

HB

145

THE
FOLLOWING
DOCUMENT(S)
ARE
POOR
ORIGINAL
COPIES



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Rick Halford

President of the Senate

SPONSOR STATEMENT

CSSB145 (JUD)

While in Session:
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
907-465-4958

While in Interim:
P.O. Box 670190
Citugiak, AK 99567
907-694-4958

The Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program is the first line of law enforcement in many small communities in the unincorporated areas of the state. Designed as a "first responder" law enforcement arm for many villages throughout the state, the VPSO program has established a commendable record of public service previously unavailable to these communities.

Although the VPSO program falls within the Department of Public Safety, the officers are actually employed by the Native nonprofit corporations responsible for the area. VPSO oversight, technical support, training and field support are provided by the Department of Public Safety. The selection of officers in a particular village is jointly approved by the nonprofit corporation and the Alaska State Troopers.

A VPSO learns about law enforcement, first aid, fire fighting and other public safety issues by attending an eight-week VPSO Academy, which includes a two-week fire-fighting course. Continued training is provided depending on the proficiency of the officer and the specific needs of the area.

VPSO officers are unique in that they are selected partly for their familiarity with and background in the geographic area they serve. Special consideration is given to hiring residents with a long history in the community. With specialized training unavailable to most villagers, the VPSO officer provides preliminary services that include law enforcement, EMS, first aid, fire fighting assistance, emergency search and rescue support, initial alcohol and drug abuse support for the community, domestic counseling and, equally important, scheduled and emergency contact with the Troopers.

At one time, there were over 120 VPSO officers in the state. Presently, the program consists of only 85 VPSO officer positions. Despite the successes of this program, it has been plagued with temporary shortages of officers. Investigations have exposed the most obvious reasons for the relatively high turnover rate among VPSO officers. Cited the most frequently were:

1. Inadequate pay
2. Lack of career opportunities
3. Lack of support from law enforcement community
4. Inadequate retirement system
5. Lack of support funds

Senate Bill 145 is designed to resolve some of the above complaints and to elevate the VPSO program to a point where it provides incentive for law enforcement stability within these small communities.

This legislation also creates a Regional Public Safety Officer (RPSO) program within the Department of Public Safety to serve as a link between the VPSO officers and the troopers, to provide a career path for VPSO officers and to provide a local supervisory position for which service as a VPSO officer is an important ingredient in the selection of regional officers. RPSO officers, like VPSO officers, will be allowed and encouraged to remain in the same area and not be required to move around the state like Troopers are required to do. The RPSO differs from the VPSO in that the regional officers will be state employees; they will be part of the Department of Public Safety and will participate in the state's retirement system. They will not be part of the police retirement system until they become certified police officers. Regional officers will have more supervisory and training responsibilities than village officers. Regional officers need not be certified police officers but in-service training opportunities will provide the option for the RPSO to meet required standards and receive certification while occupying the same position.

The fiscal note for SB 145 includes a pilot project for the RPSO system with the initial hiring of four regional officers. Continuation of this program will depend on favorable reports from the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Corrections and the VPSO non-profit employers.

VPSO and RPSO officers will be given some probation and parole supervision authority as directed by the Department of Corrections. This will serve two purposes. Individuals on probation and parole will be allowed to serve within their own community rather than being forced to reside in larger more hostile situations where the individual does not have family support and is more likely to develop recurring problems. This will also serve to provide more responsibilities for the VPSO and RPSO officers concurrent with increased compensation.

This legislation has provided that the VPSO officer may be included in the state retirement system, but not under the police officer retirement system. Some VPSO officers may choose to remain under the existing non-profit corporation retirement system being provided.

It should be emphasized that neither the VPSO nor RPSO program is intended to replace an incorporated community police force. This program specifically targets communities with populations under 1,000 and does not provide the technical sophisticated law enforcement and training provided by many municipal police organizations. The VPSO and RPSO programs are designed to augment and complement other municipal and statewide law enforcement programs.

CS for Senate Bill No. 145 (FIN)
SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

