

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

February 27, 2025

3:16 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Ashley Carrick, Chair
Representative Andi Story, Vice Chair
Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Representative Ky Holland
Representative Elexie Moore

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Kevin McCabe

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Carolyn Hall

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 87

"An Act establishing the month of March as Women's History Month."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 30

"An Act establishing the office of entrepreneurship; relating to new businesses in the state; relating to reports concerning procurements by agencies; and relating to initial business license fees for new businesses in the state."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 75

"An Act relating to national criminal history record checks for certain employees of the Department of Revenue; relating to allowable absences for eligibility for a permanent fund dividend; relating to the confidentiality of certain information provided on a permanent fund dividend application; relating to electronic notice of debt collection executed on a permanent fund dividend; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 75(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 81

"An Act restricting the release of certain records of convictions; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 87

SHORT TITLE: WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HALL

02/10/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/10/25	(H)	STA
02/22/25	(H)	STA AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/22/25	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
02/25/25	(H)	STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/25/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/25/25	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
02/27/25	(H)	STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 30

SHORT TITLE: OFFICE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HOLLAND

01/22/25	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(H)	STA, L&C
02/22/25	(H)	STA AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/22/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/22/25	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
02/27/25	(H)	STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 75

SHORT TITLE: PERM FUND; EMPLOYMENT; ELIGIBILITY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) BYNUM

01/31/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/31/25	(H)	STA, L&C
02/18/25	(H)	STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/18/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/18/25	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
02/22/25	(H)	STA AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/22/25	(H)	Heard & Held

02/22/25 (H) MINUTE (STA)
02/27/25 (H) STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

SERENA ALLEN, CEO/Cofounder
AirVitalize
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 30.

GABRIEL LOW, CEO/Founder
Remote Hands
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 30.

PETER WARDEN, Former Director
Startup Accelerator
Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 30.

Kyle Dufrane, Co-owner
Remote Hands
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 30.

MARK LAMBERT, Representing self
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 30.

NORRIS KRUEGER, Representing self
Ecosystem Builder
Boise, Idaho
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 30

JAY BYAM, CEO
Karetorium
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 30.

TREVOR SHAW, Staff
Representative Jeremy Bynum
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions related to HB 75.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:16:55 PM](#)

CHAIR ASHLEY CARRICK called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:16 p.m. Representatives Moore, Holland, Himschoot, Story, and Carrick were present at the call to order.

HB 87-WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

[3:18:07 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 87, "An Act establishing the month of March as Women's History Month."

[3:18:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND commented that he thoroughly enjoyed the committee's previous hearing on HB 87 [2/25/25] by historian David Reamer, who did a wonderful job outlining success stories of Alaskan Women.

[3:18:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT commented that she also appreciated the presentation and opined that it could have gone on longer since it was only a small fraction of the Alaskan Women that warrant praise. She encouraged support for HB 87.

[3:19:09 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK, after ascertaining that there were no further comments or questions, set an amendment deadline and announced that HB 87 was held over.

HB 30-OFFICE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

[3:19:44 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 30, "An Act establishing the office of entrepreneurship; relating to new businesses in the state; relating to reports concerning procurements by agencies; and relating to initial business license fees for new businesses in the state."

[3:20:08 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK opened public testimony on HB 30.

[3:20:29 PM](#)

SERENA ALLEN, CEO/Cofounder, AirVitalize, testified in support of HB 30. She said that her company is a Fairbanks company that pulls pollution from the air, and it wishes to expand to remove air pollution worldwide. She said that she has completed most of the innovation programs in Alaska and was named the "High North Young Entrepreneur" in 2024 by the Arctic Congress. She said that like many start-ups in Alaska, AirVitalize is at risk of leaving the state.

MS. ALLEN commented on the difference between a start-up and a small business. She said that a small business is a staple of Alaska, and the owners are "entrepreneurs by nature." However, a start-up is something that scales into a global entity that brings billions of dollars to a region. She said there is not an opportunity to grow and expand in Alaska at this point. She said that in start-ups there is a term known as "The Valley of Death." This is when someone has an idea, a concept has been proven, but before a business can get to scaling, there isn't the resources available to test the technology. She said this is where AirVitalize is currently. She said that testing for the company was done in Los Angeles where it was able to get \$70,000 to manufacture locally and test the product. She said that there has been no money available for product testing in Fairbanks. She proceeded to describe various Alaskan based start-ups that left the state due to lack of resources. She said that her own intern from last summer is looking for opportunities out-of-state due to the lack of start-up infrastructure in Alaska. She said this matters because innovation is a cornerstone for building a resilient economy. She said that HB 30 will help start-ups avoid the "Valley of Death" and help Alaska diversify its economy beyond "just oil and gas."

