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Small-town cop: Keeping the peace in Mountain Village (August 2, 2005)

I Lifelong resident knows heartache of arresting friends and relatives

By JOEL GAY

Anchorage Daily News

Tenth in a series

(Published: July 28, 2007)

MOUNTAIN VILLAGE -- Alvin Brown hates calls early in the morning.

As the village public safety officer in one of the biggest villages in Western Alaska and an 18-year veteran of rural law enforcement, he knows that early calls typically mean bad news -- assaults, rapes, fights and accidents, often alcohol-induced and usually difficult.

He has been slugged, kicked, shot and hit in the head with an ax so hard it still hurts.

But one call stands out that ended better. No one was injured, Brown tracked down \$55,000 in stolen cash and he got a public commendation from a personal hero.

It wasn't a typical experience for a village cop, but then again, Brown, who weighs 305 pounds, cuts his hair in a high flat-top and wears owlsh glasses, doesn't seem like a typical cop.

Around 3 one August morning in 1999, Brown was watching a video at the home he shared with his parents and children when his VHF radio picked up a short, mysterious call.

"Store," a voice said.

Brown, a native of Mountain Village, knew the voice. It was the village police officer on duty that night, but whose radio battery was almost dead.

"There was just enough power to say one word. Then he'd turn it off, and turn it on again and say another word," Brown recalled recently while sitting in his cramped office in the Mountain Village City Hall.

"Which store," Brown asked back. "Yup'ik," came the reply.

Officer Brown was on it.

The other cop had found the Yup'ik Store's lock broken, its back door open and the safe missing. Together the two officers found fresh shoe prints and ATV tracks nearby. Brown quickly recognized a clue that an urban detective might not, and took photos of the tire tracks.

"These tracks were not like any other ATV," he said. "These tires were a different tread," and at first light the two Bush detectives traced the machine six miles out of town. The tracks suggested the perpetrators had gone into the brush, so Brown and his partner followed.

Stumbling around in brown bear country at 6 a.m. was spooky.

"All we had was OC (pepper) spray, batons and handcuffs," Brown said. "We were just about to give up when we found the safe." Empty.

But it was enough to get a search warrant and keep looking, he said. The officers then went door to door in the village. They soon found their ATV outside a home, along with shoe prints matching those at the store.

The juvenile driver admitted his involvement, which led the officers to another suspect's home. Behind the second house, they saw a section of tundra that appeared disturbed. Suspicious, they dug and dug and dug, without success, Brown said. All the while, their suspect smiled cockily, he said.

"Then we tried one more time," and struck pay dirt -- a black plastic bag with neatly wrapped stacks of bills inside, Brown said.

"The guy's face dropped," he said.

In two days, Brown and his partner found the \$52,000 lost in the store robbery, plus another \$3,000 they believed was stolen but weren't sure from where. The store got back its money. The state kept the three grand, Brown said.

The big payoff for Brown came later, when he received what he considered the ultimate compliment. Col. Glenn Godfrey, the first Alaska Native to command the Alaska State Troopers and who later went on to become the commissioner of public safety, asked to meet Brown at a village police graduation ceremony in Kotzebue.

"He walked right towards me," trailing a small crowd of curious officers, Brown recalled. "He shook my hand and thanked us for our investigation. And during graduation, he told everyone about it."

Brown named his son Wallace Glenn Brown after his law enforcement hero, he said. Godfrey's official commendation still hangs on his office wall, along with maps, drawings by his son and daughter and a photo of his graduation from the troopers academy, which provides the required training for VPSOs.

Such are the rewards of a law enforcement career in rural Alaska. In 18 years, he worked for either the Mountain Village tribe, the city or the agency that administers the VPSO program on the lower Yukon. For several of those years, he drove a taxi during days and was an officer at night.

"I was young back then," said Brown, now 39.

He isn't in law enforcement for the money. He earns \$17.63 an hour, plus a bonus for acting as probation officer for Mountain Village's 17 convicted felons.

He doesn't do it to carry a gun. VPSOs aren't allowed to anywhere in the state, even though they occasionally face down people with firearms. Brown was unarmed when he got shot one New Year's Eve. A drunk who had been shooting into the air lowered his rifle, then accidentally fired a .223-caliber bullet that ricocheted off the frozen ground and hit Brown in the thigh. It's still there and sets off airport security every time, he said.

He isn't a cop because of the family prestige. He's arrested brothers, sisters, cousins and other relatives for bootlegging, domestic violence and assault. Until he got his own home, his parents

cringed whenever the phone rang early.

"They worry that I may not be coming back," he said.

Brown is a cop because he likes it, he's good at it and because Mountain Village needs it, he said.

"I know how these people are, and they know how I am," he said. "Even the alcohol and drug dealers respect me, because I treat everyone with respect."

It's hard to be a cop in a small town, especially one you grew up in, Brown said.