- Section 1: Intent Language
- Section 2: Civil liability: Except in an act of gross negligence or reckless or intentional conduct the state or its officers (VPSO) are not liable.
- Section 3: Amends current statute regarding the Village Public Safety Officer Program to include:
- 1) parole and probation supervision
 - 2) coordinated efforts between DPS and DOC on providing the grants to the non-profit regional corporations
 - 3) provision to allow DOC to adopt regulations on implementing parole / probation supervision
- Section 4: Establishes the VPSO in the public employees' retirement system (PERS)
- Section 5: New section that creates the Regional Public Safety Officer and outlining the administrative functions / duties of the position.
- Section 6: Amends current statute to allow VPSO in PERS the option to waive coverage.
- Section 7: New section that stipulates a VPSO in PERS is given a one-time 90 day period to opt-out of the coverage. The section stipulates the how this must be accomplished.
- Section 8: New section that treats all non-profit regional corporations as a single employer for the purpose of rate stability.
- ? Section 9: Section amended to allow VPSO's the opportunity to buy-back credited service as long as they are a current member in the PERS system. Those who opt-out are not eligible.
- Section 10: Adds a non-profit regional corporation, specific only to VPSO's employed by the corporation, to the definition of "employer" in statute.
- Section 11: Amends current definition of "peace officer" to include regional public safety officer.
- Section 12: Applicability: the act does not modify the contractual terms between the state and the nonprofit corporation.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2001 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: _____
 Bill Version: CSSB 145 (FIN)
 () Publish Date: _____
 Dept. Affected: Public Safety
 BRU: VPSO Program
 Component: VPSO/contracts
 Component Number: 516

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____
 Title: An Act relating to the expansion of the Village
public safety officer program to include the provision of . . .
 Sponsor: Senator Halford
 Requester: Senate Finance Committee

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
Personal Services	165.6	331.3	331.3	331.3	331.3	331.3
Travel	4.7	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4
Contractual	127.7	32.7	32.7	32.7	88.7	32.7
Supplies	29.2	7.6	12.3	7.6	23.8	12.3
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims	779.9	779.9	779.9	779.9	779.9	779.9
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	1,107.1	1,160.9	1,165.6	1,160.9	1,233.1	1,165.6

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

FUND SOURCE	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF	1,006.0	1,160.9	1,165.6	1,160.9	1,233.1	1,165.6
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
1007 I/A Receipts	101.1					
TOTAL	1,107.1	1,160.9	1,165.6	1,160.9	1,233.1	1,165.6

Estimate of any current year (FY2001) cost: 0.0

Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2002 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

POSITIONS	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
Full-time	4	4	4	4	4	4
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

See attached pages for line-item details by section.

In FY2002 one-time federal grant funding will be available to cover training and equipment related costs including: ALETS Academy, boat lease/purchases, snowmachines and four-wheelers.

Prepared by: Ken Bischoff, Director
 Division: Administrative Services
 Approved by: Glenn Godfrey, Commissioner
 Agency: Department of Public Safety

Phone 465-5488
 Date/Time 4/23/01 12:00 AM
 Date 4/23/01

For distribution information, call the Governor's Legislative Office

SB 145 makes two significant changes to the current Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program. First, VPSO program is amended to specifically incorporate probation and parole activities. Secondly, VPSOs would be made members of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS). The bill will also create a new Regional Public Safety Officer job class.

Note: Fiscal note was developed based upon the assumption that all provisions of the bill are fully funded. To the extent program changes under Sec. 4 – 8 are not funded, the VPSO program will necessarily experience a reduction in funded positions and/or direct services provided.

Sec. 2 of the bill expands the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program to include probation and parole supervision to persons under supervision of the Department of Corrections (DOC). VPSOs will be required to communicate with and monitor the activities and progress of these persons at the direction of DOC probation and parole officers. Chapter 137 SLA 98 provided \$115,000 to establish a Pilot Project within the VPSO program to provide probation and parole supervision through the Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) and their eleven (11) VPSOs. \$20,000 was provided to train the 11 VPSOs on Probation/Parole supervision duties and \$95,000 for direct compensation. The pilot program has been continued through FY2000 and FY2001 with level funding.

	Personal Services	Indirect Costs	Total	Employees	Grand Total
Per VPSO Cost	\$ 6,784	\$ 1,843	\$ 8,627	11	\$ 94,987

Based on current contract with BBNA for 11 VPSOs (in bold above). Total contract is for \$94,897

SB 145 proposes to expand the VPSO oversight program to the other eight (8) regional non-profits who collectively employ 73.5 VPSOs. Using the same rate of compensation developed for the pilot program noted above, a statewide program will require \$634.1 in additional funding.

New 8 VPSO Programs compensation:

Native Corporations	APIA	AVCP	CHUG	KANA	KAWA	MANI	TCC	THCC	TOTAL
VPSOs	5.5	26	3	5	10	7	10	7	73.5
VPSO Personal Services	\$ 6,784	\$ 6,784	\$ 6,784	\$ 6,784	\$ 6,784	\$ 6,784	\$ 6,784	\$ 6,784	
Individual Indirect Costs	\$ 1,843	\$ 1,843	\$ 1,843	\$ 1,843	\$ 1,843	\$ 1,843	\$ 1,843	\$ 1,843	
Total for Personal Services	\$37,312	\$176,384	\$20,352	\$33,920	\$67,840	\$47,488	\$67,840	\$ 47,488	\$498,624
Total for Indirect Costs	\$10,137	\$ 47,918	\$ 5,529	\$ 9,215	\$18,430	\$12,901	\$18,430	\$ 12,901	\$135,461
Total	\$47,449	\$224,302	\$25,881	\$43,135	\$86,270	\$60,389	\$86,270	\$ 60,389	\$634,085

Amount noted above (\$634.1) is reflected on the Grants & Claims line.

