

SB

145



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
Senator Rick Halford
President of the Senate

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

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

SPONSOR STATEMENT

CSSB145 ()

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.

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.



PO. BOX 948 • NOME ALASKA 99762

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

- SERVING THE VILLAGES OF:
- UHFVIA NUSSION
- COXINCU
- DIOMEDE
- ELIM
- GAMAFIL
- GOLOVIN
- KING ISLAND
- KUYUK
- MARY'S IGLOO
- NOME
- SAVOONGA
- SHAKTOOLK
- SHICHIMAREF
- SOLOMIN
- STEBBINS
- ST MICHAEL
- PELLER
- UPPAUKIFFT
- WALLES
- WHITE MOUNTAIN

March 28, 2001

The Honorable Rick Hallford
 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 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 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

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



Native Village of Shaktoolik

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, Kawerak VPSO Program

King Island

PHONE

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 than 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 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.

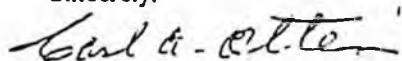
Unlike the other 226 villages St. Michael populace of 412+ people depend on our female VPSO For the demand of vital services such as search and rescue, and supervise people on probation and parole. Our nearest Alaska State Trooper who are located in Nome are 93 airmiles North of St. Michael. Because 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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edgar M. Jackson Sr.", written over a horizontal line.

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.

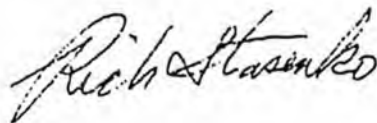
They provide law enforcement, fire suppression, emergency medical services, and search and rescue services in rural and isolated communities throughout Alaska - hence their motto "First Responders, Last Frontier." They have very broad responsibilities and they are, in most instances, the lone, trained, 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 Apangalook
City Administrator
for Wilbur Booslu
[Signature]

March 28, 2001

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

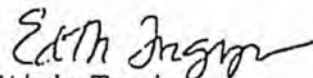
Dear Senator Halford:

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

VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE
OF
NELSON LAGOON, ALASKA

RECEIVED
MAR 27 2001

Ans'd.....

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO:	Senator Robin Taylor	FROM:	VPSO Layton E. Lockett
COMPANY:	Alaska State Legislature	DATE:	03/22/01
FAX NUMBER:		TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER:	1
PHONE NUMBER:		FAX NUMBER:	(907) 989-2281
RE:	Senate Bill 145	PHONE NUMBER:	(907) 989-2232

URGENT FOR REVIEW PLEASE COMMENT PLEASE REPLY PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

As chairman of the Judiciary Committee I would appreciate your support on Bill 145 .

Thank You Layton Lockett-- Vpso Nelson Lagoon , AK.

Box 6
Nelson Lagoon AK
99571

RECEIVED

APR 19 2001

Ans'd.....



VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER

SAXMAN ALASKA

RT. 2 BOX 21

907-225-5852

FAX:907- 225-6728

ALASKA'S "REAL" FIRST RESPONDERS

POLICE FIRE SAR EMS

VPSO CPL. E. DUNAWAY

Thursday, April 05, 2001

The Honorable Senator Robin L. Taylor
State Capital
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Mr. Taylor:

We are asking for your support for Senate Bill # 145, for the expansion of the Village Public Safety Program.

The VPSO's are under paid, many are on public assistances; this does not attract and keep qualified VPSO applicants. I feel this Senate Bill # 145 will help prevent the loss of experienced VPSO's. With the passing of Senate Bill # 145 this expansion of the VPSO program will attract and keep trained officers.

The Village Public Safety Officers have been providing quality public safety services to rural Alaska since 1979.

Sincerely;

Edna Dunaway

NELSON LAGOON VILLAGE COUNCIL

TRADITIONAL COUNCIL
NELSON LAGOON VIA COLD BAY, ALASKA 99571
(907) 989-2204/2205

RECEIVED

APR 10 2001

Ans'd.....

April 5, 2001

Senator Robin Taylor
Chairman Judiciary Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capital (MS 3100)
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

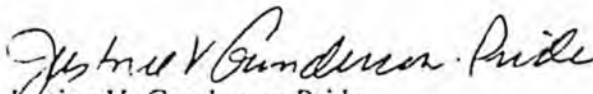
Dear Senator Taylor:

I am writing in support of Bill 145, which would give rural public safety officers the authority to probation and parole supervision to persons under supervision by communicating with and monitoring the activation and progress of those persons at the direction of probation and parole officers. The commission of public safety shall coordinate with commissioner of corrections when providing grants under this section, and the commissioner shall jointly execute an agreement with the nonprofit regional corporation.

By passing House Bill 145, this would enable village safety officers to have local authority to monitor parolees or people on probation. As an example, during the summer months, we experience an influx of fisher persons in Nelson Lagoon, this legislation would help our village safety officer with probation violators.

I urge you vote for this bill. I appreciate your time in reviewing this letter.

Sincerely,


Justine V. Gundersen-Pride
Tribal Administrator

April 4, 2001

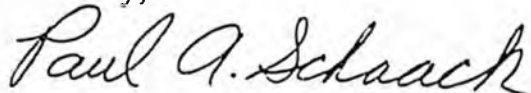
RECEIVED
APR 19 2001
Ans'd.....

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of SB 145. I feel this bill is a safety measure that all villages around the State can relate to. The village public safety officer here in Nelson Lagoon is a vital link to our community. All officers enrolled in the program should have the power to monitor paroles more closely by knowing the activities and progress of these persons.

I support this bill in its entirety.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Schaack, resident

P.O. Box 30

Nelson Lagoon, Alaska

99571

(907)989-2238

From
Jenny Johnson
General Delivery
Nelson Lagoon, AK
99571

RECEIVED
APR 19 2001
Ans'd.....

To CARL MOSES:

I support Bill 145 & THINK we need this
bill to go THRU, Please Help us.

THANK YOU

Jenny Johnson

VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE
OF
NELSON LAGOON, ALASKA

RECEIVED
APR 19 2001

Ans'd

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO:	Senator Robin Taylor	FROM:	Tribal Chief -- Harold Johnson Sr.
	Alaska State Legislature	DATE:	4/3/01
FAX NUMBER:		TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER:	1
PHONE NUMBER:		FAX NUMBER:	(907) 989-2209
RE:	Senate 145	PHONE NUMBER:	(907) 989-2299

URGENT FOR REVIEW PLEASE COMMENT PLEASE REPLY PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

I support bill 145 I would appreciate your help on this bill .

Thank You -- Harold Johnson Sr.



VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE
OF
NELSON LAGOON, ALASKA

RECEIVED
APR 19 2001
Ans'd.....

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO:	FROM:
Senator Robin Taylor	Senta J Lockett.
Alaska State Legislature	DATE: 4/3/01
FAX NUMBER:	TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 1
PHONE NUMBER:	FAX NUMBER: (907) 989-2281
RE: Senate 145	PHONE NUMBER (907) 989-2232

URGENT FOR REVIEW PLEASE COMMENT PLEASE REPLY PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

I support bill 145 I would appreciate your help on this bill .

Thank You -- Senta J Lockett



P. O. BOX 06 - NLG
NELSON LAGOON, ALASKA 99571

Letters of Support