

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

May 15, 2025

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Vice Chair
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Robert Yundt

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Bill Wielechowski

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 107

"An Act establishing a violation for hindering the Alaska Sunset Commission; establishing the Alaska Sunset Commission to review, audit, and make recommendations on discontinuation of or changes to state entities; and relating to the powers and duties of the Alaska Sunset Commission."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 3

Urging the United States Congress to grant American Samoans the ability to serve as commissioned officers in the uniformed services of the United States and the right to vote in federal elections.

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 17

"An Act relating to retirement benefits and military service."

- HEARD & HELD

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13 (MLV)

Urging the President of the United States to expand evacuation efforts for applicants with approved Special Immigrant Visas, including resumption of evacuation flights organized by the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts; urging the United States Department of State to secure legal protections and

humanitarian assistance for Special Immigrant Visa applicants; urging the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in the United States Department of Homeland Security to expedite the review of applications for Special Immigrant Visas; and requesting that the United States Secretary of State provide a report to Congress regarding efforts to reinstate evacuation flights for applicants with approved Special Immigrant Visas.

- HEARD & HELD

CS FOR HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 6 (MLV)
Commemorating the 250th birthday of the United States Marine Corps.

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 160
"An Act relating to the membership of the legislative council; and relating to the membership of the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee."

- MOVED SB 160 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 107
SHORT TITLE: ALASKA SUNSET COMMISSION
SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) HUGHES

02/19/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/25	(S)	STA, FIN
03/20/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/20/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/20/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
05/01/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
05/01/25	(S)	Heard & Held
05/01/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
05/15/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SR 3
SHORT TITLE: SAMOAN SERVICE & VOTING RIGHTS
SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) WIELECHOWSKI

05/09/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/09/25	(S)	STA
05/15/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: HB 17

SHORT TITLE: DISABLED VETERANS: RETIREMENT BENEFITS

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) RAUSCHER

01/22/25 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25 (H) MLV, FIN
02/18/25 (H) MLV AT 10:15 AM BARNES 124
02/18/25 (H) Heard & Held
02/18/25 (H) MINUTE(MLV)
02/25/25 (H) MLV AT 11:15 AM BARNES 124
02/25/25 (H) Moved HB 17 Out of Committee
02/25/25 (H) MINUTE(MLV)
02/26/25 (H) MLV RPT 7DP
02/26/25 (H) DP: HALL, FIELDS, SADDLER, GRAY,
ALLARD, NELSON, EISCHEID
03/19/25 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
03/19/25 (H) Heard & Held
03/19/25 (H) MINUTE(FIN)
04/07/25 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
04/07/25 (H) Moved HB 17 Out of Committee
04/07/25 (H) MINUTE(FIN)
04/09/25 (H) FIN RPT 10DP 1NR
04/09/25 (H) DP: BYNUM, JOHNSON, HANNAN, ALLARD,
TOMASZEWSKI, GALVIN, JIMMIE, STAPP,
FOSTER,
04/09/25 (H) SCHRAGE
04/09/25 (H) NR: JOSEPHSON
04/28/25 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/28/25 (H) VERSION: HB 17
04/30/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/30/25 (S) STA, FIN
05/15/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: HJR 13

SHORT TITLE: AFGHANS, SP. IMMIGRANT VISAS, ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) STAPP

03/21/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/21/25 (H) MLV
04/08/25 (H) MLV AT 10:15 AM BARNES 124
04/08/25 (H) Heard & Held
04/08/25 (H) MINUTE(MLV)
04/15/25 (H) MLV AT 10:15 AM BARNES 124
04/15/25 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
04/24/25 (H) MLV AT 10:15 AM BARNES 124
04/24/25 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --

04/29/25 (H) MLV AT 10:15 AM BARNES 124
04/29/25 (H) Moved CSHJR 13 (MLV) Out of Committee
04/29/25 (H) MINUTE (MLV)
04/30/25 (H) MLV RPT CS (MLV) NEW TITLE 4DP
04/30/25 (H) DP: HALL, GRAY, FIELDS, EISCHEID
05/07/25 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
05/07/25 (H) VERSION: CSHJR 13 (MLV)
05/09/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/09/25 (S) STA
05/15/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: HCR 6

