILLIAMS clarified that Pacific Dataport does not own OneWeb, but it was those engineers who were helping to get the software running smoothly. Commercial service will be available in a matter of days and will provide 100 percent coverage statewide. The capacity is sufficient for about 15,000 consumers.

#### **Aurora Phase I - Aurora 4A**

- ~7.5 Gbps
- GEO HTS Satellite
- Statewide Coverage
- Operational Q2 2022
- ~10,000 Consumers
- Target Retail: 25/3 for \$199/month

MR. WILLIAMS advised that Pacific Dataport does own the Aurora Network and its first satellite is built and ready to launch from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida in August. It will sit on the equator over Hawaii. The orbital location was selected to have the highest Look angle possible. [The highest angle that the earth station antenna can point to or "look at" the satellite directly.] This satellite will fit about 10,000 consumers at 25/3 broadband speeds for a target retail price of \$199 per month.

#### **Aurora Phase 2 - Aurora IV**

- ~100+ Gbps
- GEO VHTS Satellite
- Statewide Coverage
- Operational 2H 2024
- ~100,000 Consumers
- Target Retail: 25/3 for \$99/month

MR. WILLIAMS stated that the Aurora Phase 2 satellite will launch in the second half of 2024 and sit on orbit near the first Aurora satellite. This will be the largest non-terrestrial network serving Alaska. This satellite will fit an additional 100,000 consumers at 25/3 broadband speeds and the target retail price is \$99 per month.

He acknowledged that 25/3 speeds weren't very fast by urban standards, but many of the places in rural Alaska were making do with 5/1 and maybe 10/2 at a cost of several hundred dollars a month and steep overage fees.

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MR. WILLIAMS turned to the pie chart on slide 17 that illustrates the capacity needed to serve all of rural Alaska's unserved and underserved. The chart shows that it will take the combined capacity of OneWeb, Aurora, and Starlink to quickly serve all the unserved in Alaska. He said providers realize there is no one solution for Alaska.

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MR. WILLIAMS reviewed the summary information about OneWeb that appears on slide 18.

#### **OneWeb**

- Launched in 2015
- Internet access everywhere, for everyone!
- Geographically covering 100% of the WORLD
- Pacific Dataport is OneWeb's preferred distribution partner for Alaska and Hawaii
- 394 launched of 648 satellites
- Low latency solution
- Service in 2022

MR. WILLIAMS turned to the screen shot on slide 19 that illustrates the amazing coverage that OneWeb's polar satellites provide for Alaska with speeds up to 195 megabytes per second

(Mbps) and low latency. (Latency refers to the delay in processing computer data over a network connection.)

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MR. WILLIAMS displayed the image of the Microcom Talkeetna Alaska Teleport on slide 20.

#### **Talkeetna Alaska Teleport**

- 90 Acre Site
- Able to host multiple gateway clients
- OneWeb first client with 29 gateways
- Statewide reach
- Redundant fiber and power
- Space for a data center, data processing and Internet exchange

He said this is where OneWeb's satellites connect to fiber as they pass over Alaska. It is a commercial teleport with redundant fiber and power that is available to any company that may have a satellite over Alaska.

MR. WILLIAMS displayed the global images that illustrate the current OneWeb and Starlink low earth orbit (LEO) satellite coverage. The image on the right side shows that Starlink's existing constellation forms a band over the well populated land masses on the equator. He described what it would take for Starlink to be able to serve Alaskans. The current network design requires a fiber connected teleport to reach the internet. Once the intersatellite laser linking is perfected, Starlink will need to build 500-1,000 satellites with this feature and launch them into polar orbit, all of which requires FCC approval. At that point, Starlink will be able to serve Alaskans.

MR. WILLIAMS advanced to slide 22 to talk about the new technology in the two Aurora Project satellites that Pacific Dataport is launching compared to the old technology like C Band that some telecoms are still using. The chart illustrates that the Aurora 4A will have the same capacity as 11.5 of the old C Band satellites and the Aurora IV will have the same capacity as 153 of the old C Band satellites.

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MR. WILLIAMS displayed the Google Earth image of Alaska that illustrates that five beams of Pacific Dataport's first Aurora

satellite will cover the breadth of Alaska, reach into Canada, and out into the ocean.