Sec. 3 of this legislation will expand public safety presence in rural Alaska with the establishment of four Regional Public Safety Officer positions. Six months of funding and associated up front costs are requested in FY02. Details below:

	Year 1 FY02	Year 2 FY03	Year 3 FY04	Year 4 FY05	Year 5 FY06	Year 6 FY07
Average Cost of Entry Level Officer (Four Positions)	165.6	331.3	331.3	331.3	331.3	331.3
Personal Services Total	165.6	331.3	331.3	331.3	331.3	331.3
Instate Field Travel (transp, PD, training, aircraft charter)	4.7	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4
Travel Total	4.7	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4
Communications & DP Services (phones, fax, radio, data, postage, DP services)	12.7	25.3	25.3	25.3	25.3	25.3
Photo Processing/Reproduction	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
ALETS Academy Costs (tuition)	28.3					
PSEA Physical	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
Boat Lease/Purchase	48.0				21.6	
Computer Lease/Purchase	9.6				9.6	
Snow machine/Four-wheeler	24.8				24.8	
Misc. Contractual (conf., training, equip. repair)	2.7	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Contractual Total	127.7	32.7	32.7	32.7	88.7	32.7
Office & DP Supplies	1.4	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
Uniform & Access. (est. life 18 mos.)	9.4		4.7		4.7	4.7
Ammunition, law enforcement, fuel.	2.4	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8
Firearms (Pistol & Shotgun)	4.5					
Radios	11.5				11.5	
Supplies Total	29.2	7.6	12.3	7.6	23.8	12.3
Combined Total	327.2	381.0	385.7	381.0	453.1	385.7

Personal Services: Year 1 costs equals six months of salary & benefits (74A - Bethel Location)

Contractual: Year 1 includes 1/2 cost of "annualized contractual", one-time purchases (ALETS Training), and Equipment Lease/Purchase (boat, snow-machine, four-wheeler, and computer).

Supplies: Year 1 includes 1/2 cost of "annualized supplies" and one-time purchases (firearms and radio).

General Notes:

In calculating the cost per officer, we did not include office space.

Sections 4 – 7 relate to making VPSOs members of the State's PERS retirement system

Nonprofit	Employer Contributions					Employee Contributions	
	FY01 Salaries 1	PERS % 2	Indirect Rate 3	PERS Retirement 4	PERS Retirement 5	PERS % 6	PERS Retirement 7
			Column 1x2		column 3x4		column 1x6
APIA	195,025	8.26%	16,109	1.253	20,185	6.75%	13,164
AVCP	889,212	8.26%	73,448	1.162	85,348	6.75%	60,022
BBNA	347,209	8.26%	28,679	1.273	36,509	6.75%	23,437
CHUG	66,781	8.26%	5,516	1.300	7,171	6.75%	4,508
KANA	126,875	8.26%	10,479	1.258	13,184	6.75%	8,564
KAWA	351,769	8.26%	29,056	1.260	36,611	6.75%	23,744
MANI	231,628	8.26%	19,132	1.220	23,342	6.75%	15,635
TCC	376,758	8.26%	31,120	1.167	36,317	6.75%	25,431
THCC	196,896	8.26%	16,263	1.165	18,947	6.75%	13,290
Base Total	2,782,153				277,613		187,795
PERS costs attributed to Probation and Parole Monitoring	573,200	8.26%	47,346	1.208	57,194	6.75%	38,691
					334,807		226,486
Net Offset for existing retirement benefits					(189,000)		
Net PERS Employer Fiscal Impact					145,807		

The amount noted above (\$145.8) is reflected on the Grants & Claims line.

NOTES:

1. The non-profits presently pay retirement benefit contributions of approximately \$189,000. This fiscal note is prepared on the assumption that participation in PERS would eliminate current retirement cost reimbursements to non-profits where VPSOs become PERS members. The fiscal note amount is reduced by netting \$334,807 in projected PERS costs against the \$189,000 in current retirement cost reimbursements.
2. Assumes that mandatory Employee contributions of 6.75% would be deducted from the employee's salary and have no impact to the non-profits employers or state grant program. It is the department's understanding that VPSOs do not presently make employee contributions to existing non-profit retirement plans.
3. Section 5 relates to entitlement to prior credited service. Employees do not have an option to buy back credited service until vested, after 5 years. At that time, the cost would fall solely to the employee. VPSOs who become PERS members would become Tier III members and would vest for retirement in 5 years, vest in 10 years for medical and would be eligible for retirement at age 60.
4. Salaries related to probation monitoring and parole activities were from the sum of salaries reported on the two schedules on page two of this fiscal analysis.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2001 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 3
 Bill Version: SB145
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time: 04/17/01 4:20 p.m. Dept. Affected: Corrections
 Title: An Act relating to regional and village public BRU: Administration & Operations
safety officers; relating to the expansion of the village public... Component: Community Corrections Dir. Office
 Sponsor: Representative Coghill
 Requester: House Special Committee on Education Component Number: 1382