SHORT TITLE: US MARINE CORPS 250TH BIRTHDAY

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) UNDERWOOD

04/30/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/30/25 (H) MLV
05/06/25 (H) MLV AT 10:15 AM BARNES 124
05/06/25 (H) Moved CSHCR 6 (MLV) Out of Committee
05/06/25 (H) MINUTE (MLV)
05/07/25 (H) MLV RPT CS (MLV) NEW TITLE 7DP
05/07/25 (H) DP: GRAY, ALLARD, FIELDS, SADDLER,
HALL, NELSON, EISCHEID
05/10/25 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
05/10/25 (H) VERSION: CSHCR 6 (MLV)
05/12/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/12/25 (S) STA
05/15/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 160

SHORT TITLE: MEMBERS LEG COUNCIL; LEG BUDGET & AUDIT

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) SHOWER

04/09/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/09/25 (S) STA, FIN
05/01/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
05/01/25 (S) Heard & Held
05/01/25 (S) MINUTE (STA)
05/15/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

JOE HAYES, Staff
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the summary of changes version H to version T for SB 107.

MAXINE LABERGE, Staff
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SR 3.

TAIVALEOAANA 'SEVEN' TOLEAFOA, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SR 3.

CHARLES ALAILIMA, Board Member
Right to Democracy
Washington D.C.

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SR 3.

TAFILISAOA TOLEAFOA, Executive Director
Pacific Community of Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SR 3.

CRAIG VALDEZ, Staff
Representative George Rauscher
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 17.

AZABEL ORDAZ, Staff
Representative George Rauscher
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the sectional analysis for HB 17.

MARK WHISENHUNT, representing self
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on HB 17.

AUSTIN FLAVIN, representing self
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 17.

MELINDA VOIGT, Deputy Director
Division of Retirement and Benefits (DRB)
Department of Administration
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on HB 17.

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP
District 32
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HJR 13.

HENRY THOMPSON, Staff
Representative Will Stapp
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided details on HJR 13.

REPRESENTATIVE JUBILEE UNDERWOOD
District 27
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HCR 6.

BUDDY WHITT, Staff
Representative Jubilee Underwood
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation for HCR 6.

SENATOR MIKE SHOWER, District 0
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 160.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:32 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gray-Jackson, Yundt and Chair Kawasaki. Senator Bjorkman arrived thereafter.

SB 107-ALASKA SUNSET COMMISSION

[3:32:06 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 107 "An Act establishing a violation for hindering the Alaska Sunset Commission; establishing the Alaska Sunset Commission to review, audit, and make recommendations on discontinuation of or

changes to state entities; and relating to the powers and duties of the Alaska Sunset Commission."

[3:32:25 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI solicited a motion.

[3:32:35 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT moved to adopt the committee substitute (CS) for SB 107, work order 34-LS0111\T, as the working document.

[3:32:46 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI objected for purposes of discussion.

[3:33:02 PM](#)

JOE HAYES, Staff, Senator Scott Kawasaki, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented the summary of changes version H to version T for SB 107 and read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Summary of Changes CS SB 107 (SSTA) 34 LS-0111\T

This committee substitute makes two changes:

Page 4, Lines 7-14

- Provides that the governor may only remove a member of the Sunset Commission for cause and establishing a process for doing so. This provision is found on

Page 5, Lines 13-17

- Adds tax credits to the list of programs the Commission shall review and prepare recommendations as to whether they should be discontinued or changed.

[3:33:47 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI removed his objection; found no further objection and CSSB 107 was adopted as the working document.

[3:34:07 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened public testimony on SB 107; finding none, he kept public testimony open.

[3:34:21 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SB 107 in committee.

[3:34:29 PM](#)

At ease.

SR 3-SAMOAN SERVICE & VOTING RIGHTS

[3:35:00 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 3 Urging the United States Congress to grant American Samoans the ability to serve as commissioned officers in the uniformed services of the United States and the right to vote in federal elections.