[4:00:59 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS advanced to the next slide and explained that the Aurora IV will be a Fluorescence Explorer (FLEX) satellite, which means that the beams are dynamically steerable post launch. Providing service to a new customer simply requires entering into the software the latitude and longitude and capacity that's ordered and it's available the next day. The only requirement for the customer is to have a user terminal at their location. Transitioning from satellite to fiber would entail unplugging the satellite connection and connecting the fiber to their last mile. Pacific Dataport believes this in one way to create a future-proof network.

MR. WILLIAMS displayed slide 25.

#### **Aurora IV GEO HTS - Optimized for Rural Alaska**

- Capacity ~110+ Gbps
- Sized to provide every residence in rural Alaska with 25/3 Mbps or better
- Enables a target retail price of \$99
- Multi-satellite system offers redundancy and diversity
- Fully sustainable without future subsidies
- Capacity expansion as needed

He explained that to get the image on slide 25, Pacific Dataport sent the satellite manufacturer a spreadsheet with the latitude and longitude and households of all Alaska's unserved communities. That data was entered and the outcome provides a visual representation of how the Aurora IV satellite beams will be distributed throughout the state. The height of the orange bars reflects the number of consumers served.

MR. WILLIAMS moved to slide 26 that has pictures of the Aurora 4A satellite. One shows it boxed up and ready to ship and another shows the Aurora 4A gateway, which is where the satellite will connect to fiber in Eagle Mountain, Utah. He highlighted that the process for the Aurora satellite system is well on its way with a sustainable solution.

[4:02:56 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS reviewed the 2.5 GHz tribal spectrum WISP system depicted on slide 27. The graphic shows that the teleport in either Talkeetna or Utah connects to the satellite and the data transfers down to the community terminal, up the tower, and out to the homes. This is all done quickly and wirelessly. He noted that the graphic on the next slide shows what a tower in the community may look like.

[4:03:37 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS stated that that Pacific Dataport's 2.5 GHz tribal spectrum WISP system "broadband-in-a-box" offers tribes one approach to broadband. Microcom helps with the design, equipment installation, and maintenance and Pacific Dataport sells the tribe the backhaul.

MR. WILLIAMS displayed the map of Alaska that identifies all the communities Pacific Dataport intends to help, 15-20 of which have already received help. The next slide shows the letters of support that have come in as well as quotes from community leaders voicing their concerns. He also mentioned the separate file he sent of letters to Secretary of Commerce Raimondo from tribal entities expressing frustration about the federal and state funding for broadband. He expressed hope that the file would be added to the record.

MR. WILLIAMS concluded the presentation saying that Pacific Dataport is Alaska's local satellite expert; the Aurora Network middle mile is Alaska's most economical option when time and money is considered; the company would be okay if federal subsidies ended tomorrow; Pacific Dataport is clearly the company that is pulling the solution together; and the process is in motion.

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CHAIR SHOWER asked whether subsidies were available for satellite companies.

MR. WILLIAMS explained that about \$150 million per year comes in from the Alaska Plan, which is FCC Universal Service Fund (USF) legacy funding. It was started about five years ago and provided a 60-90 day window for telecoms to opt in. That window will be closed to new entrants for about 10 years. Pacific Dataport and other new companies that have entered the market since then don't have access to those funds. Pacific Dataport has applied for other federal funds but getting people to understand that Lower 48 solutions do not apply in Alaska is difficult. To date

they have been unsuccessful accessing any funds for satellite in Alaska.

SENATOR HOLLAND referenced slides 7-9 and asked him to talk further about the reason for the digital divide in Alaska when there's so much microwave and fiber.

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MR. WILLIAMS offered his belief that the TERA network has a maximum capacity of 7.5 gigabits per second, which is the same capacity as Aurora's first small satellite. Pacific Dataport knows that satellite has the capacity for about 10,000 people with broadband speeds of 25/3 or faster. He relayed that he has often heard the owner of the GCI TERA Network say it has about 45,000 people on their network. Pacific Dataport's view is that system is oversold by about 450 percent. Pacific Dataport intends to ensure its customers will receive 25/3 speeds. He said he didn't know the business decision that resulted in people along the road not being connected when fiber is running up the middle of the state. He was aware that AlCan and Fiber One were doing exceptional work to ensure that their new fiber line would provide service to everyone along the Dawson Highway.

