

SB

184

<TARGET><BILL>SB 184</BILL><SUBJECT>SB
184</SUBJECT><COMM>SSTA29</COMM></TARGET>

Alaska State Legislature

Session:
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Senator Lesil McGuire

MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Bill Stoltze, Chair, Senate State Affairs Committee

From: Senator Lesil McGuire *LM*

Date: March 1st, 2016

Re: Senate Bill 184 USPHS & NOAA Officers as Veterans Hearing Request

Please schedule Senate Bill 184, relating to members and veterans of the military services, including the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps, at your earliest convenience. SB 184 updates Alaska Statutes to recognize commissioned officers of the USPHS and NOAA as veterans as they are at the federal level.

Attached to this memo please find:

- SB 184 ver W
- Sponsor Statement

The contact for SB 184 is, Forrest Wolfe, 465-2995

Thank you.

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Sponsor Statement for Senate Bill 184

“An Act relating to members and veterans of the military services, including the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps.”

SB 184 is a simple bill to bring alignment between the federal definition of “veteran” under Title 38 – Veterans Benefits and the state definition of “veteran” as it applies to those members who provided active duty service in the uniformed services of the United States.

Currently, the state consistently defines “veteran” as service in the armed services only. This does not recognize the full-time active duty military service of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Officer Corps and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps, which are recognized as a uniform service by Title 38 and entitled to Veterans Benefits. Officers from the USPHS and NOAA (previously the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey) have served throughout Alaska since the early 1900’s. Each serving officer has deployed by orders to the needed mission, including losses of members in US Coast Guard joint missions. Today, USPHS Officers currently serve from Ketchikan to Kotzebue providing health care and water and sanitation engineering to Alaska’s native communities.

NOAA Officers lead surveying and mapping operations throughout Alaska, improving the navigation over the coastal waters and into the Arctic, as well as operating the vessels conducting fishery research and assessment in state and federal waters. Each officer, regardless of service, is on orders directing the nature of their deployment and their duty stations. This is no different than officers serving in the armed forces^{002E}

Upon leaving the service, whether by resigning the commission or retiring in grade, the officers have earned their federal veterans benefit. Many of these officers that have had duty in Alaska have chosen to stay, contributing to our work force and economy by building businesses, providing medical services, or continuing to offer their expertise in public service.

Please join me in support of this bill that offers the opportunity for the state of Alaska to recognize these veterans’ previous service and the veteran status they have earned.