[3:35:38 PM](#)

MAXINE LABERGE, Staff, Senator Bill Wielechowski, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, introduced SR 3 on behalf of the sponsor and read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Senate Resolution 3 urges the United States Congress to grant American Samoans the ability to serve as commissioned officers in the uniformed services of the United States and the right to vote in federal elections.

This issue was brought to Senator Wielechowski recently by several members of the community. Our office has been working with these stakeholders to bring this resolution to the Senate.

American Samoa has been an unincorporated territory of the United States since 1900. It is the only inhabited territory of the U.S whose residents are considered nationals but are not citizens. American Samoans can obtain a United States passport as well as live and work anywhere in the United States, yet they cannot vote in federal elections or hold certain positions in the service.

[3:36:56 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced invited testimony and opened public testimony on SR 3.

[3:37:23 PM](#)

TAIVALEOAANA 'SEVEN' TOLEAFOA, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SR 3 highlighted that the military acronym LDRSHIP—loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage—as guiding principles for non-commissioned officers. He noted that American

Samoa recently celebrated 125 years of loyalty and service to the United States, despite economic hardship and limited opportunities. Many American Samoans joined the military to provide for families and proudly serve the nation. However, he emphasized the injustice that American Samoans, who serve and sacrifice for the U.S., are denied the right to vote. He urged fair treatment and equal voting rights for American Samoans, invoking a quote about self-determination: "If we are not at the table for discussion, we will be on the menu."

[3:41:36 PM](#)

CHARLES ALAILIMA, Board Member, Right to Democracy, Washington D.C., testified in support of SR 3 referenced the U.S. Constitution and the 14th Amendment's Citizenship Clause, noting that people born under U.S. sovereignty should have birthright citizenship. He recounted that in 1900 and 1904, Samoan chiefs voluntarily ceded sovereignty of their islands to the United States, with the understanding that U.S. law would hold supreme authority while respecting Samoan traditions. However, efforts in the 1920s to recognize American Samoans as U.S. citizens failed in Congress due to racial prejudice. He said since then, American Samoans have been classified only as U.S. nationals, not citizens, despite generations of loyalty and military service. This has caused widespread confusion across federal and state agencies, including the military and passport system. He argued that this unequal status violates the principle that all are created equal, urging recognition of citizenship for American Samoans under the 14th Amendment.

[3:48:13 PM](#)

TAFILISAOA TOLEAFOA, Executive Director, Pacific Community of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SR 3 stated that American Samoans continue to serve in the military and contribute to their communities, and those who have sacrificed for the country deserve a voice and the right to vote.

CHAIR KAWASAKI kept public testimony open for SR 3.

[3:49:43 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SR 3 in committee.

HB 17-DISABLED VETERANS: RETIREMENT BENEFITS

[3:49:50 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of HOUSE BILL NO. 17 "An Act relating to retirement benefits and military service."

[3:50:21 PM](#)

CRAIG VALDEZ, Staff, Representative George Rauscher, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented HB 17 on behalf of the sponsor and stated that it reintroduces last session's House Bill 232, was reported out by House Military Veterans' Affairs and House Finance committees but reached the Rules Committee too late for House floor. HB 17 supports a small group of Alaska veterans rated as totally and permanently disabled due to service-connected conditions. HB 17 allows them to access earned Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) retirement benefits regardless of age after at least five years of credited service, including purchased military time. HB 17 does not create new benefits or change health eligibility rules—it simply removes barriers so eligible disabled veterans can retire with dignity. The Department of Administration identified four known eligible individuals, with up to 48 potentially qualifying.

[3:52:40 PM](#)

AZABEL ORDAZ, Staff, Representative George Rauscher, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided the sectional analysis for HB 17:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Sectional Analysis

ver A, 3.3.25

Section 1: AS 39.35.370(a)

This section amends AS 39.35.370(a) to add additional language related to eligibility requirements when a terminated employee is eligible for a normal retirement benefit. Specifically adding new subsections, A and B to section 1, lines 7 through 10.

Section 2:

Repeals three statutes.

[3:53:32 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced invited testimony and opened public testimony on HB 17.