SENATOR HOLLAND asked if he said the Aurora satellites would be able to tie into fiber optic to back feed from the opposite end.

MR. WILLIAMS said yes and the term for that is hybridized network. The only time that hybridizing isn't beneficial is if fiber goes from community to community but is only connected by microwave.

[4:12:57 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER asked if he had any concerns about interference or frequency overlap.

MR. WILLIAMS answered no, and highlighted that the Aurora systems were being looked at for use north of Alaska because the coverage and quality are so good.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked him to talk about the upload and download speeds that Pacific Dataport provides.

MR. WILLIAMS answered that, in theory, the OneWeb speeds go up to 195 megabits per sec download and 35 megabits per second upload. The GEO HTS system theoretically will provide 150 megabits per sec download and 25 megabits per sec upload. He noted that a lot of upcoming legislation requires minimums to

qualify for funding but it costs more to provide faster speeds so he doesn't believe that those types of price controls on providers was healthy.

CHAIR SHOWER asked why he used the caveat "in theory" when he responded to the previous question.

MR. WILLIAMS answered that the upload and download speeds and the latency are theoretical until the network is up and running and the system has been tested.

4:18:21 PM

SENATOR COSTELLO asked whether Pacific Dataport's product was designed to meet the latency requirements in the federal legislation.

MR. WILLIAMS said the language requires latency that will allow real time interactive software and Pacific Dataport is able to do that. GEO HTS can accommodate Zoom and Teams calls, but if there's a strict latency limitation of 100 milliseconds or lower, that will eliminate the use of GEO HTS and cut off that option for communities that would like that it because it's better than what they have now.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked what the industry had agreed on for real time latency speed.

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MR. WILLIAMS answered that he didn't know that industry had agreed on an acceptable latency, but real time two-way video refers to things like Zoom calls, Teams meetings, and GoTo meetings.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked for the upload and download requirement for two-way video calls and meetings.

MR. WILLIAMS answered that he thought it was somewhere between 5 and 10 for download and 2 or 3 for upload. He noted that each software has its own specifications.

SENATOR COSTELLO read the requirements in IIJA that her staff provided. Reliable broadband service requires not less than 25 megabits per second for downloads and 3 megabits for upload and a latency sufficient to support real time interactive applications.

MR. WILLIAMS noted that it doesn't have a minimum or maximum latency speed.

[4:22:40 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER expressed appreciation for the briefing.

### **HB 297-MILITARY MEMBER CHILD PROTECTION**

[4:23:39 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 297(HSS)(title am) "An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Family and Community Services; relating to child protection; and relating to children of active duty military members."

[4:23:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRIER HOPKINS, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HB 297, stated that the US Department of Defense (DoD) recommends this legislation to all states that have military personnel and bases within their boundaries. It provides proof that the state is supporting the military families already residing in the state and that it will continue to do so for those families that arrive in the future. He noted that the bill was drafted in close consultation with the Fairbanks Tiger Team, which is a military advocacy organization.

He explained that if the Office of Children's Services (OCS) needs to take any action involving a military family, HB 297 requires that action to be reported to the local designated authority within the Department of Defense (DoD). In Alaska those individuals reside at Fort Wainwright and JBER. Both are licensed social workers that work in the Family Advocacy Program. He noted that the seven day timeline for DoD to be notified was carefully negotiated with OCS.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS stated that HB 297 ensures that military families are able to access the support services provided on a base. Further, any paperwork OCS has given to DoD will be forwarded when the military family moves to another state. This information is confidential and kept separate from the military member's service record.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS concluded saying that HB 297 will help ensure that Alaska continues to be a good place for those in service to work and raise a family.

