

SJR

24

<TARGET><BILL>SJR 24</BILL><SUBJECT>SJR
24</SUBJECT><COMM>SSTA28</COMM></TARGET>

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT First Committee of Referral

DATE: 2/14/14

FURTHER:

Date of 5-Day Notice: 3-6-14
(in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED
IN TO OFFICE: 3-11-14

State Affairs Committee considered SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 24

SJR 24-VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

Relating to certain holiday practices at federal Veterans Health Administration facilities.

and recommends:

- be replaced with CS STAR 24 (STA) Same Title New Title
- adopt previous CS _____ (_____) Same Title New Title
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt _____ Letter of Intent
- further referral to _____ Committee

Dept Abbr.	
ADM	LWF
CED	LAW
COR	LEG
CRT	MVA
EED	DNR
DEC	DPS
DFG	REV
GOV	DOT
DHS	UA

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #
S. STA			✓	1

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	PRINTED LAST NAME	Do PASS	Do NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
	Wielechowski	✓			
	Goghil	✓			
	Giesel	✓			
CHAIR:	Dyson	✓			

SENATOR
CHARLIE HUGGINS
Senate President

(907) 465-3878
Fax (907) 465-3265

State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Alaska State Legislature



REPRESENTATIVE
MIKE CHENAULT
Speaker of the House

(907) 465-3779
Fax (907) 465-2833

State Capitol, Room 208
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

February 24, 2014
Senator Dyson
Chair: Senate State Affairs.
State Capitol, Room 121.
Juneau, Alaska. 99801

Dear Senator Dyson,

Please consider this to be my request for the Senate State Affairs Committee to hear Senate Joint Resolution NO.24. This is a resolution relating to the Veterans Administration violation of religious freedoms of the veterans in its care by not allowing the veterans the opportunity to receive certain holiday cards.

Attached is the Senate Joint Resolution 24.

Questions regarding this request may be directed to Eric Hollen @ 465-6579.

Very Respectfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlie Huggins", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Charlie Huggins
Senator

CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 24(STA)
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Offered:
Referred:

Sponsor(s): SENATORS HUGGINS, McGuire, Micciche, Kelly, Bishop, Giessel, Meyer, Dunleavy

A RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to certain holiday practices at federal Veterans Health Administration**
2 **facilities.**

3 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **WHEREAS**, in December 2013, federal Veterans Health Administration facilities in
5 Texas, Georgia, Iowa, and Alabama violated the religious freedom rights of convalescing
6 veterans in their care; and

7 **WHEREAS** a Veterans Health Administration hospital in Dallas, Texas, did not
8 distribute to the veterans in its care holiday cards that used certain language, including "Merry
9 Christmas" and "God bless you"; and

10 **WHEREAS** a Veterans Health Administration hospital in Augusta, Georgia, denied
11 Christmas carolers from the local high school the opportunity to sing in public areas of the
12 hospital; and

13 **WHEREAS** two other Veterans Health Administration facilities in Iowa and Alabama
14 prohibited the distribution of Christmas gifts and Christmas gift bags; and

15 **WHEREAS** a Veterans Health Administration official cited the policy of the Veterans

1 Health Administration for the nondistribution of the holiday cards; and

2 **WHEREAS** the Veterans Health Administration official stated that, in order to
3 respect veterans' religious beliefs, all donated holiday cards are reviewed by a
4 multidisciplinary team of staff led by the chaplaincy services to determine whether the cards
5 are appropriate and can be freely distributed to patients; and

6 **WHEREAS** the Veterans Health Administration official stated that the process for
7 reviewing holiday cards was not fully explained to the particular group involved and
8 apologized for any misunderstanding; and

9 **WHEREAS** those holiday cards, gifts, and presentations came from caring citizens,
10 including young children, who took the time to recognize the heroic actions of men and
11 women who have sacrificed so much in the service of their country in times of both peace and
12 war; and

13 **WHEREAS**, although Christmas Day has origins in religious beliefs, it is recognized
14 as a civic holiday for federal employees; and

15 **WHEREAS** the Veterans Health Administration violates the right to religious
16 freedom of the veterans in its care by not allowing them to receive certain holiday cards and
17 gifts and to attend certain presentations;

18 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that the
19 United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs reconsider the policies on holiday practices at
20 Veterans Health Administration facilities and rewrite those policies so that the violations of
21 veterans' rights described in this resolution do not occur again; and be it

22 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that
23 the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs provide each member of the Alaska State
24 Legislature with a copy of the rewritten policies on holiday practices at Veterans Health
25 Administration facilities.

26 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
27 the United States; the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and
28 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House of
29 Representatives; the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of
30 Representatives; the Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the
31 Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Eric K.

1 Shinseki, United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Verdie Bowen, Director, Office of
2 Veterans Affairs, Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs; and the Honorable Lisa
3 Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young,
4 U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and all other members of
5 the 113th United States Congress.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2014 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Bill Version SJR 24
Fiscal Note Number _____
() Publish Date _____

Identifier (file name) _____ Dept. Affected _____
Title SJR 24 VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION POLICIES Appropriation _____
Allocation _____
Sponsor Senator Huggins _____
Requester (S) State Affairs OMB Component Number _____

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

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

	FY15 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY15 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
			FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY15	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants, Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts							
1003 GF Match							
1004 GF							
1005 GF/Prgm (DGF)							
1007 I/A Rcpts (Other)							
1156 Rcpt Svcs (DGF)							
	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

POSITIONS

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

CHANGE IN REVENUES

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Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY14) operating costs _____ (separate supplemental appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY15) costs _____ (separate capital appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? _____
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended, or repealed? _____ Discuss details in analysis section.

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version (if initial version, please note as such)

Prepared by (S) State Affairs
Division _____
Approved by Senator Dyson, Chair
Division _____

Phone 465-2199
Date/Time 3/10/14 1:45 PM
Date 3/10/2014