[3:53:47 PM](#)

MARK WHISENHUNT, representing self, Palmer, Alaska, testified by invitation on HB 17 and paraphrased the following written testimony:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Disabled veterans often face challenges like limited employment opportunities, difficulties in accessing quality healthcare, and higher rates of mental health issues such as PTSD. The transition to civilian life can be particularly challenging. Some service members find themselves contributing to their communities through state and local government roles. As they make the transition from active duty to civilian life, veterans often downplay the physical or emotional impact of their service. However, it's important to recognize that, for some, these impacts simply cannot be ignored.

There is a class of veterans who are totally and permanently disabled, and they can face even greater struggles to work and keep gainful employment due to their service-connected disabilities. As such, this class of veteran often struggles with income stability.

I am one of those veterans who is now permanently disabled. Through the years not only have I personally experienced these challenges, but I have watched many those I served with face similar obstacles. I recently realized that something can be done to help, and that you all have the power and ability to make a difference.

HB 17 can serve a crucial role in addressing the unique needs of disabled veterans in state and local government service. Your support in advocating for and ensuring the implementation of this legislation emphasizes our unwavering support to those who have devoted their lives to serving our country and our communities with pride and distinction.

HB 17 provides a means for totally and permanently disabled veterans to access the retirement benefits they earned through their state and local service, at a time when they need it the most. It offers vital support and truly serves as a lifeline for disabled veterans as they navigate the financial, physical, and emotional challenges associated with their service-connected disabilities.

Inaction on this matter would not only run counter to our shared values but would also be a disservice to those who have given so much for our nation, our state, and our local communities.

Less than four percent of all veterans have been deemed totally and permanently disabled by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Veterans Affairs (VA) authored a study in 2019, on the mortality rate of 100 percent Service Connected disabled Veterans. The study revealed that this small group U.S. Veterans have a significantly diminished life expectancy when compared to the U.S. civilian population. Women veterans of this group have a 22 percent reduced life expectancy and men have an 11 percent reduced life expectancy. So, what does that mean? It means that our disabled Veterans are dying, on average, 15 years sooner than their civilian counterparts.

[3:55:13 PM](#)

MR. WHISENHUNT continued with his testimony of HB 17:

So how many totally and permanently disabled veterans currently have a PERS account? The retirement division does not collect that data but knowing the make-up of our state we can get an estimation. The estimation is derived by looking at the number of applicable members in the program (13,338). Then you multiply that by the percent of residents who are veterans (10 percent). Finally, you multiply that by the percent of veterans who are totally and permanently disabled (3.6 percent). After doing so, one can estimate the number of totally and permanently disabled veterans with a PERS account to be approximately 48 people.

It is my believe that allowing approximately 48 disabled veterans, who have a significantly reduced life expectancy, to access their hard-earned retirement funds will in no way cause an undue hardship to the PERS system.

In conclusion, I humbly ask each of you to stand united and vote in favor of HB 17. Remember, it is less than four percent of all veterans that have a designation of totally and permanently disabled, yet

this modest change is very impactful in supporting their well-being.

[3:56:12 PM](#)

AUSTIN FLAVIN, representing self, Palmer, Alaska, testified in support of HB 17 and stated that as a lifelong Alaskan and Navy veteran who served from 2004-2010 with a combat deployment to Ramadi, Iraq. He developed chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) from service-related exposures and has paid about \$30,000 into PERS but can only receive credit for five years of military service despite a six-year enlistment. He noted that veterans often have shorter lifespans and face difficulties accessing VA care. He urged the committee to support HB 17 so veterans like him can access the benefits they've earned earlier and enjoy a better quality of life.

[4:00:13 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI referenced fiscal analysis for HB 17, noting that the last line of the second paragraph states it would create additional unfunded liability to the PERS plan.

[4:00:45 PM](#)

MELINDA VOIGT, Deputy Director, Division of Retirement and Benefits (DRB), Department of Administration, Juneau, Alaska, answered questions on HB 17 and explained that the legislation, as written, has no direct cost to claim benefits once eligibility requirements are met. However, because the plan [TRS/PERS indiscernible] would ultimately pay the benefits, it could create additional unfunded liability.