"It doesn't bother me at work. But when I go home, it hits me, 'What's Dad going to think' " when his son arrests a relative or friend? "It turns out he's thanking me for arresting the guy."

Job satisfaction comes in small doses too, he said. After troopers in Bethel acted on a tip he had passed on, they prevented a shipment of booze from reaching Mountain Village during the school's graduation in late May.

"This was the first time in the history of high school graduation here we got no calls on alcohol," Brown said. Usually they start coming in at 3 or 4 in the morning.

He brightened up while telling about a marijuana sale gone bad. Village sources told him someone had come to Mountain Village with \$500 to spend on pot. A runner took the stranger's money and said he would return in five minutes with the dope, "but he never came back," Brown said, smiling.

Another time, a Mountain Village bootlegger came back from the Last Chance liquor store near Nulato with 10 cases of booze, which he hid several miles outside of town. With a bottle selling for \$120 to \$150, it's easy money, Brown said.

But this bootlegger made a strategic error: he told one of his runners where he hid the liquor. By the time he checked his stash, it was gone, Brown said.

As VPSO, Brown is usually involved in fire calls, emergency medical work and search and rescue. One of his scariest days, he said, was when a snowmachine driver got stuck in the Yukon River slush one spring. Brown heaved a grappling hook with all his might and landed it perfectly on the machine's ski. He pulled the man to safety.

Brown would like to spend another 15 years in law enforcement, he said, then possibly be a magistrate.

He may not make it after an episode in May. Brown and another officer responded to an early morning domestic violence call. According to charges filed later, a man whacked Brown in the temple with the back of a single-bit ax.

Brown had fierce headaches for weeks, and when we passed through the village earlier this summer he still suffered memory loss and daily headaches, he said. His knee jumped steadily the whole time he spoke.

"It's pretty tough on me," he said.

Though he returned to work, the longtime cop said he was throttling back a bit.

"I'm starting to learn more about taking time off from work," he said. "It helps a lot."

As we spoke, Brown had a steady stream of calls, including several about a dispute at someone's house. Finally he excused himself, saying he had business. He put on his brown VPSO hat, climbed on his four-wheeler and drove off to keep the peace in Mountain Village.

TOMORROW: A schizophrenic jukebox in Emmonak.

Daily News reporter Joel Gay can be reached at jgay@adn.com or at 257-4310. Photographer Erik Hill can be reached at ehill@adn.com or at 257-4331.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Reporter Joel Gay and photographer Erik Hill spent two weeks this summer traveling down Alaska's biggest river, visiting villages and people along the way.

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ALASKA STATE SENATE VPSO TASK FORCE

SENATOR DONALD C. OLSON
CHAIR

EMAIL:
Senator_Donny_Olson@legis.state.ak.us

(907)465-3707
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MEMBERS: SENATOR FRENCH, SENATOR DYSON, COMMISSIONER MONEGAN, ATTORNEY
GENERAL COLBERG, LORETTA BULLARD, MYRON NANENG

January 2, 2008

To VPSO Task Force Members:

The Senate VPSO Task Force meeting scheduled for this Friday, January 4, is cancelled and rescheduled for Friday, January 18, in Juneau, Beltz room.

Testimony is by invitation only. It will not be teleconferenced.

If you have any questions, please contact my staff, Denise Liccioli, at 465-3707.

Sincerely,

Senator Donald C. Olson

CC: Senator Lyda Green
Senate Secretary
Jeff Turner, Majority Press Office
Russ Kelly, Legislative Liaison, Office of the Governor
Jodi Jacques, Anchorage LIO Staff
Peg Warren, Juneau LIO Staff

ALASKA STATE SENATE VPSO TASK FORCE

SENATOR DONALD C. OLSON
CHAIR

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MEMBERS: SENATOR FRENCH, SENATOR DYSON, COMMISSIONER MONEGAN, ATTORNEY
GENERAL COLBERG, LORETTA BULLARD, MYRON NANENG

December 5, 2007

To VPSO Task Force Members:

The Senate VPSO Task Force will hold another meeting to discuss and decide on the findings and recommendations for their report to the Legislature (due in February), as follows:

Friday, January 4, 2008, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm – Anchorage, Room 220 of the LIO

Testimony is by invitation only. It will not be teleconferenced.

If you have any questions, please contact my staff, Denise Liccioli, at 465-3707.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Denise Liccioli for Senator Olson".

Senator Donald C. Olson

CC: Senator Lyda Green
Senate Secretary
Jeff Turner, Majority Press Office
Russ Kelly, Legislative Liaison, Office of the Governor
Jodi Jacques, Anchorage LIO Staff

ALASKA STATE SENATE VPSO TASK FORCE

SENATOR DONALD C. OLSON,
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MEMBERS: SENATOR FRENCH, SENATOR DYSON, COMMISSIONER MONEGAN, ATTORNEY
GENERAL COLBERG, LORETTA BULLARD, MYRON NANENG

September 7, 2007

To Distribution List:

This is to revise the Senate VPSO Task Force public meetings schedule in order to add teleconferencing at some of the locations; and to change the due date for any written testimony that is submitted. If this symbol "+" is shown below, then that meeting will be teleconferenced. Otherwise, the schedule is the same as previously distributed.