[4:28:47 PM](#)

TANYA CLUCAS, Staff, Representative Grier Hopkins, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, advised that the DoD State Liaison Office identified 10 key issues for all states to work on in 2022. The DoD looks at the responses to these issues when it makes decisions about placing bases and whether or not the state is promoting the mission of DoD. She reported Alaska's status as of last week:

- Military spouse licensure is in the process of being advanced.
- Purple Star Schools Program, the policy has passed.
- Child abuse identification and reporting is being addressed in HB 297. The sponsor is working with DoD and the state to ensure that Alaska is demonstrating its commitment to its military partners so it continues to be a good place to live, work, and serve.

[4:30:38 PM](#)

MS. CLUCAS reviewed the information bulleted on slide 3:

#### **Child Abuse Identification and Reporting Policy Status**

- Child Abuse Reporting is one of the ten key issues the Department of Defense advocates for across the nation
- This initiative is part of the Department of Defense's efforts to identify and address the most pressing needs of service members and military families
- DoD is required to address child abuse in military families, but with 70% of active-duty families living in civilian communities, service officials are often unaware of problems

MS. CLUCAS reviewed the data on slides 4 and 5:

#### **Military Children in Alaska**

- Alaska has ~180,000 children, of which over 10% are military dependents, with caregivers who are active duty or in the National Guard or Reserves
- Alaska ranks 16th in the USA for rates of reported child abuse
- Since 2003 the reported child abuse in military families has outpaced reported abuse for the

civilian population, coinciding with increased deployments and overseas operations

### **Collaboration and Coordination of Services**

- States have the statutory authority and legal responsibility to address child welfare issues for children in their states
- The Department of Defense's Family Advocacy Program has the responsibility to prevent and identify abuse and provide services for affected youth and children
- The State of Alaska and DOD already coordinate. However, mandating a reporting requirement and the authority to report will ensure that there's not unintended impediments to coordination
- Creation of a reporting requirement and the authority to report will allow for a better quality of care and consistent rehabilitative services for families
- This improved continuum of care will help our military families receive the services they need to stay healthy and together
- Having these laws in place helps improve Alaska's national ranking when the Department of Defense is deciding where to place future deployments and infrastructure

[4:32:42 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO asked what happens to the information from OCS that is placed in a confidential file.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS explained that the reports that OCS provides go to the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) on a regionally designated base. A specifically designated individual in FAP receives the report and works through a process that involves meeting with the member's superior officer and military physicians. He deferred further explanation to Tammie Perreault.

[4:33:53 PM](#)

TAMMIE PERREAULT, Northwest Regional Liaison, Defense-State Liaison Office, U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., confirmed that the information is given to a designated individual in the Family Advocacy Program office at each designated installation. The information can also be provided to other partners on the installation that provide support to

military families. She deferred to the DoD representative on the phone if the committee wanted more detail on the process.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked, once the information is passed to the base, whether the family would then be going through two processes, one with OCS and the other with the military.

MS. PERREAULT relayed that DoD has a requirement to provide wraparound services for military families for such things as new parent support, medical care, and counseling. OCS coordinates but DoD actually provides this additional support.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked if other states have this agreement and how it has worked out.

MS. PERREAULT answered that 31 states have this in statute. Several years ago it became a requirement to coordinate with states to ensure that DoD was getting the necessary information about potential child abuse and neglect cases to ensure the families get the services and support they need. Sometimes it's not a wraparound service that's needed; it may be that the family needs a cooling off period. The airman or soldier can be taken to the installation to provide that needed separation. This legislation supports the memorandum of understanding that states may have in place and if there isn't an MOU, the legislation provides the basis to ensure the coordination.

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CHAIR SHOWER relayed his experience that it didn't matter who controlled this type of information, the member's commanding officer will know about it and it will affect the service member's career. He then asked what the threshold is for OCS to file a report with DoD.

MS. PERREAULT deferred the question to the DoD representative.

[4:40:09 PM](#)

JENNIFER FRYSZ, LCSW, Social Worker, Family Advocacy Program (FAP), Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Anchorage, Alaska, explained that DoD defines family maltreatment as behavior that includes bullying, berating, exposure to domestic violence, threats of suicide, threats of self-harm, threats of harming each other, and threats that alter somebody's ability to function on a regular basis or rising to a level where somebody experiences fear. The four categories covered by those definitions are physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. Any interaction that falls within this definition will be reported.

If children are in the home and the Department of Public Safety (DPS) responds, the FAP office will have a conversation with DPS to determine whether or not it reached that federal definition.