[3:23:25 PM](#)

GABRIEL LOW, CEO/Founder, Remote Hands, testified in support of HB 30. He said that Remote Hands was in Juneau for the Innovation Summit, an event focused on start-ups and innovation. He said that he has always been an educator and had a background working with various science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs in rural areas of the state. He also said that he had associations with Upward Bound. He said that there is an

opportunity gap in Alaska's rural locations and often products and services require expensive flights to get there. He said Remote Hands connects rural communities with these products and services. He said that he never thought about Remote Hands as a start-up until he attended a start-up weekend in Anchorage. He said this event changed his life and he was now looking at scaling. He said that after a market evaluation, Remote Hands had an opportunity to be a global entity. He said he has received considerable support in the Anchorage start-up ecosystem and having a statewide Office of Entrepreneurship that would coordinate and bring resources together would be helpful.

[3:26:20 PM](#)

PETER WARDEN, Former Director, Startup Accelerator, Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, testified in support of HB 30. He said that he is part of the Alaska start-up ecosystem in a few ways. He spent the last 16 months as the director of the Startup Accelerator with the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation and left that role to pursue other innovation ideas. He said that he recently attended the Innovation Summit in Juneau and had the pleasure of meeting several entrepreneurs. He said that part of his background was building programs and getting them funded. He said that this came with learning about all the challenges associated with building an entrepreneurial program in Alaska. He said that part of this process was looking at "reverse engineering" to determine what works in other places and what would work in Alaska. He said that bringing products and services to the state comes with unique Alaska challenges, including the geography alone. He said hosting more start-up weekends across the state means navigating logistical challenges and would require a proper fit to the hosting community. He said that he really supports HB 30 and thinks that it would help Alaska catch up to the rest of the country when it comes to attitudes towards innovation and support for innovation.

[3:28:46 PM](#)

Kyle Dufrane, Co-owner, Remote Hands, testified in support of HB 30. He said that he met the other cofounder of Remote Hands at a start-up weekend. He said that without the start-up weekend, the business would have never happened. He said that being an entrepreneur is something he thought about for years but there was never an avenue or direction to find the resources. He said that he had learned about the start-up weekend from an informal channel.

3:30:03 PM

MARK LAMBERT, representing self, testified in support of HB 30. He said that he was a four-time start-up founder/CEO and two of these companies he has taken from just an idea to something with market sales. He said that his last company was a software company which ended up being based out of San Diego and was acquired by a third-party in 2019. He said in 2022 he got involved in the start-up ecosystem where he had the honor of being the mentor and resident for the gBETA startup accelerator, which is Alaska's leading startup accelerator. He said he was also involved with Techstars and chaired the tech investment arm of the NuFund Venture Group. He said that most of the last few years had been spent getting start-ups ready. His last company was founded in Alaska and because of the lack of resources and capital availability, the company moved to San Diego. He said that this was a transformative experience for him because everything he struggled to find in Alaska was easily found in San Diego. This included access to capital or centralized resource guiding which he found from an entity called "Start-up San Diego." He said this put him in contact with people who helped his business get off the ground. He said that this was foundational to the growth of the company. He said that none of this value was captured by Alaska. He said that since returning to Alaska he has cofounded another company that is venture backed, and it has successfully raised capital and nearly all of it has been outside of Alaska. He said that during investor meetings, the common question he has received is when he plans on moving the company out of Alaska, even though two of the cofounders live in the state and the headquarters is based there. He said that if Alaska wants to build the start-up ecosystem, then the state will have to support and grow it itself. He said HB 30 is the single biggest thing the state could do to build this ecosystem.

3:33:28 PM

NORRIS KRUEGER, Leadership Council, Ecosystem Builder, testified in support of HB 30. He said that he has been able to work with global policy people and was both a scholar and educator in entrepreneurship. He said that he is passionate about helping people build a start-up ecosystem and said that this is an important topic and other states and countries have been trying this. He said that simply listening was powerful and that entrepreneurs want to be heard. He said that the previous testimonies were a powerful signal that it is time to coordinate

and advance this topic. He said that the start-up climate often needs a referee and the Office of Entrepreneurship that is proposed under HB 30 could do this. He said that every year, companies have fewer jobs, and this includes every state and region. He said the new jobs are coming from start-ups and having a vehicle to help start-ups is critical.

[3:38:37 PM](#)

JAY BYAM, CEO, Karetorium, testified in support of HB 30. He said that Karetorium started five years ago and began participating in the start-up ecosystem four years ago after discovering its existence. He said that Karetorium has involved itself in every single program throughout the state and has jumped from one program to another. The phases involved customer feedback, investment acquisition, and other assistance to achieve start-up milestones. The business is now profitable and has six full-time employees. He said other start-ups do not go through the phases in such an elegant fashion. He said that an Office of Entrepreneurship proposed under HB 30 would be able to centralize start-up activities.

[3:40:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND asked if Mr. Byam could describe Karetorium in greater detail. He said it is a great example of a start-up that is more than just an Anchorage based business. The software company captures images of processing facilities to allow for facilitated remote support, something that can support rural locations in Alaska and decrease maintenance costs. He said that it provides solutions to not only Alaska's challenges but with potential applications across the globe.