+ Tuesday, September 25, 3:15-5:15 pm - **Nome** - Rec Center

Wednesday, September 26, 9:30-11:30 am - **Savoonga** - City Hall, downstairs

Wednesday, September 26, 1:30-3:30 pm - **Gambell** - City Hall, downstairs

+ Thursday, October 4, 3:00-5:00 pm - **Bethel** - Cultural Center

Friday, October 5, 9:30-11:30 am - **Mountain Village** - Community Hall

Friday, October 5, 1:30-3:30 pm - **Emmonak** - City Complex

+ Monday, November 5, 9:00-11:00 am - **Kodiak** - Kodiak Inn

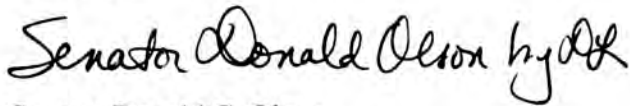
Monday, November 5, after the public meeting, the Task Force will also attend the VPSO Training being held in Kodiak.

If a person wishes to testify but cannot make it to one of the meetings, written testimony will be accepted by the Task Force. Written testimony must include the name and mailing address of the person testifying. It is preferable to use email for sending the testimony; however, it can also be sent via US mail. In either case, it is important to have the written testimony received by November 2. The email and USPO mailing addresses to use are shown above.

Senate VPSO Task Force Meeting Schedule Announcement/September 7, 2007
Page 2 of 2

If you have any questions, please contact my staff, Denise Liccioli, at 465-3707.

Sincerely,



Senator Donald C. Olson

CC: Senator Lyda Green
Senate Secretary
Jeff Turner, Majority Press Office
Christopher Clark, Acting Legislative Liaison, Office of the Governor

Distribution List:

Task Force Members

Mayors of Nome, Bethel, Savoonga, Gambell, Emmonak, Mountain Village, City of Kodiak, Kodiak Island Borough

Presidents of Gambell IRA Council, Savoonga IRA Council, Orutsaramiut Native Council, Emmonak Tribal Council, and Asa'carsarmiut Tribal Council

Aleutian Pribilof Island Association
Association of Village Council Presidents
Bristol Bay Native Association
Kodiak Area Native Association
Kawerak, Inc.
Tanana Chiefs Conference
Tlingit-Haida Central Council
Arctic Sounder
Nome Nugget
Delta Discovery
Tundra Drums
Kodiak Daily Mirror
Val Maxwell, VPSO Coordinator, KANA

VPSO Task Force Public Meetings Agenda

In May 2007, the Senate passed SR7, "A resolution creating and relating to the Senate VPSO Task Force". This resolution created a Task Force to find ways to strengthen and improve public safety in rural Alaska by identifying problems with the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program, and ways those problems might be addressed.

Senator Donald C. Olson was appointed Chair of the Task Force. Other members are Senator Hollis French, Senator Fred Dyson, Commissioner Walt Monegan, Attorney General Talis Colberg, Loretta Bullard (President, Kawerak, Inc), and Myron Naneng (President, AVCP).

The agenda for the public meetings to be held by the Task Force follows. If you wish to testify but cannot make it to the meeting, you can submit written testimony to the Task Force. If you do so, your name and address must be included with your testimony. It is preferable to use email (Senator_Donny_Olson@legis.state.ak.us) for sending your testimony; however, you can also send it via US mail to Senator Donald Olson, State Capitol Room 514, Juneau, AK 99801. In either case, it is important to have your written testimony received by November 2.

- Opening remarks – Senator Olson

- Purpose of the Task Force
- What we hope to accomplish
- Process we are using

- Overview of the current VPSO program – Commissioner Monegan

- Problems we're aware of, such as recruitment and retention, salary, etc.
- Things that have already been tried, or are in the works
- Introduction of tiered approach to public safety officers throughout Alaska

- Public input and discussion – please:

- State your name for the record
- State the problem or concern you have or have noticed, and
- Concentrate on your recommendation and ideas for restructuring and improvements that would make the program effective.

- Closing – Senator Olson and other members of the Task Force

Denise Liccioli

From: Denise Liccioli
Sent: Friday, August 10, 2007 3:43 PM
To: Loretta Bullard; Myron P. Naneng; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Hollis French; Sen. Fred Dyson ; Walt Monegan; Talis J Colberg
Cc: Alvin Jimmie ; Cindy Smith ; Allison Biastock ; Cathy Hoffman; Gina Appolloni ; Lucky Shultz; Lauren Rice; Svobodny, Richard (LAW); Glick, John; Valent Maxwell
Subject: Non-public meetings

Good afternoon everyone,

Yesterday I sent out the memo regarding the public meetings so I thought I should remind everyone that in addition to those public meetings, we will meet with the VPSOs in Kodiak on 11/5 and also meet in Anchorage on 11/19 and 11/20 to wrap everything up and generate the recommendations and report.