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
Personal Services	49.8	66.5	66.5	66.5	66.5	66.5
Travel	75.4	45.0	45.0	45.0	45.0	45.0
Contractual	15.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
Supplies	35.0	47.0	47.0	47.0	47.0	47.0
Equipment	20.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	195.2	184.5	184.5	184.5	184.5	184.5

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF	69.8	96.5	184.5	184.5	184.5	184.5
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other IA 1007*	125.4	88.0				
TOTAL	195.2	184.5	184.5	184.5	184.5	184.5

Estimate of any current year (FY2001) cost: 0.0

Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2002 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time	1	1	1	1	1	1
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This bill will expand the duties of Village Public Safety Officers to include assisting Field Probations Officers in monitoring probationers and parolees in rural communities. It will require coordinating with all the non-profit regional corporations to provide oversight to all of the communities. In addition, it will require initial and on-going training and field auditing to assure community safety and probationer/parolee compliance. FY02 reflects a 9 month period and the remaining years are full fiscal years. In order to accomplish this, the Department of Corrections will adopt regulations in accordance with Sec. 18.65.670(c). This will require: 1 Probation Officer IV, staff travel and 5 days centralized training for 74 VPSOs, office rent and communications costs for staff, supplies including office and urinalysis testing supplies for probationers, and equipment to include a staff computer (1st year) and breathalyzers for VPSOs.

*Interagency Receipts from the Dept. of Public & Safety for training of VPSOs for FY02 & FY03. Subsequent years will require other sources of funds.

Prepared by: Candace Brower

Division: Commissioner's Office

Approved by: Margaret Pugh 

Phone 465-4652

Date/Time 4/17/01 4:30pm

Date 4/17/01

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2001 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: _____
 Bill Version: CS SB 145(FIN)
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: Administration
 Title: An Act relating to the expansion of the village BRU: Centralized Administrative Services
public safety officer program Component: Retirement and Benefits
 Sponsor: Senator Halford
 Requester: Senate Finance Component Number: 64

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type)						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2001) cost: 0.0

Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2002 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

CSSB 145(FIN) will not increase cost to the Public Employees Retirement System because all costs will be fully paid by the VPSO's and their employers.

Prepared by: Guy Bell, Director Phone 465-4471
 Division: Retirement and Benefits Date/Time: April 18, 2001
 Approved by: Jim Duncan, Commissioner Date: April 18, 2001
 Agency: Department of Administration

For distribution information, call the Governor's Legislative Office



IRA Council
P.O. Box 100
Shaktoolik, Alaska 99771-0100

Phone (907) 955-3701

Fax (907) 955-2352

March 28, 2001

The Honorable Donny Olson
State Capitol, Room 510
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Olson:

We support the efforts to pass Senate Bill 145. VPSO's provide law enforcement, fire suppression, emergency medical services, and search and rescue services in rural and isolated communities throughout Alaska - hence their motto "First Responder. Last Frontier." They have very broad responsibilities and they are, in most instances the lone trained, unarmed officer in their community.

VPSO's are paid anywhere from 14-38% less than their municipal counterparts employed in like positions. Their benefits need to be consistent with other peace officers in Alaska PERS. The VPSO turnover rate is mainly due to low wages and benefits provided in relation to the high responsibility and dangerous nature of their job.

We are grateful that Senate Bill 145 was introduced and we thank you for this time to express our support. We urge the Alaska Legislature to appropriate additional funds for VPSO wage increases to be brought to an equitable level so as to improve the provision of rural public safety in the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Edgar M. Jackson Sr.
President

cc: Senator Rick Halford
Senator Dave Donley
Senator Pete Kelly
Josie Stiles, Kawcrak VPSO Program

King Island

PHONE 907 486 2222

Native Community

March 27, 2001

The Honorable Rick Halford
State Capital Room 7
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Halford:

We support the efforts to pass Senate Bill 145 which was introduced by Senate President Rick Halford. The VPSO's provide law enforcement, fire suppression, emergency medical services and search and rescue services in rural and isolated communities throughout Alaska - thus their motto "First Responders, Last Frontier". They have very broad responsibilities and they are in most instances the lone, trained, unarmed peace officer in their community.

