

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 5, 2024

3:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Laddie Shaw, Chair
Representative Stanley Wright, Vice Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Craig Johnson
Representative Jamie Allard
Representative Ashley Carrick
Representative Andi Story

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 316

"An Act relating to law enforcement requests for wireless telephone location information in emergencies."

- MOVED CSHB 316 (STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 173

"An Act relating to public construction contracts; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 12 (JUD)

"An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Administration; creating an address confidentiality program; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 95 (STA) AM

"An Act relating to special request specialty organization registration plates; relating to special registration plates commemorating peace officers killed in the line of duty; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18

Urging the United States Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset of the Social Security Act.

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 316

SHORT TITLE: EMERGENCY CELL PHONE LOCATION DISCLOSURE

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) C.JOHNSON

02/09/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/09/24	(H)	STA
02/27/24	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/27/24	(H)	Heard & Held
02/27/24	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
03/05/24	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 173

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS WAGE RATES

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) MCCABE

04/24/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/24/23	(H)	STA, FIN
03/05/24	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: SB 12

SHORT TITLE: ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) KIEHL

01/18/23	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23
01/18/23	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/23	(S)	STA, JUD, FIN
02/02/23	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/02/23	(S)	Heard & Held
02/02/23	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
02/28/23	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/28/23	(S)	Moved CSSB 12(STA) Out of Committee
02/28/23	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/01/23	(S)	STA RPT CS 1DP 3NR NEW TITLE
03/01/23	(S)	DP: KAWASAKI
03/01/23	(S)	NR: WIELECHOWSKI, BJORKMAN, MERRICK
03/08/23	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/08/23	(S)	Heard & Held

03/08/23 (S) MINUTE(JUD)
 03/15/23 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 03/15/23 (S) Moved CSSB 12(JUD) Out of Committee
 03/15/23 (S) MINUTE(JUD)
 03/17/23 (S) JUD RPT CS 3DP 1AM NEW TITLE
 03/17/23 (S) DP: CLAMAN, TOBIN, KIEHL
 03/17/23 (S) AM: KAUFMAN
 03/28/23 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 03/28/23 (S) Heard & Held
 03/28/23 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 04/03/23 (S) FIN RPT CS(JUD) 3DP 3NR 1AM
 04/03/23 (S) DP: OLSON, HOFFMAN, KIEHL
 04/03/23 (S) NR: STEDMAN, MERRICK, BISHOP
 04/03/23 (S) AM: WILSON
 04/03/23 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 04/03/23 (S) Moved CSSB 12(JUD) Out of Committee
 04/03/23 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 04/24/23 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 04/24/23 (S) VERSION: CSSB 12(JUD)
 04/26/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 04/26/23 (H) STA, JUD, FIN
 05/04/23 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
 05/04/23 (H) Heard & Held
 05/04/23 (H) MINUTE(STA)
 03/05/24 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: SB 95

SHORT TITLE: LIC. PLATES: SPECIALTY ORGS/PEACE OFFICER
 SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) MERRICK

03/08/23 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 03/08/23 (S) STA, FIN
 04/18/23 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 04/18/23 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --
 04/20/23 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM
 04/20/23 (S) Heard & Held
 04/20/23 (S) MINUTE(STA)
 05/02/23 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 05/02/23 (S) Moved CSSB 95(STA) Out of Committee
 05/02/23 (S) MINUTE(STA)
 05/03/23 (S) STA RPT CS 5DP SAME TITLE
 05/03/23 (S) DP: KAWASAKI, WIELECHOWSKI, CLAMAN,
 MERRICK, BJORKMAN
 05/10/23 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 05/10/23 (S) Heard & Held
 05/10/23 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 05/12/23 (S) FIN RPT CS(STA) 6DP 1NR SAME TITLE

05/12/23 (S) DP: STEDMAN, HOFFMAN, WILSON, KIEHL,
MERRICK, BISHOP
05/12/23 (S) NR: OLSON
05/12/23 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
05/12/23 (S) Moved CSSB 95(STA) Out of Committee
05/12/23 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
05/16/23 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
05/16/23 (S) VERSION: CSSB 95(STA) AM
01/16/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/24 (H) STA, FIN
03/05/24 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HJR 18

SHORT TITLE: SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT REDUCTION REPEAL
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GALVIN

01/22/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/24 (H) STA
02/22/24 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/22/24 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
03/05/24 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

PORTIA SAMUELS, Staff
Representative Craig Johnson
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an explanation of Amendment 1 to
HB 316, on behalf of Representative Craig Johnson, prime
sponsor.