I also wanted to share some travel information since I will be making the arrangements for Senator Olson, Loretta Bullard and Myron Naneng; but the rest of you will have your staff make the arrangements. From the rest of this email, this is really information intended to be helpful for those who will be making the travel arrangements for you.

Nome - intend to fly into Nome out of Anchorage on flight 152 at 9:26 AM on 9/25; returning to Anchorage from Nome on flight 153 at 10:09 PM on 9/26. Staying at the Aurora Inn, 800-354-4606, on 9/25. I believe we will need to taxi to and from airport and hotel, and the charter. We will charter to Savoonga and Gambell on Hageland. As I understand it, the meeting places in both locations are a short walk from where we will land when we come in on the charter.

Bethel - intend to fly into Bethel out of Anchorage on flight 43 at 12:00 PM on 10/4; returning to Anchorage from Bethel on flight 46 at 8:36 PM on 10/5. Staying at Bentley's Porter House Bed & Breakfast, 543-3552, on 10/4. I believe we will need to taxi to and from airport and hotel, and the charter. We will charter to Emmonak and Mountain Village on Grant Air. I am still working on how we will get from the charter to the meeting place in Emmonak; but in Mountain Village, they will send a shuttle and it will cost \$5 per person (each way, I assume).

Kodiak - You could fly in the day before and stay the night, or you could fly into Kodiak in the morning. If you fly in to Kodiak in the morning, the flight leaves Anchorage at 6 AM and it is not a jet. I have made reservations for those for whom I am responsible to come in the night before on 11/4 and stay at the Kodiak Inn, 800-563-4254, since that is where the public meeting will be in the morning. We will be done in time to make the afternoon jet out of Kodiak on 11/5, flight #33 leaves at 4:58 pm. The Kodiak Inn provides a courtesy shuttle from the airport to the hotel.

The meeting with the VPSOs is being coordinated with Val Maxwell. He is going to arrange transportation for all of us from the Kodiak Inn to the Coast Guard Facility where the training will be held. We will probably want to have lunch before the training, but again, Val is still working out the details and we may be able to lunch at the training. (I'll let you know the details later when they have been finalized and it is closer.) He will also arrange shuttles to take all of us to the airport.

Anchorage - those coming from out of town will fly in the night before on 11/18 so that we can meet essentially all day Monday and Tuesday if needed, leaving Anchorage after work on Tuesday 11/20. Our meeting place is at the LIO, room 220, for 11/19 and 11/20. I'm assuming that two days will be enough, but please speak up if anyone thinks it will take longer; if it takes less, no harm done.

Let me know if you have any other questions and I hope this is helpful information for the travel arrangers!

~Denise
x3707

TESTIMONY

Bristol Bay Native Association

MEMORANDUM
Village Public Safety Officer Program
Carla Akelkok, Program Manager
PO BOX 310

Dillingham, AK 99576

1800-478-5257, (907) 842-5257, (907) 842-5932-FAX, cakelkok@bbna.com

TO: VPSO Task Force Committee
FROM: Carla Akelkok, VPSO Program Manager *CA*
DATE: 01/30/08
SUBJECT: VPSO List of Concerns for BBNA Region

VPSO Task Force Committee

Bristol Bay region is made up of a wide area that includes surrounding lakes, streams, rivers and bays depending on the location of the VPSO Post. Southwest Alaska weather conditions range from ambient temperatures of 40 degrees to the high 70 degrees in the summer; in the winter the temperatures can range from 30 degrees to minus 30 degrees, Fahrenheit. Bristol Bay boasts of the largest Alaska Salmon runs returning to spawning streams. Salmon harvest activities include commercial, sports and the subsistence fisheries. The VPSO's work in an area that includes the Wood Tikchik State Park, 3 federal preserves and 2 national park systems, and the nearest community is often impacted by a high increase of tourism/visitor activity during the summer season.

For the most part the resident's practice of a Subsistence Lifestyle where the majority of the Bristol Bay communities rely on gathering or harvesting wild/organic food products from berries, birds, fish, moose, caribou, bears, eggs, etc. This activity has occurred over many generations and expresses the pride in one's ability to provide food and other necessary resources for their family over the eons.

Allowing input from the VPSO's and from a program administration perspective, BBNA submits the following comments by topic to the VPSO Task Force:

Better Pay, Retirement and Benefits are needed to keep VPSO's: The cost of living is very high in the rural villages as compared to the urban areas. A fair Retirement and Health Benefits package may attract individuals to apply for a VPSO position. Currently, a VPSO employed for 8+ years has accrued minimal retirement benefits.

