

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

January 31, 2023

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair
Senator Matt Claman, Vice Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Kelly Merrick

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 26

"An Act relating to special registration plates commemorating peace officers killed in the line of duty."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 26

SHORT TITLE: LICENSE PLATES: FALLEN PEACE OFFICERS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) KAUFMAN

01/18/23	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23
01/18/23	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/23	(S)	STA, FIN
01/31/23	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR JAMES KAUFMAN
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 26.

DOMINICK HARNETT, Staff
Senator James Kaufman
Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the sectional analysis for SB 26.

JAMES COCKRELL, Commissioner
Department of Public Safety
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony in support of SB 26.

DOUG FIFER, Chair
CIRI Board of Directors
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony in support of SB 26.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:32 PM](#)

CHAIR SCOTT KAWASAKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Bjorkman, Claman, Merrick, and Chair Kawasaki. Senator Wielechowski arrived immediately thereafter.

SB 26-LICENSE PLATES: FALLEN PEACE OFFICERS

[3:31:22 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 26 "An Act relating to special registration plates commemorating peace officers killed in the line of duty."

He stated the intention to hear the introduction and invited testimony and hold the bill for further consideration.

[3:31:45 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI joined the committee.

CHAIR KAWASAKI invited the sponsor and staff to the witness table.

[3:32:21 PM](#)

SENATOR JAMES KAUFMAN, District F, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 26, introduced the legislation by reading the following sponsor statement into the record:

[Original punctuation provided.]

I am honored to sponsor SB 26 during the 33rd Alaska State Legislature. 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 statutes 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.

Every day, those that have sworn to protect us put themselves in harm's way to preserve the peace and to protect their fellow citizens. There are a multitude of other states with license plates honoring those who have died in the line of duty. It is time that the great state of Alaska represents our respect for Alaskan peace officers in a similar manner.

This bill is a small but meaningful way to recognize and honor the sacrifices made by these heroes. I urge my fellow legislators to support SB 26 and show our state's gratitude for the service and sacrifices of our fallen peace officers, their families, friends, and coworkers.

Please support those that protect and serve. Support SB 26!

[3:34:09 PM](#)

DOMINICK HARNETT, Staff, Senator James Kaufman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented the sectional analysis for SB 26. It read as follows:

Sec 1:

Adds a new subsection to AS 28.10.181 which authorizes, and sets guidelines for the creation of, special request plates commemorating peace officers killed in the line of duty.

This section also defines "peace officer" as:

- An officer of the state troopers
- A member of the police force of a municipality
- A village public safety officer

- An officer assigned to a court to serve warrants and court orders, provide court security and judicial protection, and transport prisoners

Sec 2:

Adds a new paragraph to AS 28.10.421(d) which sets the cost of the special request plates authorized in Section 1 [at \$30].

[3:35:10 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK stated support for the legislation. She read the last sentence in the fiscal note analysis that says, "Expenses associated with coordinating design, set up, updates to website, education and training is estimated at \$14,000." She asked what education and training was envisioned.

SENATOR KAUFMAN offered his understanding that the cost was the normal process of setting up a program for a commemorative license plate.

SENATOR MERRICK asked if the reference to education and training was a mistake.

SENATOR KAUFMAN offered to follow up with a definitive answer.

CHAIR KAWASAKI stated that the bill has a Finance Committee referral where fiscal questions could be sorted out.

[3:36:15 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN asked for confirmation that the commemorative license plate would be for officers who had died in the line of duty but would not have an individual officer's name.

SENATOR KAUFMAN answered yes; it would be a commemorative plate, similar to other commemorative plates one might see.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked if \$14,000 was the estimated cost of designing the plate and whether it would cost another \$14,000 if the plate were redesigned in five years.

SENATOR KAUFMAN offered his understanding that it would be a one-time cost to design the plate.

[3:37:54 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN asked if the \$30 additional charge covers the department's cost to make specialty plates.

SENATOR KAUFMAN explained that \$30 is the default number in statute.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked if he knew the difference in cost between a regular license plate and a specialty license plate.

SENATOR KAUFMAN offered to follow up with the information.

SENATOR CLAMAN said he'd appreciate the information and he liked the bill.

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked how "peace officer" was defined in this context.

SENATOR KAUFMAN explained that he'd been working on the bill for three years and over that time he'd expanded the definition to include correctional officers who were killed in the line of duty.

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CHAIR KAWASAKI found no further questions and turned to invited testimony.

[3:40:34 PM](#)

JAMES COCKRELL, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety, Anchorage, Alaska, provided invited testimony in support of SB 26. He reported that since Territorial Days, 69 law enforcement officers had lost their lives in the line of duty. SB 26 signifies the importance that Alaskans place on law enforcement officers and sends a message that Alaska is law enforcement friendly. The bill recognizes the men and women who make the state safe for citizens and families and protect wildlife resources. He encouraged this committee and the full legislature to pass SB 26 in support of the law enforcement community.

CHAIR KAWASAKI thanked Commissioner Cockrell for his testimony and for coming out of retirement to serve the state in this capacity.

[3:42:56 PM](#)

DOUG FIFER, Chair, Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI) Board of Directors, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that he was a retired Anchorage police officer who specialized in hostage negotiation. He said the idea of a specialty plate to commemorate peace officers who were killed in the line of duty came to him when he saw that most states have this type of specialty plate. He

started working on the idea in 2017 and he hopes it will pass this year. He named some of the worthy groups and organizations that have specialty commemorative license plates and asked the committee to also support the men and women who risk their lives every day to protect Alaskan citizens and communities.

MR. FIFER shared that he participates in a 400-mile bike ride every year to commemorate fallen officers. The culmination is the Police Memorial in Washington, DC. It is a somber reminder of the number of officers killed in the line of duty. He described SB 26 as both honorable and respectful of Alaska's peace officers. He asked the committee to take this positive step to add Alaska to the majority of states that already honor law enforcement in this way.

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CHAIR KAWASAKI solicited questions.

[3:45:43 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked whether other states that have this type of commemorative plate charge extra that goes into a special fund to help the families of fallen law enforcement officers.

MR. FIFER replied that some do have that option, which he supports. To the question of who would design the plate, he recommended the state/national organization called COPS. It is comprised of family members of fallen officers.

SENATOR CLAMAN noted that the bill does not mention correctional officers. He asked if that was a drafting oversight.

SENATOR KAUFMAN said he would follow up because his intent was to include correctional officers.

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CHAIR KAWASAKI announced he would hold SB 26 in committee for a future hearing.

[3:49:34 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Senator Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 3:49 p.m.