She said a police officer who responds to a home but does not make an arrest may or may not notify the commanding officer. If the commander is notified the family advocacy office will receive the report, but it may not be screened in and assigned to a case manager. To the question of false reporting, she said they rely on the information and assessment from the people or persons who responded to the home, what was alleged to have happened, and the documentation involved.

[4:43:04 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER asked her to forward that to the committee for the record.

SENATOR REINBOLD expressed her lack of trust and concern with OCS and her preference for programs that support families rather than splitting them up.

She asked why the bill didn't pass previously and whether the sponsor had contacted former Representative Tammie Wilson.

[4:45:09 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS said he shares her concerns about OCS and SB 297 is important to ensure that it is not the only avenue for these families to receive services. Rather, the bill will ensure they are able to work through the military system to receive the wrap around services that were described earlier. The bill didn't pass when it was initially introduced in 2020 because of the early adjournment due to COVID-19. He acknowledged that his office had not spoken to former Representative Tammie Wilson who introduced the bill in 2020.

CHAIR SHOWER expressed his desire to hear from former Representative Tammie Wilson.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS agreed to reach out.

[4:47:16 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI noted that OCS collaborates with DoD and the Family Advocacy Program. He asked whether FAP coordinates with OCS as a mandatory reporter.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS deferred the question.

[4:48:00 PM](#)

MS. FRYSZ answered that every Family Advocacy Program follows the mandatory reporting requirements in the state in which the office resides. FAP is a mandatory reporter in Alaska and they follow that law. She acknowledged the concerns about OCS and said it may help to know that when FAP screens and assigns a case manager, they not only talk to OCS, but also to the troopers, the police department, attorneys, and the command. After that they sit down formally with a board that uses a DoD logarithm to make a determination without bias. She posited that knowing the entire process should relieve some of the concern about relying on OCS.

SENATOR KAWASAKI cited data that showed that just a small percentage of cases rise to the investigation level and fewer yet need to go through the entire process. He asked whether DoD had a similar experience.

MS. FRYSZ responded that the FAP office at JBER receives 600 referrals a year and just 300 may be screened in. Of those 300 cases, there may be one-fourth that go to the board and meet the criteria to keep the case open and clinical treatment is recommended for the family. It's important to receive the reports from OCS to ensure the appropriate action is taken and that the required wraparound services are provided.

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CHAIR SHOWER opened public testimony on HB 297; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[4:52:47 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER held HB 297 in committee.

### **HB 234-POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION LIMITS**

[4:52:52 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 234(STA) am(efd fld) "An Act relating to political contributions; relating to the location of offices for the Alaska Public Offices Commission and the locations at which certain statements and reports filed with the commission are made available."

[This is the third hearing and public testimony is closed.]

[4:53:39 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CALVIN SCHRAGE, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HB 234, reminded the committee that this legislation fixes the hole in campaign finance that came about after the court struck down Alaska's individual to candidate contribution limits. After the ruling, the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC) issued temporary advisory limits. APOC recently abandoned those limits, which effectively leaves no individual to candidate campaign contribution limits. The courts also struck down the limits on out-of-state contributions, which effectively leaves the state open to unlimited campaign contributions from out-of-state donors.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE relayed that Alaska voters overwhelmingly supported two separate ballot initiatives for robust campaign contribution limits. Polling today still shows about 70 plus percent of Alaskans support robust contribution limits. He acknowledged the concern voiced in the previous committee that this limits speech. However, it's a limitation that the people want to ensure that there is no undue influence in elections.

[4:56:32 PM](#)

SENATOR REINBOLD stated that she supports campaign limits and was working with the members to address their concerns.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked if he could share the polling data that he mentioned.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE agreed to provide some information.

CHAIR SHOWER asked what the legislature might do to prevent the court from striking down the contribution limits in SB 234 because it limits free speech, just as it did on the two previous ballot measures.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE said the Supreme Court identified three concerns with Alaska's individual to candidate limits: 1) Alaska's \$500 limit was substantially lower than the limits the court had previously upheld; 2) Alaska's individual to candidate limit was substantially lower than comparable limits in other states; and 3) Alaska's limit was not adjusted for inflation.

