

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

March 5, 2024

1:34 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator James Kaufman, Chair
Senator David Wilson, Vice Chair
Senator Löki Tobin
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Robert Myers

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members Present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 244

"An Act naming the Marvin Thurmond Galena Maintenance and Operation Station."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 244

SHORT TITLE: MARVIN THURMOND GALENA MAINT. STATION

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) BISHOP

02/19/24	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/24	(S)	TRA
03/05/24	(S)	TRA AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR CLICK BISHOP, District R
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 244.

ALEXANDER HANNA, Staff
Senator Click Bishop
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the sectional analysis for SB 244.

JASON SAKALASKAS, Chief,
Northern Region Maintenance and Operations Chief
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on SB 244.

SHANDA HUNTINGTON, City Manager
City of Galena
Galena, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on SB 244.

JENNAL ESMAILKA, Council Member
Galena City Council
Galena, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on SB 244.

KATHERINE THURMOND, representing herself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on SB 244.

JENNY BRYANT, President
Galena School Board
Galena City School District
Galena, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 244.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:34:03 PM](#)

CHAIR JAMES KAUFMAN called the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Myers, Tobin, Wilson, Kiehl, and Chair Kaufman.

SB 244-MARVIN THURMOND GALENA MAINT. STATION

[1:35:01 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 244 "An Act naming the Marvin Thurmond Galena Maintenance and Operation Station."

He noted that this was the first hearing on SB 244.

[1:35:27 PM](#)

SENATOR CLICK BISHOP, District R, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 244 thanked the committee for their consideration of the bill. He said SB 244 would rename the Galena Maintenance Station after Marvin Thurmond. He introduced Alex Hanna to present SB 244.

[1:36:42 PM](#)

ALEXANDER HANNA, staff, Senator Click Bishop, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, gave an overview of SB 244 and explained the sectional analysis.

He stated that SB 244 changes the name of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) maintenance and operation station in Galena, Alaska to Marvin Thurmond Galena Maintenance and Operation Station. He gave a brief overview of Marvin's lifelong dedication to the DOT Services:

Marvin worked for DOT in Galena for more than 32 years. He worked endlessly to maintain the roads and airport in Galena. Galena is a major hub for rural communities and the airport is a crucial part in wild land fire crews and emergency response for the surrounding communities. During the spring of 2013, Galena experienced extreme flooding due to an ice jam on the Yukon River. Marvin and his crew worked together in evacuating the community and to reinforce the airport levee that would hold water from reaching further back. Without this work it would have delayed any emergency access throughout the region.

Prior to the flood in 2013, the road was constantly being washed away by the Yukon River, for many years. Marvin worked with his crew to move the road further inland away from the river.

Marvin's relationship with the community, local contractors, and adjacent tribal landowners allowed the DOTPF to effectively realign this roadway within a matter of days. Marvin was a model community member who always strived to enhance DOT's services to Alaska.

With the support of the community of Galena and the DOT to rename the Galena Maintenance Station in honor of Marvin Thurmond.

[1:39:30 PM](#)

MR. HANNA explained the sectional analysis for SB 244:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SB 244 - Sectional Analysis

Version: 33-LS1390\A

Section 1

Amends AS 35.40 by adding a new section naming the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) Maintenance and Operation Station in Galena, Alaska the Marvin Thurmond Galena Maintenance and Operation Station.

Section 2

Provides uncodified law allowing DOT to implement Section 1 at a time and method that does not impose additional costs to the state.

[1:40:16 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN referred to Mr. Thurmond's obituary and commented that he had a lovely life. She noted that he served as a heavy equipment operator before he became the airport manager. She wondered why not rename the airport after him, instead of the maintenance and operation station.

[1:41:02 PM](#)

MR. HANNA replied that the DOT station worked on all of the roads and because Mr. Thurmond worked at the DOTPF station and ran it so long and so well, establishing a good system there, they have struggled without him since he left. He said the City of Galena proposed naming the DOTPF station after Mr. Thurmond.

[1:42:15 PM](#)

SENATOR WILSON referred to SB 244, Section 2 and asked how DOTPF plans to do the renaming without additional costs to the state.

[1:42:34 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP deferred to Jason Sakalaskas.

[1:42:42 PM](#)

JASON SAKALASKAS, Chief, Northern Region Maintenance and Operations, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF), Fairbanks, Alaska, replied that the department proposes this as a zero-cost change. He explained that sign changes would be incorporated into the facility with upcoming capital projects, for airport, highway or facilities repair projects. He

offered special thanks to Senator Bishop and Representative Cronk for supporting SB 244.