[4:01:36 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI noted that HB 17 adds a new benefit for individuals who currently lack benefits, and while the fiscal note may appear indeterminate or zero. He asked if there's still a cost to the PERS or TRS systems.

[4:02:03 PM](#)

MS. VOIGT answered yes.

[4:02:11 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked how disability will be defined according to the Veterans Administration or another legal standard.

[4:02:31 PM](#)

MR. VALDEZ replied that the question is addressed in the Department of Administration's letter, which indicates that

disability determination would likely be based on a VA-issued DD-214 form showing 100 percent permanent total disability.

[CHAIR KAWASAKI kept public testimony open for HB 17.]

[4:03:42 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held HB 17 in committee.

HJR 13-AFGHANS, SP. IMMIGRANT VISAS, ASSISTANCE

[4:03:54 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13(MLV) Urging the President of the United States to expand evacuation efforts for applicants with approved Special Immigrant Visas, including resumption of evacuation flights organized by the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts; urging the United States Department of State to secure legal protections and humanitarian assistance for Special Immigrant Visa applicants; urging the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in the United States Department of Homeland Security to expedite the review of applications for Special Immigrant Visas; and requesting that the United States Secretary of State provide a report to Congress regarding efforts to reinstate evacuation flights for applicants with approved Special Immigrant Visas.

[4:04:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP, District 32, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HJR 13 summarized the sponsor statement as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Sponsor Statement for HJR 13
(34-LS0710\G)

After the September 11, 2001 attacks on our nation, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) on October 7, 2001. The primary purpose of the mission was to address the issue of Al-Qaeda influence in Afghanistan. During OEF, Afghani nationals assisted our US servicemembers as translators and interpreters throughout their mission. The acts of these Afghani nationals provided necessary communication and understanding of cultural norms.

In 2006, the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program was established as part of the Afghan Allies Protection Act and was expanded in 2008 to include Iraqi nationals who assisted in the same capacity in Iraq under Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This program allowed those who assisted us to apply and gain permanent US residency.

Since the botched evacuation of US forces in Afghanistan in 2021, processing and approval of these SIV's and the subsequent evacuation of these Afghani nationals and their families have been delayed or stalled. HJR 13 aims to rectify this by respectfully urging the President of the United States to order the US Secretary of State to resume, expand, and expedite the processing of these SIV applications and the evacuations of these individuals and their families.

These Afghani citizens risked their lives and the lives of their families under Taliban rule to assist our service members during Operation Enduring Freedom, on the promise that their service could be repaid with a chance at permanent US residency. We must honor our promises as a nation and do our best to assist these allies.

[4:06:43 PM](#)

HENRY THOMPSON, Staff, Representative Will Stapp, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided more details on HJR 13 and explained that there are three related programs: one created in 2006 for Iraqi and Afghan interpreters, another in 2008 for Iraqis who assisted the U.S., and a 2009 program for Afghans. He said the Afghan program is the largest, with 143,000 visas granted to principals and their families, though only 50,000 principal visas were authorized. He noted significant delays in processing and relocating applicants to the United States.

[4:08:04 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked whether processing delays vary by country or are specific to the Afghan Allied Protection Act.

[4:08:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP replied that he couldn't confirm specific processing times but emphasized that Special Immigrant Visa applicants undergo thorough State Department vetting and must prove their service with U.S. forces. He added that many friends

are currently trying to help their interpreters immigrate under the program.

[4:09:23 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT asked where communication or coordination had broken down in the program, since it worked well previously.

[4:09:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP answered that the program faltered after the rapid collapse of the Afghan government. Unlike Iraq, where a phased withdrawal maintained U.S. presence, Afghanistan's sudden fall left little time to evacuate eligible individuals. He said bureaucratic processes couldn't adjust quickly, and the Taliban's return to power further complicated efforts. However, some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) continue working to help evacuate and resettle those individuals in the United States.

[4:10:46 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT noted that many civilians who worked with the U.S. destroyed their documents for safety when the Afghan government collapsed and asked how those individuals can immigrate without proof of service.