GREG SMITH, Executive Director
Kelsey Smith Foundation
Overland Park, Kansas

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony in support of HB
316.

REPRESENTATIVE KEVIN MCCABE
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 173, as prime sponsor.

JULIE MORRIS, Staff
Representative Kevin McCabe
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the sectional analysis for HB 173, on behalf of Representative Kevin McCabe.

SENATOR JESSE KIEHL
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SB 12, as prime sponsor.

KEELEY OLSON, Executive Director
Standing Together Against Rape
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing and testified in support of SB 12.

SENATOR KELLY MERRICK
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SB 95, as prime sponsor.

DOUG FIFER, retired Police Officer
Anchorage Police Department;
Chair

Cook Inlet Region, Inc.
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 95.

KERRY CROCKER, Staff
Senator Kelly Merrick
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on SB 95, on behalf of Senator Kelly Merrick, prime sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE ALYSE GALVIN
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HJR 18, as prime sponsor.

MEREDITH TRAINOR, Staff
Representative Alyse Galvin
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HJR 18 on behalf of Representative Alyse Galvin.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:02:16 PM](#)

CHAIR LADDIE SHAW called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. Representatives Wright, C. Johnson, Carpenter, Carrick, Story, and Shaw were present at the call to order. Representative Allard arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 316-EMERGENCY CELL PHONE LOCATION DISCLOSURE

[3:03:47 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 316, "An Act relating to law enforcement requests for wireless telephone location information in emergencies." [Before the committee was CSHB 316.]

[3:04:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HB 316, labeled 33-LS1235\B.2, Walsh, 3/1/24, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 1:
Delete "**telephone**"
Insert "**device**"

Page 1, line 5:
Delete "**Telephone**"
Insert "**Device**"

Page 1, line 6:
Delete "**telephone**"
Insert "**device**"

Page 1, line 7:
Delete "telephone company"
Insert "carrier"

Page 1, line 8:
Delete "telephone"
Insert "device"

Page 1, line 10:
Delete "telephone"
Insert "device"

Page 1, line 12:

Delete "telephone company"
Insert "carrier"

Page 1, line 13:
Delete "telephone"
Insert "device"

Page 1, line 14, through page 2, line 2:
Delete all material and insert:
"(c) An action may not be brought against a wireless carrier or its officers, agents, or employees for providing the location of a wireless device to a law enforcement agency while acting in good faith in compliance with (a) of this section."

Page 2, line 3:
Delete "telephone company"
Insert "carrier"

Page 2, line 5:
Delete "telephone"
Insert "device"

Page 2, lines 16 - 17:
Delete all material and insert:
"(3) "law enforcement agency" has the meaning given in AS 12.36.090;
(4) "wireless carrier" means a provider of a commercial mobile service as defined in 47 U.S.C. 332;
(5) "wireless device" means a device that connects to a service provided by a wireless carrier."

[3:04:22 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW objected for the purpose of discussion.

[3:04:29 PM](#)

PORTIA SAMUELS, Staff, Representative Craig Johnson, Alaska State Legislature, provided an explanation of Amendment 1 to HB 316, on behalf of Representative Craig Johnson. Amendment 1 does not change the intent of the legislation, nor are there major substantive changes to the bill. She explained that the term "telephone" was replaced with "device" throughout the bill. She said the term "telephone company" was replaced with "wireless carrier" to ensure that all devices are covered.

Liability language was replaced with "an action may not be brought against a wireless carrier". Definitions are included for "law enforcement" and updated for "wireless carrier" and "wireless device."

[3:05:53 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW removed his objection to Amendment 1 to HB 316. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[3:06:04 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW opened public testimony on HB 316.

[3:06:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON provided wrap up comments. He said, "If we can save one life, this bill will have been worth it."

[3:06:53 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW, after ascertaining there was no one who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 316.

[3:07:09 PM](#)

GREG SMITH, Executive Director, provided invited testimony in support of HB 316. He said the adoption of the amendment strengthens the bill. He assured the committee that the bill will save lives in Alaska.

[3:08:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT moved to report HB 316, as amended, out of committee, with individual recommendations and the attached fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 316(STA) was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[3:08:24 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:08 p.m. to 3:10 p.m.