Vehicle's Needed: VPSO's work often takes them out into the weather/elements where temperatures and high winds from wind chill temperatures from 20 degrees to -40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and can also experience 25-50+ knot winds during the winter months. Adequate appropriate transportation such as a covered vehicle would benefit public safety expectation at the local level. Use of the vehicle would be for normal patrol schedules, and to transport

VPSO Task Force

1

by BBNA

Vehicle's (cont'd)

perpetrators to or from the holding cells to the airport safely. Aside from the VPSO's personal safety, there is a liability issue if a prisoner is resistant to arrest and combative, where a required/mandatory arrest is 2 to 5 miles from the holding cells.

NOTE: BBNA recently requested 4 vehicles thru DPS and were denied as Bristol Bay communities are not on the (south-central Alaska) road system.

Also, high fuel costs are a big concern for the oversight council, required to provide fuel for patrols and transports of prisoners. As well as the requirement to provide work space and holding cell facilities to house a VPSO in their community. The grant does not allow for space rent to the community. That rental income might offset a portion of the facility operating costs for the partnering community.

Public Safety Building and Small Equipment: At some sites the whole public safety building renovated, including the roof, siding, windows. Inside renovations include office space; adequate holding cells and other necessary items such as mattresses/bed and adequate bedding; bathrooms plumbing upgrades; adequate heating system; electrical work and lighting fixtures; a heated garage to store the vehicles; including the emergency preparedness equipment such as Fire Trucks. Small equipment from Office to Patrol needs are listed: VHF Radios, updated Laptops, Search and Rescue Supplies such as GPS, Radios, Satellite Phone, Flashlights, etc. Then factoring in extra backup as small equipment can break. Officers need adequate Desks, Internet/Computer Access for reporting Dispatch Cards, Fax/Copier/ Scanner's, etc. Some VPSO's need new Evidence Storage Rooms; also necessary to include a room for the AST that come to assist for more than a day and having to stay in the community overnight. Washer and dryer are necessary to keep the jail facility items clean for use for the next prisoner. Some VPSO's have different equipment needs in their communities from a Snow machine, 4x4 Wheeler, 6x6 Wheeler, Side by Side ATV, Skiff w/outboard and Trailer.

One VPSO in the Bristol Bay region, with the support of the community, successfully applied for a federal COPS grant for a snow machine; as there were no funds available through DPS.

Housing Needs for a VPSO Family: Adequate housing to accommodate VPSO and their family. An additional consideration would include assistance for heating fuel and electricity due to high costs of living in rural areas of the state.

Other Housing for a VPSO: We were also requested to provide approximate numbers of communities that would need housing for a possible VPSO position. Most VPSO's are already reside in their communities. However, if an applicant is hired from outside the community or region then there will be the need for adequate housing for the VPSO and his family. The current state grant contract lists up to 22 sites for the Bristol Bay region; but only funded up to 11 positions. We estimate that number to be about 1/2 that would need housing if there is an increase in positions totaling approximately up to 11 homes needed for our region.

Additional VPSO Needed: One VPSO covers his community that includes a Public State Park and the numerous lodges operating within the park system. In the summer the job includes patrolling on the lake and including its tributaries, or being called out for Search and Rescue. During the boating season the activity on the lake triples from spring breakup thru the fall season, late September, then the VPSO's busy schedule often prevents adequate coverage for the small community that encompasses both North and South Shores of the lake. The community has requested an additional VPSO position for their village for 2 years in a row. DPS has not provided a response to date of the status of this request. This is the busiest VPSO position in the Bristol Bay region with the most dispatch cards reported thru AST.

State or Non-Profit Employees Continuation of Subsistence Leave: VPSO's do use approved leave during subsistence seasons. Under the VPSO Grant Guidelines BBNA VPSO's are offered up to 90 days of Subsistence Leave Policy each year. BBNA would encourage that this option continue should the VPSO Program be moved to the State.

Continuous Respect from Oversight Council, AST and BBNA: VPSO's need the respect and support from their Oversight Council, AST and their employer. On the ground and at the forefront the VPSO's are the resident's first contact when there are calls for public safety service. The relationship between all partnering entities must be visible and transparent, and provide fair support and oversight for the VPSO's.

Communication between Oversight AST and VPSO: VPSO's are required to provide Case Reports to DPS for documentation to the legislature for continuation funds to support the VPSO Programs for improvements and expansion of the program statewide.

Leave of Absence from VPSO duties whether personal or job related: VPSO's should be able to take a leave of absence from their VPSO duties with coverage from the Oversight AST for the time requested by employer giving notification to their Oversight AST and Council approval. It may range from personal leave to relief from duties due to a death/drowning investigation to receive counseling as needed.

I am available to respond to any questions, I can be reached at (907) 842-5257.