[4:11:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP replied that some interpreters sent photos before destroying their documents and noted that many records still exist on the U.S. side, though they can be difficult to locate. He agreed that the loss of documents hinders efforts to expedite evacuations.

[4:11:59 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened public testimony on HJR 13; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[4:12:16 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held HJR 13 in committee.

HCR 6-US MARINE CORPS 250TH BIRTHDAY

[4:12:33 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 6 (MLV) Commemorating the 250th birthday of the United States Marine Corps.

[4:13:11 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JUBILEE UNDERWOOD, District 27, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HCR 6 read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Chair Kawasaki, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to present House Concurrent Resolution 6, a bill to honor the 250th birthday of the United States Marine Corps, a storied institution that has defended our nation with unparalleled courage and sacrifice since its founding on November 10, 1775.

This resolution celebrates the Marines' enduring legacy of service, from the earliest battles of the American Revolution to modern conflicts across the globe. It recognizes their role as America's expeditionary force, always ready to answer the call, whether on land, sea, or air. As we approach this historic milestone, we reflect on the values of honor, courage, and commitment that define the Corps and inspire generations.

To capture the spirit of the Marines, allow me to share a few words from notable figures. Eleanor Roosevelt, after visiting Marines during World War II, is often quoted as saying, "The Marines I have seen around the world have the cleanest bodies, the filthiest minds, the highest morale, and the lowest morals of any group of animals I have ever seen. Thank God for the United States Marine Corps!" Though some debate the exact wording, her admiration for their spirit is undeniable.

President Ronald Reagan, in tribute to their impact, said, "Some people spend an entire lifetime wondering if they made a difference in the world. But, the Marines don't have that problem." This speaks to the profound legacy of every Marine who has served.

And from General John J. Pershing, we hear, "The deadliest weapon in the world is a Marine and his rifle!"—a testament to the unmatched skill and resolve of these warriors.

[4:15:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD continued with the summary for HCR 6:

House Concurrent Resolution 6 calls for statewide commemoration of this milestone, encouraging Alaskans to honor the Marines' contributions through ceremonies, educational programs, and community events. It is a chance to thank the Marines, past and present, for their sacrifices and to reaffirm our commitment to supporting them.

In summary, by passing this resolution, we are joining Marines, their families, and friends throughout the nation and the world in celebrating this historic 250th birthday milestone. We also remember those Marines who have gone before us, who have helped shape the nation and the Marine Corps that we have today, many of whom gave the ultimate sacrifice for our nation's defense. Let us honor their legacy with the same fidelity they showed—Semper Fidelis, always faithful. Thank you.

[4:16:01 PM](#)

BUDDY WHITT, Staff, Representative Jubilee Underwood, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided a presentation for HCR 6 and moved to slide 2:

[Original punctuation provided.]

The United States Marine Corps is a branch of the U.S. military, established on November 10, 1775, tasked with conducting amphibious and expeditionary warfare, providing rapid-response power projection from the sea, and serving as a versatile, elite force for national security missions worldwide.

[4:17:36 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 3, History, and discussed the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

In 1775, The Second Continental Congress commissioned innkeeper and former Quaker Samuel Nicholas to raise two battalions of Continental Marines. Tun Tavern, managed by Robert Mullan, became the chief recruiting location for the Marines and Robert Mullen, the taverns manager, became the "chief Marine Recruiter"

[4:18:47 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 4, and discussed the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Father Of Marine Corps

Samuel Nicholas is considered the "Father of the Marine Corps." As the first commissioned officer of the Continental Marines, appointed on November 28, 1775, by the Second Continental Congress, he played a pivotal role in establishing and leading the Marine Corps during the American Revolutionary War, organizing its initial recruitment and operations

[4:19:24 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 5, and discussed the mission of the Marine Corp:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Make Marines

- Win Battles
- Create Quality Citizens

Mission Accomplishment is the Foundation of our reputation

[4:19:52 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 6 and discussed the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Every Marine A Rifleman

- All Marines are basic riflemen first, regardless of specialty.
- 25 percent of enlisted recruit training is dedicated to rifle marksmanship
- TBS trains officers to be infantry platoon commanders
- Our history is full of examples of pilots, logisticians, & administrators assigned infantry duties.