VPSO's are paid anywhere from 14-38% less then their municipal counterparts employed in the same positions. Their benefits should be consistent with other peace officers in Alaska PERS. The VPSO turnover rate is mainly due to low wages and benefits provided in relation to the high responsibility and dangerous nature of their job.

We are pleased that Senate Bill 145 was introduced and we thank you for this time to express our support. We urge the Alaska Legislature to appropriate additional funds for VPSO wage increases to be brought to a fair level so as to improve the provision of rural public safety in the State of Alaska.

Respectfully,

Carmelita Nattanguk
Carmelita Nattanguk
Chief

City of Shaktoolik



P. O. Box 10
Shaktoolik, Alaska 99771

March 28, 2001

The Honorable Rick Halford
State Capital, Room 7
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Halford

We are in support of passing Senate Bill 145. The VPSO's provide law enforcement, fire, suppression, emergency medical services, and search and rescue services in rural and isolated communities throughout Alaska. They have very broad responsibilities and they are, in most instances the lone, trained, unarmed peace officer in their communities.

VPSO's are paid anywhere from 14 to 38% less than their municipal counterparts employed in similar positions. The VPSO's benefits need to be consistent with other peace officers in Alaska PERS. The VPSO turnover rate is mainly due to low wages and benefits provided in relation to the high responsibility and dangerous nature of their position.

We are grateful that Senate Bill 145 was introduced in which we are in support of. We would like to thank you for your time in supporting our VPSO Program throughout Alaska. We would like to urge the Alaska Legislature to appropriate funding for VPSO wage increase so that it can be brought to an equitable level. Thank You for supporting Senate Bill 145.

Sincerely

Edgar M. Jackson Sr.-City of Shaktoolik
Mayor

Shishmaref Kawerak, Inc
P.O. Box 154
Shishmaref, Alaska 99772

.....
Kawerak, Inc.

April 2, 2001

The Honorable Rick Halford
State Capitol, Room 7
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Halford:

I support the efforts to pass Senate Bill 145.

VPSO's put their lives on the line in a job that is both dangerous and demanding in order to serve their communities.

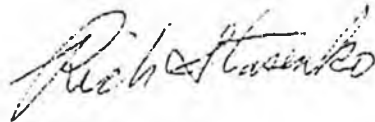
They provide law enforcement, fire suppression, emergency medical services, and search and rescue services in rural and isolated communities throughout Alaska - hence their motto "First Responders, Last Frontier." They have very broad responsibilities and they are, in most instances, the lone, trained, unarmed peace officer in their community.

Yet, VPSO's are underpaid. Their pay is 14-38% less than their municipal counterparts employed in like positions. Their benefits needs to be consistent with other peace officers in Alaska PERS.

Low wages and fewer benefits promote a high turnover rate for VPSO's. This fact puts people in Rural Communities at risk. It is critical to the safety and health of the citizens Rural Alaska to pass Senate Bill 145.

I am grateful for the introduction of Senate Bill 145. The Alaska Legislature needs to support Senate Bill 145 with appropriate funds.

Sincerely,



Rich Stasenko
Regional EET Specialist

CITY OF GAMBELL

March 29, 2001

TO: Honorable Rick Halford
State Capitol, RM# 7
Juneau, AK 99801

FROM: City of Gambell
P.O. Box 189
Gambell, AK 99742

Dear Senator Halford,

The City of Gambell supports the passage of Senate Bill 145. VPSO's are our #1 Rural Law Enforcement Officers, in which they provide law enforcement, search & rescue, EMT, and fire support in our communities.

VPSO's are paid less than other municipal counterparts which are employed in the same field, law enforcement. Their benefits should also be the same as other peace officers in Alaska, which are under the PERS. VPSO's turnover rate is high due to low wages, their employed in a highly dangerous job, where they are unarmed.

We are thankful that Senate Bill 145 was introduced. We urge the Alaska Legislature to pass the Senate Bill, this Bill could greatly improve Public Safety in Rural Alaska, with the increase of wages & benefits for the VPSO's.

Wilbur Booslu
Mayor
City of Gambell

Preston Apangalouk
City Administrator
for Wilbur Booslu
[Signature]

March 28, 2001

The Honorable Rick Halford
State Capital, Room 7
Juneau, Alaska 99801

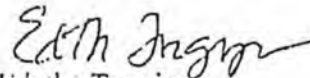
Dear Senator Halford:

I am writing this as an individual, strongly supporting Senate Bill 145. I have known this issue to be the most important and yet never get any support whatsoever since time immemorial. It is long overdue, and I am glad to see it is finally getting attention and support the program needs.

To give you my experience, I am from Gambell, now living in Nome. Gambell always had and will always have law enforcement problems. Even with the funding from the Federal COPS and UHP, where we created Peace Officer positions with much higher hourly wages, we still see high turn over, due to lack of training, benefits and support from the community. I believe we will have interest from the community members and non-residents alike if this important Bill passes. We have experienced and seen much heartache, as Gambell is notoriously known for crimes that you do not see in many small communities, which I'm sure the State is aware of.

