

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

January 25, 2024

12:38 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Stanley Wright, Chair  
Representative Laddie Shaw  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative George Rauscher  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Cliff Groh  
Representative Andrew Gray

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 229

"An Act establishing Alaska Veterans' Poppy Day; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 229

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA VETERANS' POPPY DAY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STAPP

|          |     |                                 |
|----------|-----|---------------------------------|
| 01/16/24 | (H) | PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/24         |
| 01/16/24 | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 01/16/24 | (H) | MLV                             |
| 01/25/24 | (H) | MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120    |

**WITNESS REGISTER**

PAUL MENKE, Staff  
Representative Will Stapp  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Read the sponsor statement and sectional analysis on behalf of Representative Stapp, prime sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 229 as prime sponsor.

JEANNE OSTNES, President  
American Legion  
Jack Henry Post 1  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 229.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:01:16 PM](#)

**CHAIR STANLEY WRIGHT** called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 12:38 p.m. Representatives Shaw, Carpenter, Groh, Gray, Rauscher, and Wright were present at the call to order. Representative Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### **HB 229-ALASKA VETERANS' POPPY DAY**

[1:01:59 PM](#)

CHAIR WRIGHT announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 229, "An Act establishing Alaska Veterans' Poppy Day; and providing for an effective date."

[1:02:37 PM](#)

PAUL MENKE, Staff, Representative Will Stapp, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Stapp, prime sponsor, read the sponsor statement for HB 229 [included in committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Serving our great nation is one of the most honorable and commendable acts that a person can undertake. Countless individuals have given their lives and paid the highest price for our liberty, and there can never be enough gratitude or recognition given to those who have lost life and limb in the line of duty.

The State of Alaska has one of the largest veteran populations per capita in the nation. Tens of thousands of Alaskans have served our nation's military to fight for values that make America, and

Alaska, a beacon of freedom and prosperity that shines across the globe. This is why it is imperative for Alaska to expand our recognition and remembrance of the brave men and women who made undaunted the final sacrifice for our country.

Named after a hardy flower that grew on the scorched French battlefields in World War I, HB 229 establishes the Friday after Memorial Day of each year as Alaska Veterans' Poppy Day. The objective of this bill is to honor and promote the remembrance of Alaska's many veterans, current and former armed services members, and servicemembers who have fallen in the line of duty.

[1:04:12 PM](#)

MR. MENKE read the sectional analysis for HB 229 [included in committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1:

Establishes the Friday before Memorial Day each year as Alaska Veterans' Poppy Day.

Section 2:

Provides for an immediate effective date.

[1:04:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor of HB 229, added that it is important to remind Alaskans of those who served.

[1:06:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked how the date was decided.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP responded that the day would be on the Friday following Memorial Day weekend.

[1:06:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said he likes the spirit of HB 229. He asked if it would be in conflict or compliment with Canadian remembrance events.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP answered that it would complement the events.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER questioned whether other states are looking at such a remembrance day.

[1:08:13 PM](#)

MR. MENKE offered his understanding that all states observe National Poppy Day, and Virginia does have a poppy day as the Friday before Memorial Day. He said Alaska would be the first to pass a bill for a poppy day.

[1:09:13 PM](#)

JEANNE OSTNES, President, American Legion, Jack Henry Post 1, shared history about Post 1. She explained that the bill has been a yearlong process; there is a resolution that was approved by the post in 2023 included in the committee packet. She said this year's poppy day is on May 27, and that National Poppy Day started in 2017. She pointed out that the first veteran's organization to organize a nationwide poppy distribution was Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in 1922. If the state recognizes May 27 as National Veteran's Poppy Day, then this would show the populace that that the state is showing its appreciation for service and sacrifice. She detailed the logistics of distributing poppy flowers. She said the idea of poppy day encourages people to wear a poppy as a symbol of remembrance and hope. She explained that all poppy funds must be used only for the welfare of veterans, active-duty members, and their families; poppies are not for sale, rather, they are distributed at the request of the person receiving them after they donate. She informed members of the other support letters sent to the committee.

[1:17:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether, if HB 229 were to pass, it would change how the American Legion carries out veteran remembrance events.

MS. OSTNES answered no, events would stay the same. She noted that poppies are available throughout the year. In response to a follow-up question from Representative Saddler regarding overseas use of poppies, she responded that Canada, England, France, Belgium, and Australia all use the poppy as a symbol.

1:21:25 PM

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER thanked Ms. Ostnes for her testimony.

1:22:07 PM

CHAIR WRIGHT opened public testimony on HB 229. After ascertaining that there was no one wishing to testify, he closed public testimony.

CHAIR WRIGHT thanked the sponsor for bringing HB 229 forward.

1:22:53 PM

CHAIR WRIGHT announced that HB 229 was held over.

1:23:07 PM

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 1:23 p.m.