

**SB**

**119**

April 15<sup>th</sup> 1999

Good afternoon Mr Chairman, members of the committee.

This is an honor for me to be testifying before you this morning.

My name is Harold Holten and I am the representative for the Seafarers International Union. Although I would like it clear that I'm here on behalf of all Merchant Seaman, who are denied their permanent fund dividend.

I was born in Ketchikan, raised in Ketchikan, Petersburg, and Juneau, upon my completion of 6 years in the Marine Corps, I came back to Alaska and became a state trooper for a short period of time. I was a Salmon tender captain for 15 years, before becoming a union rep.

The Seafarers opened an office in Anchorage, almost 2 years ago to the day. Our objective is to recruit Alaskans to go to our unlicensed apprenticeship program in Piney Point, Maryland, and give them an opportunity to obtain good paying jobs with good benefits when they complete the program.

I first became alerted to the fact that Merchant Seaman were being denied their permanent fund, by a Merchant Seaman from a different union. His name is Ross Perrine from Palmer, and he owns a home, has an Alaska drivers license, voter reg card, etc. he has been denied the fund since the inception. I went to one of our ships, and found that a boatswain on the Tote ship Northern Lights has also experienced the same problems. His name is John Glenn and he will be testifying this afternoon.

My recruiting effort has taken me around a lot of the state, and in my interviews with young people, I seem to have their interest in the program until the question of the Permanent Fund dividend comes up, then I am told they are no longer interested. I thought to myself and have shared this view, that these people seemed awfully shortsighted, until I really thought about it, this is probably the only steady money

they have ever seen, and are reluctant to let it go under any circumstance.

One of our recent graduates (Jessie Sharp) who will testify this afternoon, that already this year he has been denied the Permanent Fund dividend

These merchant seaman being denied, do not have a choice when they sail, as to whether they can sail in Alaska or not. Sailing is based on a seniority system, and believe it or not, our Alaska routes, are in high demand. The ones that have the Alaska routes Ross and John are denied because they are not physically in state a minimum of 180 days.

All of our Alaskans have been accepted to Piney Point because they are Alaska residents. I would hate to discourage good young people, (short sighted as they may be) from enjoying such a career opportunity.

Right now we have 18 Alaskans who have graduated from Piney Point, and we presently have 2 in school.

Besides the 18 graduates, we have created a Riding Maintenance gang. These merchant seaman go on oil tankers and do preventative maintenance. We hired 10 Riding gang a year ago, and all have done an outstanding job. When they have a year of sea time, they will be sent back to Piney Point and upgraded to Able bodied seaman. We will start training and working a new crew. This crew averages \$3,200.00 per month, with full benefits. Two of these Merchant Seaman have recently put money down on homes in the Wasilla arear. They also will be denied their Permanent Fund dividend.

An article in the Anch news last Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> did an article on our first native Alaskan. This has generated such a positive response it is hard for me to keep up with it. The first day generated about 20 phone calls, and yesterday I received 71 inquires. This has resulted in 6 tests being given yesterday, and 6 more scheduled on Friday. Plus 2 in Soldotna, 1 in Anchor Point, 2 in Kodiak, 2 in Ketchikan, and several from Willow. These numbers are candidates that are qualified.

In my estimation, we are not talking about any more than 200 Merchant Seaman over a ten year Period. (Although I hope for many more than that).

This concludes my statement, I urge you to support the SB 119

I thank the committee for their time.

A M E N D M E N T

OFFERED IN THE SENATE  
TO: SB 119

BY SENATOR ELTON

1 Page 1, line 2, following "marine":

2 Insert "or while serving as a volunteer in the Peace Corps"

3 Page 2, following line 21:

4 Insert a new paragraph to read:

5 "(13) serving as a volunteer in the Peace Corps;"

6 Page 2, line 22:

7 Delete "(13)"

8 Insert "(14)"

9 Page 2, line 23:

10 Delete "(14)"

11 Insert "(15)"

12 Page 2, line 25:

13 Delete "(14)"

14 Insert "(15)"

15 Page 2, line 28:

16 Delete "(1) - (13)"

17 Insert "(1) - (14)"

18 Page 2, line 31:

19 Delete "(3) - (13)"

- 1           Insert "(3) - (14)"
  
- 2   Page 3, line 2:
- 3           Delete "(1) - (13)"
- 4           Insert "(1) - (14)"
  
- 5   Page 3, line 3:
- 6           Delete "(a)(1) - (13)"
- 7           Insert "(a)(1) - (14)"
  
- 8   Page 3, line 11:
- 9           Delete "(a)(13)"
- 10          Insert "(a)(14)"