[3:43:16 PM](#)

MR. BYAM said that Karetorium is an online platform that makes three-dimensional (3D) models of infrastructure. He said that a lot of the work in Alaska has been to build out various infrastructure in rural locations. By doing this, off-site experts can use 3D modeling to coordinate with others how to maintain these facilities. He said that starting out in Alaska was beneficial because it made their company adjacent to potential users of this product. He said it allowed the company to legitimize themselves on a small scale for later scaling into other sectors. He said that when Karetorium mentions that it is based out of Alaska, it surprises people.

[3:46:07 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK, after ascertaining that there were no additional questions, closed public testimony on HB 30.

[3:46:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND asked about an amendment deadline for HB 30.

[3:46:52 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK set an amendment deadline and announced that HB 30 was held over.

[3:47:19 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:47 p.m. to 3:49 p.m.

HB 75-PERM FUND; EMPLOYMENT; ELIGIBILITY

[3:49:53 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 75, "An Act relating to national criminal history record checks for certain employees of the Department of Revenue; relating to allowable absences for eligibility for a permanent fund dividend; relating to the confidentiality of certain information provided on a permanent fund dividend application; relating to electronic notice of debt collection executed on a permanent fund dividend; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR CARRICK after ascertaining that there were no questions or comments on HB 75, entertained amendments.

[3:50:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY moved to adopt the Amendment [Amendment 1] to HB 75, labeled 34-LS0475\N.2, Nauman, 2/25/25, which read as follows:

Page 2, line 30:

Delete "armed forces"

Insert "**uniformed services** [ARMED FORCES]"

Page 3, line 2:

Delete "armed forces"

Insert "uniformed services [ARMED FORCES]"

Page 4, following line 23:

Insert a new bill section to read:

"* **Sec. 3.** AS 43.23.008(f) is amended to read:

(f) **In** [FOR PURPOSES OF (a)(7) OF] this section,

(1) "family member" means a person who is

(A) [(1)] legally related to the individual through marriage or guardianship; or

(B) [(2)] the individual's sibling, parent, grandparent, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, or first cousin;

(2) "uniformed service" means the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force, and the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Public Health Services."

Renumber the following bill sections accordingly.

[3:50:52 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK objected for the purpose of discussion.

[3:51:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY noted that Amendment N.2 was drafted because of an experience from a constituent who was denied an appeal for the permanent fund dividend (PFD) because uniform service members were not included in the allowable absence statute. She specified that this included uniformed service members associated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps and the United

States Public Health Service Officer Corps. She said that only those affiliated with the armed forces were currently allowed for PFD qualification. She said that this constituent was on a NOAA boat doing research for several months, and when she went to the PFD office, she was denied a PFD. She said that these positions are uniformed, qualify for the Veterans Affairs (VA), can enroll in higher education using the Government Issue (GI) bill, and have other privileges like the armed services. She said that when looking at the amendment, it changes "armed forces" to "uniformed services", and she clarified that armed forces were included with uniformed services.

[3:53:34 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK asked if Peace Corps volunteers were already included for PFD eligibility.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY responded that there are 16 subsections in statute regarding eligibility and the Peace Corps are eligible.

[3:54:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND asked if the definition was changed just for a section related to training or provides guidance for the PFD program in general.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY responded that it has to do with Alaska Statute (AS) 43.23.008.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND asked for clarification, and if AS 43.23.008 was specifically related to training exemptions or a statute that provides broader definitions as it relates to the PFD.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said that her understanding is that looking at the amendment, it would change uniform service definitions.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND said that he was surprised how important the United States Public Health Service Officer Corps was in Alaska. He asked if Representative Story could summarize where these individuals are found in Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY responded that many of them are in rural locations and serve the communities and many go overseas to provide medical support during times of need.

[3:57:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MOORE said that she had a question about the definitions. She asked whether armed service members get coverage for anyone in their family. She said she was confused about the qualifications regarding exemptions.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY clarified that these provisions already existed in statute and the amendment would add only the bold, [underlined] language of [paragraph] 2.

CHAIR CARRICK said that the statute currently says that one of the allowable exemptions is providing care for terminally ill family members and settling the estate of a family member. She said that adding the uniformed service members would add to this section.

[3:59:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said that she spoke with the prime sponsor of HB 75, Representative Bynum, she offered her understanding that he was supportive of the Amendment [1].

[3:59:36 PM](#)

TREVOR SHAW, Staff, Representative Jeremy Bynum, Alaska State Legislature, said that they had a good conversation with both Representative Story and district constituents. He said that the amendment was presented well, and Representative Bynum supported it.

[4:00:00 PM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK removed her objection. There being no further objection, [Amendment 1] was adopted.

[4:00:38 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY moved to report HB 75, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes and to authorize Legislative Legal Services to make any necessary technical or conforming changes. There being no objection, CSHB 75(STA) was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[4:01:10 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:01 p.m. to 4:03 p.m.

4:03:49 PM

CHAIR CARRICK discussed upcoming committee scheduling and agenda.

4:04:20 PM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.