

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

March 14, 2024

3:07 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. 287

"An Act relating to public notice for certain state actions and public hearings; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 101

"An Act relating to the use of campaign funds for dependent care, protection, and supervision."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 228

"An Act establishing the Alaska mental health and psychedelic medicine task force; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 234

"An Act relating to police officer training; establishing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Review Commission; relating to missing and murdered indigenous persons; relating to the duties of the Department of Public Safety; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 287

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC NOTICE FOR DISPOSAL/LEASE

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) RAUSCHER

01/24/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/24/24 (H) STA  
03/14/24 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 101

SHORT TITLE: CAMPAIGN FUNDS FOR DEPENDENT CARE

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) ARMSTRONG

03/08/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
03/08/23 (H) HSS, STA, JUD  
04/26/23 (H) HSS REFERRAL REMOVED  
04/26/23 (H) BILL REPRINTED  
03/14/24 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 228

SHORT TITLE: MENTAL HEALTH/PSYCHEDELIC MED. TASK FORCE

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) ARMSTRONG

01/16/24 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/24  
01/16/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/16/24 (H) HSS, STA, FIN  
02/02/24 (H) MLV REPLACES HSS REFERRAL  
02/02/24 (H) BILL REPRINTED  
02/13/24 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
02/13/24 (H) Heard & Held  
02/13/24 (H) MINUTE(MLV)  
02/29/24 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
02/29/24 (H) Heard & Held  
02/29/24 (H) MINUTE(MLV)  
03/05/24 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
03/05/24 (H) Moved CSHB 228(MLV) Out of Committee  
03/05/24 (H) MINUTE(MLV)  
03/06/24 (H) MLV RPT CS(MLV) 1DNP 4NR 1AM  
03/06/24 (H) DNP: SADDLER  
03/06/24 (H) NR: GROH, CARPENTER, SHAW, WRIGHT  
03/06/24 (H) AM: GRAY  
03/13/24 (H) FIN REFERRAL REMOVED  
03/14/24 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE GEORGE RAUSCHER  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 287, as prime sponsor.

CHRISTY COLLES, Director  
Central Office  
Division of Mining, Land and Water  
Department of Natural Resources  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions and provided comments about HB 287.

RYAN MCKEE, Staff  
Representative George Rauscher  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 287, on behalf of Representative Rauscher, prime sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE JENNIFER ARMSTRONG  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 101, as prime sponsor; presented HB 228, as prime sponsor.

HEATHER HEBDON, Executive Director  
Anchorage Office  
Alaska Public Offices Commission  
Department of Administration  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 101.

MICHAEL DEMOLINA, PhD, President  
Wisdom Traditions Counseling Services  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony for HB 228.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:07:32 PM](#)

**CHAIR LADDIE SHAW** called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:07 p.m. Representatives Carrick, Allard, Story, Wright, and Shaw were present at the

call to order. Representatives C. Johnson and Carpenter arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**HB 287-PUBLIC NOTICE FOR DISPOSAL/LEASE**

[3:08:41 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 287, "An Act relating to public notice for certain state actions and public hearings; and providing for an effective date."

[3:09:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GEORGE RAUSCHER, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 287, as prime sponsor. He provided the sponsor statement for HB 287 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

HB 287 proposes changes to certain public notice requirements relating to certain land and water usages. The bill changes the requirement for public notice by allowing an option to use the Alaska Online Public Notice System. This would provide a new means to the current requirement that notices be posted in a newspaper of general circulation in an affected area. The bill would update, but not substantively change, other requirements for notice by the appropriate commissioner to determine the rights of persons regarding related issues.

By allowing for online public notice, it is possible to save applicants money as opposed to newspaper notice. The changes would utilize the state's online public notice system, which is available to most Alaskans to view at no cost. Public notices posted on this system are permanently retained for future reference, whereas newspaper notices are difficult to retrieve. Utilizing the online public notice system ensures that Alaskans have equal access to public notices rather than just newspaper subscribers or residents of certain areas. Finally, online public notice would eliminate coordinating issues with newspaper publications and reduce permit processing timeframes.