Cc: file

Village Public Safety Officer Program
Sgt. Clinton O'Malley
VPSO Thorne Bay

The VPSO program was created to give the rural villages an individual who has been trained in a number of different fields. Through the years the program has matured into a jack of all trades concept, where the VPSO assumes the roll as Law Enforcement Officer, Firefighter, Fire Chief, Medic Responder, Search and Rescue Coordinator, Probation/Parole supervision assistance, Municipal Code enforcement, Animal Control and vaccinator, DARE officer, School Resource Officer duties, Jail guard, process server, prisoner transport to name the major duties of the VPSO.

Due to the current financial situation in the rural areas of Alaska, many communities are turning to the VPSO program for a law enforcement officer. The communities cannot afford full time or part-time officers and have to choose between services such as clean water and trying to maintain aging equipment or hiring a law enforcement officer. Many times the "Police Department" is eliminated from the budget to save money, and the citizens are left with the delayed response time of the Alaska State Trooper's as they respond from a Hub community.

Many of the services in the rural communities are funded by state or federal agencies. Medical, water and sewer, school's, roads, and such are funded annually by state or federal programs, except for law enforcement. Communities cannot meet the qualifications for government COPS grants, or meet the requirements for the grants to qualify for continued funding.

That's where the VPSO program comes in to fill the roll of a community based law enforcement officer. These towns see the VPSO program as a godsend, and are looking to the VPSO program for a law enforcement officer. The local governments cannot afford even a part time law enforcement officer and see the need for someone to call in an emergency, who can respond within minutes, not hours, and who is there for the community, not for the region.

Because of the ongoing lack of funding in rural towns, there are many communities in the state that are new to the VPSO Program as funding for local law enforcement has become non existent. With the decrease in income for the local governments the number of communities that are going to be applying for a VPSO position are only going to increase. With the increased demand for village based law enforcement the state has not increased funding for the VPSO program but has cut the program by 70 positions in the last five years. This seems contradictory to the statements to the media by Alaskan politicians that they support rural law enforcement.

Rural Alaska is in desperate need for law enforcement and the VPSO program is geared for these small communities. The VPSO program was created specifically for rural Alaska and that's why rural Alaska needs this program.

With the VPSO program the State of Alaska gets officers who are trained by the Department of Public Safety, and who follow almost to the letter the same procedures as the Alaska State Troopers. These officers live and work in rural communities for much

Village Public Safety Officer Program
Sgt. Clinton O'Malley
VPSO Thorne Bay

less then the cost of a trooper. This is a one time per year grant by the state with no further costs. No retirement, medical, dental, vision, support staff (except for two funded by the grant, an accounting tech I, and a Sergeant PS). Equipment, and the cost to maintain and run the equipment. Office space and the costs associated with it. Cost of living allocation, state housing, and the myriad of costs associated with the Department of Public Safety. These are provided by the Non-Profits and the facilities by the Local Governments.

This does not include the savings to the State because of the decrease in crime when a VPSO becomes established in a community. That officer's presence within the community decreases the amount of criminal behavior and with that decrease in crime, comes the decrease in the costs of services to the victims and offenders. Medical services, correctional services (adult and juvenile), treatment services, trooper call outs, OCS, Probation/Parole, and all the other services, all funded by the state.

The cost per officer, when compared with the other law enforcement agencies in the State of Alaska show that the State gets a bargain with the VPSO program. If there was a State employee whose duties were the same as a VPSO, how much would that position cost per officer?

There are issues with the program that the state can address here and now. Many of the VPSO's still qualify for welfare. This is even true for me and my family. Without my wife working at the school and a monthly stipend from the local government I would qualify for food stamps and Medicaid. This should not be the case and this needs to be addressed. An increase in the starting salary and an increase across the board will solve this shameful aspect of the program. Also with the increase in pay the caliber of applicants will improve and the turnover rates will become steady or even decrease. The continued increases in salary to offset the increasing costs of living in rural Alaska, where all the VPSO's are stationed

Due to the current and future state of funding in the rural communities, the VPSO program's role in rural law enforcement is increasing. The Department of Public Safety has in the past few years, taken steps to streamline the VPSO program. This has been done by increasing the training time from nine weeks to ten weeks to include new training requirements, and the consolidation of non profits that administer the VPSO program.

What many people who live in Fairbanks, and the Anchorage areas don't understand is that crime in rural Alaska affects all of Alaska. If someone in a village gets assaulted or ran over because they know that there is no one to deter them, and the victim needs medical attention, where do they go if they need serious help? Anchorage or Fairbanks hospitals is where they will end up at and emergency rooms costs are astronomical. If the presence of a VPSO stops an assault at the Misdemeanor level and the person spends 30-60 days in jail as opposed to no one responding and the assault turns into a felony assault or Murder and the person spending 5 years to life in jail. Which costs the state more, the

Village Public Safety Officer Program
Sgt. Clinton O'Malley
VPSO Thorne Bay

answer is obvious. Less time in jail, troopers don't have to fly out, and no felony supervision costs. That alone will save the State of Alaska tens of millions of dollars.

That was just for the offender. There are savings with the victim also. The costs associated with the prosecution for a felony verses a misdemeanor, the costs of the crime lab, medical examiner, and children's services to name a few.