[1:43:21 PM](#)

SENATOR WILSON asked whether DOTPF has an anticipated timeline for completion of the new sign.

[1:43:37 PM](#)

MR. SAKALASKAS said there is not a specific timeline, but he estimated that within five years there would likely be a highway or airport project that could absorb and support the new sign.

[1:44:03 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN announced invited testimony.

[1:44:58 PM](#)

JENNAL ESMAILKA, Council Member, Galena City Council, Galena, Alaska, presented a resolution by the City of Galena.

[Original punctuation provided.]

**GALENA, ALASKA
RESOLUTION 2024-04**

A RESOLUTION OF THE GALENA CITY COUNCIL SUPPORTING THE
RENAMING OF THE STATE OF ALASKA MAINTENANCE AND
OPERATIONS STATION IN GALENA, ALASKA

WHEREAS, Marvin Thurmond served for the State of Alaska for more than 32 years as a heavy equipment operator and the airport manager for Galena, for the Department of Transpiration and Public Facilities; and

WHEREAS, His career of dedication and service to the people of Alaska is a fine example for others to follow; and

WHEREAS, his leadership to maintain and operate Galena airport has benefit many communities and has experienced the highest level of service from the Department of DOT; and

WHEREAS, the naming of a facility is an appropriate recognition for such a distinguished person; and

Now THEREFORE' be it resolved by the city Council of the city of Galena that, in their capacity as City

Council Members for the City of Galena supports renaming the building the Marvin Thurmond Galena Maintenance and Operation Station.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Galena, Alaska, this _____ day of March 4, 2024

MS. ESMAILKA further testified that, as a community member, she found it hard to express the magnitude of Marvin's impact on community members' lives. She said the things that spoke the loudest were his actions. Marvin lived a life of dedication to the community of Galena, and it was shown through his work: from early mornings to late nights, the maintenance of the airport, the roads, and emergency response when he was called on. She said naming the DOTPF building after Marvin would be a great legacy that would continue to shine through the community of Galena, reminding the community of a great man and role model that loved Galena.

[1:47:24 PM](#)

KATHERINE THURMOND, Fairbanks, Alaska, gave invited testimony on SB 244 and said Marvin was her brother-in-law for over forty years. She read a letter that her husband, Ed wrote:

[Original punctuation provided.]

February 16,2024
To Whom it May Concern,

As a former employee for the State of Alaska, DOT, Galena station I fully support the state shop being named after Marvin J Thurmond. I have known Marvin my whole life, I am his younger brother, Ed. Together we worked many years at the Galena state shop. He was a force to be reckoned with when it came to his duties! In his early years, driving up and down the runway to clear snow and ice for the Air Force and their jets. He maintained the airport well. Keeping the runway in top condition was his number one priority. He was often at work at least half an hour early to begin his day for the State of Alaska, DOT. In his later years with the state Marvin became the Airport Manager along with maintaining the runway, and state roads in the Galena area. Since Marvin's retirement (February 2020) and his death (July 2020) residents of Galena have spoken highly of Marvins's skills when it came to

maintaining the Galena runway and roads. He has been greatly missed as an exceptional operator for the State of Alaska, DOT.

Please, consider naming the Galena DOT shop after Marvin J Thurmond. Contact me at your earliest convenience if more information is needed.

Edward J Thurmond, Sr
Retired DOT State Employee

MS. THURMOND said Marvin, Ed, and others worked for DOTPF for over thirty years and ran a very well-maintained shop. She recalled that, oftentimes, Elmendorf Air Force Base (AFB) and Eielson AFB weren't open because of snow while the Galena base airport was open for the Air Force to land jets because of the dedicated DOT employees who were led by Marvin and kept the runway cleared.

[1:51:39 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN concluded invited testimony and opened public testimony on SB 244.

[1:51:55 PM](#)

JENNY BRYANT, President, Galena School Board, Galena City School District, Galena, Alaska, testified in support of SB 244. She thanked Senator Bishop and Representative Cronk for bringing SB 244 forward. She said this is a great honor for Marvin. He was a good guy who did a lot for the community and kept the airport open. He went to school in Galena, raised his kids there and was a huge part of the community. She thanked the committee for considering SB 244.

[1:53:14 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN closed public testimony on SB 244.

[1:53:26 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN held SB 244 in committee.

[1:53:49 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kaufman adjourned the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting at 1:53 p.m.