[3:11:18 PM](#)

CHRISTY COLLES, Director, Central Office, Division of Mining, Land and Water, Department of Natural Resources, reported that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) supports HB 287. She said that the bill addresses the current requirements for water use applications to be posted in newspapers. She said that these requirements take significant time to coordinate. Costs to the applicant can range between \$500-\$1,500 per notice. The amendments proposed for HB 287 would align with other public notice requirements in statute, more widely distribute public notices, save money for the applicant, and save time and resources for the state.

[3:12:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked about the current challenges in creating print publications, especially in rural communities.

[3:13:25 PM](#)

RYAN MCKEE, Staff, Representative George Rauscher, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Rauscher, prime sponsor, responded that some challenges include the time spent coordinating with publications to determine which ones are accessed in remote areas. Another challenge is the cost to the applicant; a single newspaper advertisement can cost between \$500-\$1,500 per day. A single day advertisement is a limited window of time to provide notice. A public notice system on the state website would make it easier to notify the public for longer periods of time with no cost.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK referenced page 5, line 24 of the bill, which read "published or broadcast", and asked if this bill helps to provide notice to communities who lack newspaper coverage.

MS. COLLES responded that notices are put in the closest newspaper available to the community. She said if there is not a nearby newspaper, notices are put in conspicuous locations such as post offices in addition to the online public notice website. The newspaper requirement is difficult to coordinate.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked what efforts will be made by the department for communities without access to online resources.

MS. COLLES answered that an assessment would need to be made based on community information.

[3:18:38 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON asked if the notice would still need to be in a newspaper of usual circulation.

MS. COLLES affirmed that there is currently a requirement to put a notice in a newspaper of general circulation. The bill is written to say that the department must put a notice on the Alaska public notice system and may also choose to include it in a newspaper of circulation.

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON asked for a definition of a "newspaper of general circulation".

MS. COLLES responded with her understanding that a "newspaper of general circulation" would be a newspaper within a delivery area.

[3:19:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER referred to page 7, lines 22-24, which stated that notices may be published in "other appropriate information media".

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON offered his understanding as a former newspaper publisher that a "newspaper of general circulation" indicates certified circulation of over 5,000, which eliminates many small-town newspapers. He expressed his concern that perhaps the only way to reach some small communities is through online resources.

[3:20:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed her concern for areas with limited or no broadband. She asked how the department ensures that notices are adequately posted in rural communities without Internet access. She asked for a list of areas in the state that are without broadband.

MS. COLLES responded that the department doesn't have a list of areas without broadband service. She noted other options of notifying the public such as posting notices in community centers, libraries, and post offices.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how notices are documented to ensure community members have received adequate notice.

MS. COLLES stated that the department does its best, though she noted the difficulty of reaching the entire community. She stated her belief that the online notification system can help to close the gaps.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY requested a list of areas that lack broadband access for the purpose of receiving notifications from the department.

[3:23:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked if areas with limited broadband also have limited newspaper delivery.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER suggested that it may be more difficult to find a newspaper in an area that lacks broadband. He echoed Ms. Colles' statement that post offices are an option for posting notices.

MS. COLLES responded that there are plenty of areas that lack general circulation newspapers. In those cases the department takes extra measures to post notices in post offices and community centers.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD offered her support for HB 287. She commented that many folks in Alaska are isolated for personal reasons and prefer not to be contacted.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK noted that the flexibility of the legislation is valuable and reiterated the challenge with reaching out with notices to communities that lack broadband and newspaper circulation. She asked if DNR has reached out to other departments that experience similar challenges and may benefit from similar legislation.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER responded with his expectation that other departments would find this bill of interest.

MR. MCKEE noted that the Department of Environmental Conservation is looking into electronic notice requirement flexibility.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK said there are entities aside from state departments that also have notice requirements that could benefit from the type of flexibility offered in HB 287.

[3:27:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON acknowledged that there are several statewide newspapers but asked if publishing notices in newspapers with low circulation would qualify as notification.

MS. COLLES responded that if it is the only newspaper available, it would be used to fulfill the statutory requirement.

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON stated that there are more people with broadband access than people who subscribe to larger state-wide newspapers. He offered his support for HB 287.

[3:29:16 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that HB 287 was held over.