My recommendations for the VPSO Program are based on my experiences working in rural communities and serving the program for 10 years.

Due to the cost of living in rural Alaska at an all time high and with the starting wage being so low it is almost impossible to attract applicants.

1. Raise the starting salary to \$20.00/hour.(even with this increase, many new hires will still qualify for welfare)
2. Raise the starting salary by \$1.00/hour for the next five years.
3. Raise the pay by \$5.00/hour.(offset the cost of living)
4. Increase the number of positions through out the State by 20 positions per year for three years.

Thank you for your support for the VPSO Program and your continued support in the future.

Sgt. Clinton O'Malley
VPSO Program
P.O. Box 19110
Thorne Bay AK 99919
Phone-907 828-3905
Fax-907 828-3909
Cell 907 254-8499
vpsomalley@yahoo.com

Denise Liccioli

From: Eric-Wilma Osborne [chagaiuk@gci.net]
Sent: Tuesday, November 06, 2007 11:40 AM
To: Sen. Donny Olson
Subject: please fwd. to VPSO Taskforce

The VPSO program is a private police force that covers the majority of the land mass of Alaska. Something without parallel in this or any other democratic nation. Although the troopers provide training and liasons with the program; VPSO's are corporate employees, with a supervisor who as likely as not started his or her job with no law enforcement, or legal background.

The State can not hire or fire a VPSO. In the worst instances, they can arrest them. But short of that, expressing a negative legal opinion about a VPSO by a Trooper leaves them open for a defamation suit.

State troopers tend to be rotated every few years and much of what they've learned goes with them. If a VPSO is under suspicion, all they have to do is wait out a change.

In living in a village in Western Alaska I witnessed a wide open drug trade, and physical reckless injury to one of my children. The response of the VPSO in that community always was influenced by the relationship he had established over decades with the dealer or the reckless operator, not necessarily the law.

In going directly to the Troopers to attempt resolutions of these issues I detected a sense of frustration, similar to what I experienced, in varying degrees.

I had no honest response from the program's corporate management within the nonprofit. Any public action or admission that would reflect badly on their management, and adversely effect future funding or continued management, were buried with beaurocratic finesse.

As a result I feel a deep skepticism of the program as currently constituted. But there are several ways it could be improved.

1. Direct supervision of a regions VPSO's, with the right to hire and fire, by the State Troopers.

2. Any corporate supervisory personnel be required by statute to have several years law enforcement, a degree in criminology, or equivalent legal experience.

3. Have the boundary of the VPSO program in various areas of the State correspond to the Trooper contingents districts; ie. A, B, C etc. This would help maintain a continuity in oversight of the program as troopers are transferred within their area.

4. Recruit returning veterans to become VPSOs. Veterans have useful training, institutional integrity, demonstrated courage, and commitment to public service. Alaska Natives have a great history of service to their country: why not continue it here?

5. Where possible recruit State Troopers from young competent VPSO's.

6. That the Trooper overseeing VPSO's in an area spend substantial time in its villages gaining a greater knowledge of their region and those they supervise.

7. Make VPSO's employees of the State. It would allow oversight of the program by competent professionals. It would also legitimize and ensure the continuity of the program.

Sincerely, Eric Osborne

Denise Liccioli

From: Eric Osborne [chagaiuk@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 07, 2007 11:27 AM
To: Sen. Donny Olson
Subject: please note

Thanks. Please mention to Senator Olson, that as of last spring, Ed Titus is the State Troopers point of contact in White Mountain during Dan's frequent absences. As they say, Ed's reputation preceeds him.

EO

--- "Sen. Donny Olson"

<Senator_Donny_Olson@legis.state.ak.us> wrote:

> Got it!

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Eric Osborne [mailto:chagaiuk@yahoo.com]

> Sent: Wednesday, November 07, 2007 8:35 AM

> To: Sen. Donny Olson

> Subject: Fwd: please fwd. to VPSO Taskforce

>

> Note: forwarded message attached.

> Hopefully Jt'll get through this time Denise. EO

>

>

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EMAIL: EMMONAK@UNICOM-ALASKA.COM

October 17, 2007

Senator Donald Olson
State Capitol Room 514
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Rural Alaska public Safety Officers

Dear Senator Olson:

Let me introduce myself, Paul Crane, Corporate Manager for Emmonak Corporation. Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns with you upon your arrival to Emmonak, Alaska with the support you brought with you. We do hope your visit here was a meaningful visit and that they gained insight with our Public Safety issues that face our citizens across Rural Alaska.

We like the rest of the nation, honor those in uniform. For this reason we would like our Village Public Officers established into a uniformed standards that represent our honor and the respect that we have for them in Rural Alaska.

Last but not least, our public safety officers bring respect and honor to the citizens and communities they serve on behalf of the Great State of Alaska; a true spirit of Alaska's Alaskan Heritage Foundation.