Again, I am in full support of this important Bill and I hope it will get full support from legislation! Thank- you.

Sincerely,


Edythe Tungiyah
Dedicated Voter from Nome Area

Brevig Mission V.P.S.O.
P.O. Box 79
Brevig Mission, Alaska 99785
Phone: (907) 642-2264

March 28, 2001

The Honorable Rick Halford
State Capitol, Room 7
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Halford:

As a V.P.S.O. and a citizen of rural Alaska I strongly support the efforts to pass Senate Bill 145. As a V.P.S.O. I provide law enforcement, fire suppression, emergency medical services and search and rescue services in my rural community of Brevig Mission. In most situations I'm alone with no back up or help, and most of the situations that I must face are dangerous and potentially life threatening.

We as V.P.S.Os are paid anywhere from 14-38% less than our municipal counterparts employed in like positions. Due to our low wages I'm forced to take an extended leave of absence from the V.P.S.O. program to pursue a higher paying job opportunity, which will begin in the spring and last till late fall, so that I may make ends meet financially.

I'm truly grateful that Senate Bill 145 was introduced and I thank you for this time to express my support. I urge the Alaska Legislature to appropriate additional funds for V.P.S.O. wage increases to be brought to an equitable level so as to improve the provision of rural public safety in the State of Alaska.
"First Responders, Last Frontier."

Sincerely,

Ronald J. Bloomstrand Jr.
Village Public Safety Officer



KAWERAK, INC.



P.O. BOX 948 • NOME, ALASKA 99762

TELEPHONE: (907) 443-5231 • FAX: (907) 443-3708

- SERVING THE VILLAGES OF:
- URFVIG MISSION
- COUNCIL
- DIOMEDE
- ELIM
- GAMBEL
- GOLOVIN
- KING ISLAND
- KUYUK
- MARYS ISLE
- NOME
- SAVOONGA
- SHAKTOOLIK
- SHISHMAREF
- SOLOMON
- STEBBINS
- ST. MICHAEL
- TELLER
- UNAJAKIEFF
- WALES
- WHITE MOUNTAIN

March 28, 2001

The Honorable Rick Halford
 The Honorable Dave Donley
 The Honorable Pete Kelly
 The Honorable Donny Olson
 State Capitol
 Juneau, Alaska 99801

Gentlemen:

On behalf of Kawerak Inc., I am writing to express our support for the passage of Senate Bill 145. Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs) provide law enforcement, fire suppression, emergency medical services, and search and rescue services in rural and isolated communities throughout Alaska - hence their motto "First Responder Last Frontier." They have very broad responsibilities and they are, in most instances, the lone, trained, unarmed peace officer in their community.

VPSO's are paid anywhere from 14-38% less than their municipal counterparts employed in like positions. Their benefits need to be consistent with other peace officers in Alaska. The VPSO turnover rate is mainly due to low wages and benefits provided in relation to the high responsibility and dangerous nature of their job.

We are grateful that Senate Bill 145 was introduced and we encourage you to actively work for its passage. We urge the Alaska Legislature to appropriate additional funds for VPSO wage increases to be brought to an equitable level so as to improve the provision of rural public safety in the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Kawerak Inc.

Loretta Bullard
 President

cc: Senator Ward, Senator Lincoln, Senator Hoffman, Senator Austerman

City of St. Michael
Box 70
St. Michael, Alaska 99659
Ph.#. (907) 923-3222 Fax #(907) 923-2284

March 30, 2001

The Honorable Donald C. Olson
Alaska State Senator
State Capital, Room 510
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Olson:

First of all I would like to thank Rick Halford who introduced the legislation on Senate Bill 145 and Senate Finance Co-Chair Dave Donley and Pete Kelly. The Village Public Safety Officer Program is the only other service provided to 227 tribes in the great state of Alaska.

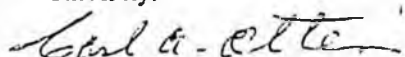
Unlike the other 226 villages St. Michael populace of 412+ people depend on our female VPSO For the demand of vital services such as search and rescue, and supervise people on probation and parole. Our nearest Alaska State Trooper who are located in Nome are 93 airmiles North of St. Michael. Because of the lack of domestic supervision for persons on probation , Recurring incarceration incidents occur for the same people. Making it more expensive and Overbooked jails throughout the state.

The VPSO wages and retirement benefits are long over due. The facilities in the villages are Shacks and the one in St. Michael in squeezed into a small 16'x16' and one tiny cell @ 10'x 6', Built into our small community building which is 23 years old.