**HB 101-CAMPAIGN FUNDS FOR DEPENDENT CARE**

[3:29:27 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 101, "An Act relating to the use of campaign funds for dependent care, protection, and supervision."

[3:29:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 101. She provided a sponsor statement for HB 101 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Political campaigns are incredibly demanding and time-consuming. Having support to manage family responsibilities can be central to a candidate's decision to run for office and their ability to successfully campaign. However, under current law, it's unclear whether campaign funds can be used by candidates for dependent care. This bill would explicitly permit candidates to use campaign funds to provide for the care of dependent children, as well as elderly and disabled dependents. To date, sixteen other states have enacted similar legislation. By passing this bill, we can take a meaningful step towards making Alaska a truly pro-family state, at the ballot box and beyond.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG explained that campaigning for office is unpaid, hard work and occurs after work on evenings and weekends. Working full-time, campaigning for office, and paying for supplemental childcare on top of existing childcare costs can be prohibitive for many who hope to run for office. There are fewer parents with young children who run for office and thus the perspectives of those parents are underrepresented. She noted the outmigration of young families from Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG said that she is the only mother in the legislature who has a toddler or an infant. She described long waitlists for childcare. She explained that she is not presenting this bill for herself as she is not running for reelection. This legislation has widespread bipartisan support. In 2018, the Federal Election Commission approved spending campaign funds on child and dependent care for federal candidates with unanimous bipartisan support.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG said that HB 101 has a zero fiscal note and is regulated and monitored like any other campaign expenditure. She noted some of the ways that campaign funds are utilized including gala tickets, car and private plane maintenance, wine, fancy food, professional photos, and more. She argued that childcare is aligned with the intended use of campaign funds. She said HB 101 would put Alaska in line with campaign regulations in 31 other states.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG, regarding the proposed use of campaign funds and the definition of "dependent" directed attention to the language on page 1, lines 5-11, which read as follows:

A candidate who requires assistance with the care, protection, and supervision of a dependent because of the demands of the candidate's campaign activities may use campaign contributions for the direct care, protection, and supervision of the dependent. In this subsection, "dependent" means

- (1) the candidate's minor child;
- (2) a person with a disability or medical condition for whom the candidate has direct caregiving responsibility.

[3:35:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked how many fathers in the legislature have toddlers.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG responded that there are several.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked if any fathers in the legislature have wanted to utilize campaign money to be used for childcare.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG said that she didn't think it would be appropriate to share information about other representatives' childcare situations on the record.

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REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed her appreciation of the inclusion of "persons with disabilities or medical condition" in the bill.

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REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD expressed her concern about "faulty" candidates who may take advantage of campaign funds.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG responded that abuse of expenditures is a common concern regarding all campaign fund uses. She explained that there is a robust public process with ethics standards that would be applied just as with any other use of campaign funds. She made note of the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC).

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD expressed her dislike of APOC.

CHAIR SHAW asked Representative Allard to adhere to the bill discussion.

[3:38:26 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked if there is a current prohibition on the use of campaign funds for dependent care or if it is not explicitly stated as an acceptable use of campaign funds.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG said that current statute does not explicitly state that campaign funds can be used for dependent care and is ambiguous.

[3:38:56 PM](#)

HEATHER HEBDON, Executive Director, Anchorage Office, Alaska Public Offices Commission, Department of Administration, confirmed that there is not a prohibition on utilizing campaign funds for dependent care. She said that current statute is written broadly and only requires that the expenses be reasonably related to campaign activities.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK expressed her appreciation of the intent of HB 101. She mentioned many major financial challenges that may prevent a person from running for office. She asked if there are other life circumstances that could prevent someone from running besides strictly their salary, for example high energy costs.

CHAIR SHAW asked Representative Carrick to stay focused on the subject of the bill, which is campaign money use for dependent care.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG emphasized the global struggle with representation. She explained that HB 101 is targeted for people who wouldn't be able to attend a campaign event or fundraiser without dependent care.

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REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER commented that he finds HB 101 to be intriguing.

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON asked about the chair's intention with the bill.

[3:42:18 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that HB 101 was held over.

**HB 228-MENTAL HEALTH/PSYCHEDELIC MED. TASK FORCE**

[3:42:32 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 228, "An Act establishing the Alaska mental health and psychedelic medicine task force; and providing for an effective date." [Before the committee was CSHB 228(MLV).]