HB 173-PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS WAGE RATES

[3:10:32 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 173, "An Act relating to public construction contracts; and providing for an effective date."

[3:11:05 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KEVIN MCCABE, as prime sponsor, presented HB 173. He paraphrased from the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 173 seeks to modernize an outdated statute to better address the specific challenges of construction in Alaska. Specifically, it updates the Little Davis Bacon Act (LDBA) public construction contract thresholds in our state. The current threshold of \$25,000 is deemed inefficient due to various Alaska-specific factors and inflationary pressures over the past 11 years. Many states have either eliminated thresholds altogether or raised them to \$1 million.

This bill proposes raising the threshold to \$150,000 to better reflect inflation and current industry costs. This adjustment would streamline processes, reduce administrative burdens, and enhance efficiency in public construction projects statewide. Moreover, it would encourage smaller contractors to bid on contracts and help address the labor shortage in the construction industry in Alaska.

Furthermore, the increased threshold would address unique challenges faced in Alaska, such as high transportation costs in rural areas. Currently, even minor projects, like repairing 20 potholes, may necessitate compliance with LDBA regulations due to exceeding the threshold.

Support for House Bill 173 is crucial for adapting regulations, ensuring equitable participation for local contractors, and fostering economic development in the face of inflation and workforce shortages. Let's modernize our approach to public construction contracts and propel Alaska forward.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated that HB 173 creates opportunities for smaller enterprises, which could lead to job creation and community development. The bill acknowledges the need for a more streamlined process for smaller public construction contracts. Projects under \$150,000 would move projects forward more efficiently and facilitate timely improvements to local infrastructure without unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.

[3:12:43 PM](#)

JULIE MORRIS, Staff, Representative Kevin McCabe, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Kevin McCabe, provided the sectional analysis for HB 173 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1: Amends §AS 36.05.005 to raise the minimum dollar threshold for which the requirements of Title 36 (Public Contracts) apply to public construction contracts from \$25,000 to \$150,000.

[3:13:31 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about the limit of \$150,000.

[3:13:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE answered that local contractors from his district informed him that they were struggling to complete simple projects like laying gravel on a mile of road under the \$25,000 currently in statute. This meant that an engineering process needed to be completed, which costs construction projects a minimum of an additional \$70,000.

[3:15:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked how many states have eliminated or raised thresholds to \$1 million.

[3:15:30 PM](#)

MS. MORRIS offered to follow up with specific information after the meeting.

[3:16:48 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that HB 178 was held over.

SB 12-ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM

[3:16:59 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the next order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 12(JUD), "An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Administration; creating an address confidentiality program; and providing for an effective date."

[3:17:14 PM](#)

SENATOR JESSE KIEHL, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, paraphrased from the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

SB 12 creates an address protection program for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, peace officers and correctional officers, and their families.

Alaska is one of only nine states without any form of address protection program. They are so widespread because they are essential. A person needs an address to vote, drive, work, send children to school, and much more. When that address shows up in a public record, an Alaskan seeking safety from a stalker or abuser faces unnecessary danger. So do Alaska law enforcement professionals who face threats of retribution.

An address protection program gives those Alaskans a tool to stay safe.

Under SB 12, the state would keep a Post Office Box and confidentially forward mail to Alaskans with a protective order, public safety professionals, and their families. Victims and those protecting our state deserve the chance to live safely.

SENATOR KIEHL made note that the Department of Public Safety has informed him that this bill may have opened a loophole in an unrelated program, and he plans to work with the department to clear it up.

[3:19:47 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked for some examples of the problem.

[3:20:22 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL told a story of a constituent who had moved to Alaska to escape an abusive situation. She utilized a P.O. Box to prevent creating a public record of her home address. One day, she saw her abuser at the post office. This is one of many examples of people who move to restart their lives to avoid a dangerous situation and struggle to do so without protected addresses. He emphasized the importance of creating legislation that creates safe opportunities for people in need.

[3:21:58 PM](#)

KEELEY OLSON, Executive Director, Standing Together Against Rape (STAR), described her experience using address confidentiality tools in Washington state where she previously worked in a victims' advocate confidentiality program. Combined with comprehensive safety planning and emergency relocation plans, the address confidentiality program saved lives. These programs are available in 40 states nationwide. She explained that in Washington, the program was available even without a protective order in place. She appreciated the inclusion of public officers in the program listed under CSSB 12(JUD). She stated STAR's support of the proposed legislation.