We should not take precious time away from VPSO's when they are trying to be eligible for Foodstamps that takes lots of time and effort when they have to get their wages faxed in or other pertinent information for Public Assistance or another part time job.

Thank you for your very important legislation and we give you elected leaders the power of Authority to enhance the Safety, Health and Welfare of our 226 villages who lack the many Resources a number of the metropolitan cities already have in this great big beautiful State of Alaska.

Sincerely:



Carl A. Otten
The Honorable Mayor
City of St. Michael

Cc: The Honorable Alaska State Senator Rick Halford
The Honorable Alaska State Senator Dave Donley
The Honorable Alaska State Senator Pete Kelly

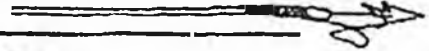
Co/vw



KAWERAK, INC.



PO. BOX 948 • NOME, ALASKA 99762



TELEPHONE: (907) 443-5231 • FAX: (907) 443-~~2591~~ 4452

- SERVING THE VILLAGES OF:
- BREVIG MISSION
- COUNCI
- DIGMEDE
- EUM
- GAMBELL
- COLOVIN
- KING ISLAND
- KOYUK
- MARYS GLOO
- NOME
- SAYOONGA
- SHAKTOOLIK
- SHISHMARLI
- SOLOMONI
- STEBBINS
- ST. MICHAEL
- TELLER
- UNALASKA
- WALEZ
- WHITE MOUNTAIN

RESOLUTION 01-05

Support for Alaska Senate Bill 145 - VPSO Program

Whereas, Village Public Safety Officers provide law enforcement, fire suppression, emergency medical services, and search and rescue services in rural and isolated communities throughout Alaska - hence their motto "First Responders - Last Frontier;" and

Whereas, Village Public Safety Officers have very broad responsibilities and they are, in most instances, the lone, trained, unarmed peace officer in their community; and

Whereas, Village Public Safety Officers are paid up to 38% less than their municipal counterparts employed in like positions;

Whereas, the benefits provided to Village Public Safety Officers need to be consistent with other peace officers in the Alaska Public Employees Retirement System (PERS); and

Whereas, the high turnover rate of Village Public Safety Officers is mainly due to the low wages and benefits provided in relation to the high responsibility and dangerous nature of their job; and

Whereas, Senate Bill 145 has been introduced in the Alaska Senate that would make additional funding available for Village Public Safety Officers wages by having them provide parole supervision services at the village level, and to allow Village Public Safety Officers to participate in PERS;

Now therefore be it resolved the Kawerak Board of Directors expresses their collective support for Senate Bill 145 and requests the Alaska Legislature to pass the bill; and

Be it further resolved that the Kawerak Board urges the Alaska State Legislature to appropriate additional funds for VPSO wage increases (at least 30%) in order to be brought to an equitable level so as to improve the provision of rural public safety in the State of Alaska.

Signatures:

Robert J. Keith
Robert Keith, Chairman

04/06/2001
Date

Certification

I, the undersigned Secretary of Kawerak Inc. hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Kawerak Board of Directors at a duly convened meeting held in Nome on April 6, 2001.

Mary Darlene Charles
Mary Darlene Charles, Secretary



City of
White Mountain
P.O. BOX 130
White Mountain, AK 99714
(907) 638-3411

APR 17 2001

The Honorable Rick Halford
State Capital, Room 7
Juneau, Alaska 99801

April 2, 2001

Dear Senator Halford,

We support to pass Senate Bill 145. VPSO's provide law enforcement, fire suppression, emergency medical services, and search and rescue services in rural and isolated communities throughout Alaska-hence their motto "First Responders, Last Frontier." They have broad responsibilities and they are, in most instances, the lone, trained, unarmed peace officer in their community.

VPSO's are paid anywhere from 14-38% less than their municipal counterparts employed in like positions. Their benefits need to be consistent with other peace officers in Alaska PERS. The VPSO turnover rate is mainly due to low wages and benefits provided in relation to the high responsibility and dangerous nature of their job.

We are grateful that Senate Bill 145 was introduced and we thank you for this time to express our support. We urge the Alaska Legislature to appropriate additional funds for VPSO wage increases to be brought to an equitable level so as to improve the provision of rural public safety in the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Tom Gray
Mayor
City of White Mountain

cc: Kawerak Inc.