[3:42:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 228. She presented a sponsor statement for HB 228 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

HB 228 seeks to create a task force to consider barriers to the implementation of and equitable access to certain psychedelic medicines ahead of the expected FDA authorization of prescription drugs that would fall under this category.

The task force will report to the Legislature by December 31, 2024 what regulations or other changes are necessary in the state for Alaskans to safely benefit from these new treatments for mental health issues such as treatment-resistant depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorder and other mental health issues common in Alaska.

Alaska has the highest share of veterans per capita and one of the highest suicide rates in the nation. Coupled with also being a state where 43.3% of women and 30.2% of men in Alaska experience domestic violence and related crimes in their lifetimes and where 84% of American Indian/Alaska Native women experience violence, there is a potential for these medicines to have a profoundly positive impact on the mental health crises we see statewide. This task force is an opportunity to ensure we are prepared for the potential federal medicalization of these life-saving and life-changing medicines.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG added that the task force will not consider or take a position on the medicalization, decriminalization, or legalization of psychedelic medicines. The purpose of the task force is to craft a set of policy recommendations for the Thirty-Fourth Alaska State Legislature to consider in advance of the potential medicalization of certain psychedelic medicines by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Licensing and insurance will be considered by the task force for policy recommendations. She reported that in 2021, Texas became the first state to enact a psychedelic research bill to study veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She mentioned that there are many states with similar task forces to the one proposed in HB 228.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG emphasized the importance of the task force and said that the FDA approves about 43 novel drugs each year, but not all of them have the potential to make as big of an impact as psychedelic medicines. She reported that Alaska is suffering from an acute mental health and addiction crisis, has the third highest suicide rate in the country, and 35.6 drug overdoses per 100,000 people in state. She said that trauma can exacerbate mental health issues, which can lead to violence. She reported the high rate of women killed by men in Alaska and the high rate of women who have experienced intimate partner and/or sexual violence.

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REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG reported that Alaska has the largest share of veterans per capita in the United States and that veterans have a 57 percent higher suicide rate than non-veterans. She said that two out of ten veterans with PTSD also have a substance use disorder. In November 2023, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) stated its commitment to studying psychedelics for PTSD treatment.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG described the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), which has conducted 20 years of clinical trials for 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)-assisted therapy for PTSD; in 2017 this therapy was deemed a "breakthrough therapy" by the FDA. Clinical trials showed that patients had "clinically significant improvements" in PTSD symptoms and that 71 percent of participants receiving the MDMA therapy no longer met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD at the end of the study. She emphasized the potential impact of these new treatments for Alaskans struggling with mental health. She reported that there are no adverse side effects to the treatments. Later this year, the FDA is expected to announce its determination.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG mentioned that the FDA has also granted two "breakthrough therapy" designations for psilocybin for treatment resistant depression and major depressive disorder. She listed other conditions that are being studied, including cancer-related anxiety, depression, anorexia, PTSD, substance use disorders, and chronic pain.

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REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG described the MDMA therapy in greater detail. She emphasized the importance of licensing. The FDA

has provided clinical guidance on the six credentials needed to be a licensed administrator of MDMA. She advised that the state should work to be prepared for when the FDA approval comes into effect.

[3:52:07 PM](#)

MICHAEL DEMOLINA, PhD, Wisdom Traditions Counseling Services, provided invited testimony for HB 228. He introduced himself as a veteran with three decades of experience as a substance-abuse counselor and trauma-informed therapist. He described his first clients as veterans who served in Vietnam.

DR. DEMOLINA expressed his strong support for HB 228. Through his work at the California Institute of Integral Studies graduate level program on the topic of psychedelic certification, he will be certified. He remarked that he has gained valuable insight into the transformative power of psychedelic assisted therapy. He emphasized the importance of convening a task force to be ahead of the curve in creating guidelines. He emphasized the urgent need for comprehensive approaches to mental healthcare. He said that HB 228 creates a significant opportunity to expand the understanding and implementation of trauma-based interventions.

[3:55:43 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW after ascertaining that there were no questions from the committee, announced that HB 228 was held over.

[3:56:47 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at [3:57] p.m.