[3:24:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked if anyone could use the program for their own privacy.

SENATOR KIEHL pointed to page 3, line 3 of CSSB 12(JUD) and explained that a protective order is not necessary to qualify. More specifically, he responded that the cost would prohibit any and every Alaskan from utilizing the program. He noted it would also create a significant inconvenience for Alaskans who don't need the program and mentioned delays in receiving mail. Despite those inconveniences, this program is essential to those who are trying to safeguard their lives and their children's lives.

[3:26:52 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that CSSB 12(JUD) was held over.

SB 95-LIC. PLATES: SPECIALTY ORGS/PEACE OFFICER

3:27:02 PM

CHAIR SHAW announced that the next order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 95(STA), "An Act relating to special request specialty organization registration plates; relating to special registration plates commemorating peace officers killed in the line of duty; relating to special registration plates for vehicles owned by women veterans; relating to special request registration plates for United States Space Force personnel; relating to the transfer of vehicles; relating to commercial driver's licenses and commercial instruction permits; and providing for an effective date."

3:27:18 PM

SENATOR KELLY MERRICK, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor of CSSB 95(STA), paraphrased from a sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Nearly every year, the Legislature spends a portion of its limited time considering specialty license plates for various organizations and non-profits who request them, and the Department of Administration spends its valuable time responding to those pieces of legislation. As of now, there are at least 42 license plates with roughly 90 variations that can be purchased at the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

Since 2003, the Legislature has passed nine bills that authorize specialty license plates. In some cases, multiple pieces of specialty plate legislation were rolled into one bill. For example, in the 27th Legislature, four bills were rolled into one bill that authorized six different plates. IN other instances, the legislature discussed the same license plate option for years before either approving or denying the plate.

This bill intends to pay tribute to the brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty as peace officers. This bill adds a subsection to the Alaska statute which authorizes the creation and issuance of license plates commemorating these peace officers. This bill includes not just police officers, but all peace officers such as state

troopers, municipal police officers, village public safety officers, and officers of the courts.

Senate Bill 95 was introduced to remove the Legislature from approving specialty plates, redirecting that time to bigger issues of statewide significance. Under this legislation, responsibility would be turned over to the DMV, streamlining the process for both the legislature and the DMV.

The division would adopt regulations to allow for issuance of specialty plates sponsored by tax-exempt organizations based within the state, departments of the state, or a municipality within the state. Those entities would also be responsible for paying for the costs associated with development and issuance of the plate.

This bill would reduce State expenses and be a timesaving measure for the Legislature by allowing the DMV to review specialty plate requests.

[3:29:32 PM](#)

DOUG FIFER, Retired Police Officer, Anchorage Police Department; Chair, Cook Inlet Region, Inc., testified in support of CSSB 95(STA). He said he noticed other states that had plates that honored fallen peace officers and the overwhelming support from state senators for their inclusion in specialty license plates. He described the many other worthy organizations that already have commemorative plates. He stated that in the history of the state of Alaska, 50 law enforcement officers died in the line of duty.

CHAIR SHAW offered his support of the bill.

[3:32:09 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked about the original bill to which Senator Merrick referred, nicknamed "The license plate bill to end all license plate bills."

[3:32:46 PM](#)

KERRY CROCKER, Staff, Senator Kelly Merrick, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Senator Merrick, prime sponsor, said that CSSB 95(STA) would not preclude the legislature from

passing a new statute. The bill provides the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) the ability to approve license plates so that the legislature does not have to approve them every time.

[3:33:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked if the DMV can already approve this specialty plate.

[3:33:43 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK said that specialty plates require statute change.

[3:33:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about the cost for developing and issuing the specialty plate.

SENATOR MERRICK answered that the fiscal notes range from \$3,000-14,000. The cost would be incurred on the organization requesting the specialty plate, not the state.

[3:34:59 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that CSSB 95(STA) was held over.

HJR 18-SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT REDUCTION REPEAL

[3:35:24 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18, Urging the United States Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset of the Social Security Act. [

[3:35:51 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[3:35:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALYSE GALVIN, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HJR 18. She provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Urging the United States Congress to Repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset of the federal Social Security Act" [hard copy included

in the committee packet]. She began her presentation on slide 2, titled "What are WEP/GPO?" which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

THE WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION

"The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) can affect how Social Security calculates your retirement or disability benefit. If you work for an employer who doesn't withhold Social Security taxes from your salary, any retirement or disability pension you get from that work can reduce your Social Security benefits. Such an employer may be a government agency or an employer in another country."