[4:20:11 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 7, and discussed the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

170,000

In 2024, The USMC has active-duty members

33,000

Personnel in reserve.

[4:20:21 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 8, and discussed the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

How To Observe Marine Corps Birthday

Visit the Marine Corps War Memorial

- The iconic statue, located between Arlington, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., depicts six Marines raising a U.S. flag on a mountaintop during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Reach out to a Marine

- Reach out to them and remind them how you appreciate the hard work they have done for their country.

Get together with your old Corps buddies

- Try to organize a gathering with your fellow Marines to catch up and collectively appreciate your time served.

[4:21:28 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 9, and discussed the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

A ball and a cake cutting ceremony

So thoroughly baked into the system of the Marine Corps that it's written into the official manual - is

the cake-cutting ceremony. Done with the same respect for tradition and order as a 21 gun salute, the cake cutting was formalized in the Drill Manual in 1956.

[4:22:06 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 10, and discussed the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Musical And Events

In addition to a fancy ball and cake cutting ceremony, many birthdays have included a variety of battle reenactments, pageants, musical performances, and even sporting events.

[4:22:13 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 11, and discussed the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Reading of marine corps order 47

Marine Corps Order No. 47, Series 1921, issued by Major General John A. Lejeune on November 1, 1921, is traditionally read at every Marine Corps Birthday Ball as part of the formal ceremony to honor the founding of the Marine Corps on November 10, 1775. The order, which summarizes the history, mission, and traditions of the Corps, was directed to be read annually on November 10 to every command, and this practice has been consistently incorporated into the standardized Birthday Ball celebrations, formalized by Commandant Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. in 1952.

[4:22:40 PM](#)

MR. WHITT moved to slide 12, and read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

"This high name of distinction and soldierly repute we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the corps. With it we have also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of the Marines in every age. So long as that spirit continues to

flourish Marines will be found equal to every emergency in the future as they have been in the past, and the men of our Nation will regard us as worthy successors to the long line of illustrious men who have served as "Soldiers of the Sea" since the founding of the Corps."

John A. Lejeune, Major General Commandant

[4:23:48 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON expressed gratitude for the bravery and dedication of the Marine Corps, noting their personal connection through an ex-husband who served, and voiced strong support for the resolution.

[4:24:24 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked why HCR 6 does not include the Army and Navy since these branches were established before the Marine Corp at the Continental Congress.

[4:24:50 PM](#)

MR. WHITT replied that, while he could not speak for the sponsor, she did instructed her staff that the resolution would be central to the Marine Corp and that other branches of service, if represented in the building, would do likewise.

CHAIR KAWASAKI quipped that some members may have dropped the ball.

[4:25:21 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT conjectured that the focus on the Marines might relate to the branch's 250th birthday.

[4:25:31 PM](#)

MR. WHITT opined that with the semiquincentennial, many military branches are celebrating anniversaries as most were established around the same time.

[4:26:02 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held HCR 6 in committee.

SB 160-MEMBERS LEG COUNCIL; LEG BUDGET & AUDIT

[4:26:09 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 160 "An Act relating to the membership of the legislative

council; and relating to the membership of the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee."

[4:26:25 PM](#)

SENATOR MIKE SHOWER, District 0, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 160 explained that the measure allows a minority in each legislative body to have representation on the budget and legislative council, requires the minority to be at least 25 percent of the body, ensures the minorities voice is heard, and carries no fiscal impact.

[4:27:19 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced Senator Bjorkman joined the meeting.

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced that an updated fiscal note from the Legislative Affairs Agency, prepared by Deputy Executive Director Sante Lesh and approved by Executive Director Jessica Geary, was issued today at 2:30 PM. The fiscal note reports a zero fiscal impact, noting that SB 160 adds a minority member from each body without increasing the total number of committee members.

[4:28:14 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI solicited the will of the committee.

[4:28:16 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON moved to report SB 160, work order 34-LS0751\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[4:28:33 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI found no objection and SB 160 was reported from the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee.

[4:31:27 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 4:31 p.m.