Powered By

Web posted Tuesday, April 24, 2001

Today's Headlines

[Click Here](#)

Local

- [Home](#)
- [Local News](#)
- [State News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Senior Citizens](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [NEW Tax](#)
- [Forums](#)
- [Circulation Services](#)

Features

- [Peninsula Life](#)
- [Community People](#)
- [InSide](#)
- [NIE Calendar](#)
- [Health](#)
- [NEW Travel](#)
- [TV](#)
- [Horoscope](#)
- [Crosswords](#)
- [Religion](#)
- [Nascar](#)
- [Olympics](#)
- [Star Wars](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Stocks](#)
- [Golf](#)
- [Your Pages](#)
- [Comics](#)
- [Movies](#)

Outdoors

- [Outdoors Recreation](#)
- [Wildlife Reports](#)
- [Fishing Section](#)
- [Fishing Stories](#)
- [gardening](#)
- [Hunting Stories](#)
- [Hunting Section](#)
- [Crosscountry Skiing](#)
- [Skiing Updates](#)

Senate approves bill boosting pay, benefits to rural public safety officers

By DAN JOLING
Associated Press Writer

JUNEAU (AP) -- A bill to increase village public safety officers' pay and benefits -- as well as their duties -- was approved by the Senate on Monday.

Aimed at reducing an annual turnover rate that averages 40 percent, Senate Bill 145 would make officers eligible for the state's retirement system and boost pay by just more than 11 percent. In exchange, officers will take on probation and parole responsibilities in their communities on top of their five current duties, which include law enforcement, firefighting, search and rescue, water safety and emergency medical services.

Senate President Rick Halford, R-Chugiak, and 15 co-sponsors put their names on the bill.

"It's the top priority of mine," Halford said. "I believe it will do more good for less money for more people in greater need than many of the other things we do."

Starting pay for a VPSO starts at \$11 to \$15 per hour, depending on the region, said Royce Weller, special assistant to the commissioner of Public Safety. The bill, carrying an initial price tag of \$1.3 million, will add \$5,000 to \$6,000 annually to officers' pay, bringing it up to about \$35,000 for a job that requires being on call 24 hours per day, seven days per week, Halford said.

The bill expands to the entire state a successful two-year pilot project tried out in the Bristol Bay Native Association with 11 officers. Besides benefiting officers, the bill would allow rural residents on parole or probation to return to their home communities rather than stay in urban areas under the jurisdiction of Department of Corrections officers.

According to a University of Alaska Anchorage study last year, a typical officer stays with the program less than two years, and the cost to the state is not cheap. The state estimates it spends \$6,200 to hire, train and equip each new VPSO. The time between a resignation and the hiring of

[Doggmushing](#)
[Iditarod](#)
[Snowmachining](#)
[Environment](#)

Peninsula Guide

[Community Pages](#)
[Church Listings](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[Used Car Dealers](#)
[Yellow Pages](#)
[Kenai Restaurants](#)
[Soldotna Restaurants](#)
[Roadworthy](#)
[White Pages](#)
[Your Pages](#)
[Search the Web](#)
[Archives](#)
[Morris Communications](#)

Interactive

[Panorama on Bridge Access](#)
[Panorama of Pillars](#)
[Moose Slide Show](#)
[Summer in Kenai](#)
[Electric Light Parade](#)
[Fireworks](#)
[Y2K Year in Pictures](#)

Special Section

[Economic Changes](#)
[Preparing for Emergencies](#)
[On The Kenai](#)
[Class of 2000](#)
[Progress Days](#)
[Back To School](#)
[High School Football](#)
[Let It Snow](#)
[Christmas](#)
[Children's Christmas](#)

**New School Calendar
Sponsored by
N.I.E.**

a replacement is more than four months.

The study asked 113 out of a possible 184 current and former VPSOs about working conditions. Sixty percent said they supplemented their incomes, including 20 percent who used food stamps and 48 percent who worked at extra job.

The study determined that 80 percent of the officers believed they were lucky not to have been injured during some part of their jobs. Thirty-seven percent had been injured making an arrest and almost 40 percent had responded to calls in which gunshots were fired.

Sen. Georgianna Lincoln, D-Rampart, said VPSOs earn what janitors make in rural communities.

"To me it is such an important, huge step," Lincoln said of the salary and benefits boost.

"Their life is on the line sometimes," Lincoln said. "They're right there answering domestic violence calls, and people who are armed, and people who are under the influence."

Turnover is not the only problem, Lincoln said. As of last August, the state had 71 VPSOs serving 70 villages, but 53 villages had authorized positions that were vacant.

The bill also calls for the hiring of four regional public safety officers who would help train and supervise VPSOs in villages. The new positions are career incentives that VPSOs now do not have, Halford said.

Lincoln and Halford expect the bill to eventually save the state money. More VPSOs will mean fewer trips by Alaska State Troopers to villages, Lincoln said.

Rural residents on parole and probation in cities are subject to alcohol, drugs and predators, Halford said.

"They end up violating their conditions of parole and probation and end up going back to jail," he said.

"In my opinion, in the long term, through the successful avoidance of incarceration for probation violations, it will return maybe more than that to the state and certainly more than that in the value of self-respect to the people involved," Halford said.

The bill now moves to the House for consideration.

Discuss this story in our [Discussion Forum](#)