To address those concerns HB 234 first reduced the limitations on challengers. The court looked at whether challengers were able to effectively fund raise like incumbents. The bill moved the limits to a campaign cycle to alleviate the disparity between the amounts of money an incumbent can raise versus a challenger. To addresses the concern about adjusting for

inflation, HB 234 requires APOC to adjust the contribution limits every 10 years, based on Alaska's consumer inflation rates. Finally, there is no need to justify the limit because the bill increases the limit above what is found in other states and the court has upheld. He recapped that the limit is higher, it is per campaign, and the limits are inflation adjusted every 10 years. These changes address the concerns of both the Supreme Court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

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CHAIR SHOWER questioned whether the bill wasn't still vulnerable to the argument that it restricted speech. He also asked if the risk of a court challenge would be lessened if the bill were to adopt the federal contribution limits.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE responded to the first question by pointing to Citizens United where the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged that fighting corruption was a legitimate state interest worthy of justifying a restriction of free speech. To the question about defending the contribution limits, he pointed out that the contribution limits in HB 234 are higher than the limits the court previously upheld as constitutionally valid. It is also above the limits in many other state.

SENATOR HOLLAND asked for the reason for the March 3, 2022 retroactive date.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE explained that campaigns were following the APOC staff guidance on contribution limits up to March 3, 2022. That is when APOC rejected the staff's proposed \$1,500 limit, which threw the door open to unlimited contributions.

CHAIR SHOWER asked him to talk about the perception if not reality that the field is not level when an individual candidate is competing against a candidate who has strong support from either an independent expenditure (IE) group or a union.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE said he'd heard those concerns, but his belief was that there was broad support from both sides of the aisle for contribution limits as a means of fighting corruption in elections. He opined that it did not match the Alaskan identity to support unlimited money coming into the state for Alaskan elections.

CHAIR SHOWER commented on the importance of there being a sense of fair play, which might include restricting groups on all

sides from offering paid time off to campaign or requiring that it be reported against the contribution limit.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE agreed with the notion of a fair playing field and said he'd like to fix all the problems with elections. However, that was outside the scope of the bill, and his focus and the intent of HB 234 was to fix the gaping hole in out-of-state contributions and individual to candidate contributions. Specifically to the comment about union members receiving paid time off to campaign, he offered his understanding those activities were split into a separate arm.

[5:12:18 PM](#)

CHAIR SHOWER commented on the inability of individuals to match the money, power, and influence of a large union like the IBEW or somebody's brother with a large IE group who might come in from out of state to support a candidate.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE agreed that some people have used the process very effectively. He noted that in addition to unions, there are some significant business PACS. He also noted that IE groups may be able to raise millions of dollars, but they're frequently charged substantially more for things like advertising. He said it doesn't balance the playing field, but it is important context.

CHAIR SHOWER commented that he was tainted because his union never supports him due to the "R" attached to his name.

[5:15:09 PM](#)

ERIC GUNDERSON, Staff, Representative Calvin Schrage, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, highlighted that in the last election cycle, the independent expenditure amounts going to each campaign was relatively even. He acknowledged that it depended on where the money was coming from, but the amount that the groups can give to a candidate was limited under HB 234. He acknowledged that what they're giving to IE groups themselves wasn't something that the legislature could do much about.

CHAIR SHOWER said that's part of the dark money he'd like to get rid of.

CHAIR SHOWER asked Tom Lucas if he had anything to add or correct.

[5:16:41 PM](#)

TOM LUCAS, Attorney, Alaska Public Offices Commission, Department of Administration (DOA), Anchorage, Alaska, referenced the comment about union members using paid time to engage in campaign activities and explained that doing that for a regular PAC or candidate would be unlawful. It would be a non-monetary contribution from the business or labor organization, which is prohibited. However, if it was being done for an independent expenditure (IE) group, there is no limitation. An IE group can receive unlimited amounts from almost anybody except a foreign national.

[5:18:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE thanked the committee for its attention and expressed hope that HB 234 could be passed into law this session.

CHAIR SHOWER held HB 234 in committee for future consideration.

[5:19:31 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Shower adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 5:19 p.m.