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) affects Alaskans who have paid into the Social Security program and are employed by the State of Alaska, which does not withhold federal social security taxes from Alaskans' paychecks. This scenario is common for many Alaskans.

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN moved to slides 3-4, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

THE GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET

"The Government Pension Offset (GPO) adjusts Social Security spousal or widow(er) benefits for people who receive "non-covered pensions." A non-covered pension is a pension paid by an employer that does not withhold Social Security taxes from your salary, typically, state and local governments or non-U.S. employers. Under Social Security's dual-entitlement rule, spouses with their own covered earnings have their spousal benefits offset dollar-for-dollar by their own earned benefit. The GPO has a similar intention; the offset originally was dollar-for-dollar for non-covered pensions, but Congress reduced it to two-thirds in 1983."

ACCORDING TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE...

Alaska has the highest percentage of WEP-affected beneficiaries of any state, with 11.7% of all beneficiaries and 15.2% of all retired workers

THIS IS A BIPARTISAN ISSUE

There are over 300 cosponsors in the U.S. House* There are over 49 cosponsors in the US Senate*

ALASKANS ARE DIFFERENT

With many veterans and seasonal employment opportunities, our teachers, troopers, and firefighters can be disproportionately penalized by these provisions

*Both Senator Murkowski and Representative Peltola are co-sponsors of this legislation in their respective bodies

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN said WEP decreases the social security benefits received by those who receive retirement or disability pensions from the state. These penalties end up disproportionately impacting those Alaskans who are most likely to find themselves in some form of social or civic service, such as troopers, teachers, firefighters, and many other fields. She argued that if a teacher takes a summer job, social security benefits earned at the summer job should be paid out to them accordingly.

[3:40:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN said that the Social Security Fairness Act has already been introduced at the federal level to address inequities. There are currently over 300 cosponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives and 50 in the U.S. Senate. She moved to slide 5, titled "WEP-GPO ROLLBACK ENJOYS WIDESPREAD CONSTITUENT SUPPORT," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

"...I have at least 40+ years working experience. I spent 26 years as an elementary school teacher on the North Slope and in Fairbanks. During my work years I worked at various jobs before and during college, summer jobs to help ends meet while teaching, and for the University of Alaska as an adjunct professor (all paying into social security). I have earned well over forty quarters towards my Social Security benefits over the years.

My current Social Security benefit, after paying my monthly premium for Medicare, is \$65.00, well under to what I am entitled. I earned those benefits on the jobs outside of my public service and because of my public school teaching I face the penalty of the WEP.

I am married to a Social Security beneficiary who spent his whole career in private employment...If he were to pass away before me, using the current formula of my public service in Alaska, I would not be able to receive any of his spouse survival benefits that others receive. He paid into the Social Security system his whole work life and due to the GPO penalty, none of the normal spousal benefits will apply for me..."

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN urged the committee to join her in calling on Congress to repeal these penalties for public servants.

CHAIR SHAW commented on HJR 18 and his personal experience with social security benefits. He offered his support of HJR 18.

[3:43:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about support across the federal delegation.

[3:43:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN provided her understanding that many other states are experiencing the same predicament. Even so, Alaska is disproportionately experiencing unfairness compared with other states in the country. She noted that many people are unaware of the impacts of the provision at the time of onboarding. She noted challenges with recruitment and retention in public positions like police officers and teachers. She discussed the "death tier," which refers to the likelihood of outliving one's benefits.

CHAIR SHAW reiterated his support of HJR 18.

[3:46:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about the rollback date.

[3:46:18 PM](#)

MEREDITH TRAINOR, Staff, Representative Alyse Galvin, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Galvin, prime sponsor of HJR 18, replied that the GPO was introduced into law in 1977, the WEP was introduced in 1983. Each of the two policies have different effective dates. The WEP effective date applies to those hired after December 31, 1983. She offered to follow up with more information.

[3:47:19 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW highlighted Alaska as the state most impacted by the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset.

CHAIR SHAW announced that HJR 18 was held over.

[3:47:44 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW provided closing remarks about submitting amendments for the bills heard during the meeting by Monday, March 11, at 4:00 p.m.

[3:48:05 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:48 p.m.