On behalf of the board of directors of Emmonak Corporation, we look to your support in our own endeavor to provide remedies for our social ills for the honor that we want to pass on to our youth of Emmonak Alaska.

Sincerely,



Paul T. Crane
Corporate Manager

Cc: file, City of Emmonak, Emmonak Police Department

LIO Nome

From: Sen. Donny Olson
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2007 11:28 AM
To: Angelique Horton
Subject: FW: VPSO problems

Angelique:

Please print the following email RE: VPSO issues in Buckland for Senator Olson and Denise. Thanks, Ginny Austerman

From: Buckland City Council [mailto:city_of_buckland@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2007 10:50 AM
To: Sen. Donny Olson
Subject: VPSO problems

Good Morning Senator Olson;

The City of Buckland has been having communication problems with KANA, the organization that handles our region's vpso program.

We feel that this organization is too far from our region to properly manage the VPSO positions for the NANA region.

We have an applicant who is qualified and more than willing to fill the position here in Buckland. The KANA coordinator told the applicant to negotiate what the Village of Buckland has to offer, and he feels that it's the coordinator who needs to do this.

sincerely;
Darlene B. Hadley
City Administrator

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Denise Liccioli

From: Linae Sanger [Linae_Sanger@lksd.org]
Sent: Tuesday, September 18, 2007 11:45 AM
To: Sen. Donny Olson
Subject: VPSO

My superintendent suggested I email you with my concerns about what has happened and is happening in our village in relation to your local meetings on VPSO.

When I have emergencies at school, or hear of things happening outside of school, I have not been able to get ahold of a VPSO. I heard a rumor that our village's VPSO moved to another village. I have not seen a posting for the job.

I had an incident this fall where a student who was on probation for being drunk and threatening to kill a teacher last spring showed up at school drunk. I didn't know how he was going to react when I confronted him. I called around VPSO phone number, VPO phone number, and Troopers, but got no one. This could have been a very violent situation. Finally, I got a board member at the tribal office to come to school to be with me while I interviewed the student. Luckily, the student did not get violent and we didn't have to have a lockdown at school.

Later that week, the above student was with another student who was also on probation. The 2nd student was drunk, no pants on, and had a gun. This was during the evening hours. I tried to call Troopers and left 4 messages, but no one called me back. Again, this could have escalated into an extremely dangerous situation.

When the VPO who had been out of town finally got back, I reported these incidents to her. I don't know if anything has been acted on or not.

The troopers came to our village the following week, but did not pick up these two for violation of probation.

My main concern is that we need someone to respond when we have emergencies at school or in the village, especially those involving violence/weapons.

Thank you,

Linae Sanger, Site Administrator
Chief Paul Memorial School
Box 19
Kipnuk, AK 99614
Phone: 907-896-5011
linae_sanger@lksd.org

Denise Liccioli

From: Nellie Wesley [nellie.wesley@nautaaq.org]
Sent: Tuesday, September 04, 2007 11:29 AM
To: Sen. Donny Olson
Subject: Public Comment - AK Rural Justice

Please accept this as a comment to the Rural Justice department...

Rural Alaska is in dire need of public safety in the field of policing. Our community in Noatak went without a VPSO for many years even while KANA in Kodiak is advertising the position for several years now. We have couple locals that want the job but because of their background check they don't qualify for the position, even what happened in their past was almost 20 years ago and their lives are changed and alcohol free today. Can that background check be cleared after so many years?

You know, people CAN change, but yet we keep their records for the rest of their lives, many if not all of us go thru times in life we are not proud of one time or another, but a lot of us realize the need to change/quit drinking or other substance abuse etc. and do so, but unfortunately there are people stuck with records that stay for the rest of their lives, when changes are made like quitting drinking - the root of their problems or crimes they did while under the influence of alcohol.

Another note on that matter, when children (ICWA children) are displaced from their parents, and the grandparents want to take the children, but someone have a felony record in the household from many years back while under the influence of alcohol, same situation like the above they don't qualify to take their own grandchildren, when in fact they made a positive change and quit alcohol. Someone need to look into that situation and try to clear people's names after a period of time and not keep their criminal records for LIFE when they want to make a difference in their families or their communities (like taking grandchildren or patrolling and taking on the duties of policing).

Thank you for your consideration and taking comments from your constituents.

Respectfully,

N. Carol Wesley,
Noatak Resident
PO Box 54
Noatak, AK 99761
Phone: (907) 485-2173

9/4/2007

Denise Liccioli

From: JStrong08@aol.com
Sent: Friday, August 31, 2007 2:15 PM
To: Denise Liccioli
Subject: VPSO Program

Hi. I am Joseph G. Strongheart, Sr., Nunam Iqua Tribal Council member. The following is my own personal feelings and ideas. Not the NITC.

For the Native Village of Nunam Iqua we do not see the benefits of the VPSO Program due to a few reasons:

1. we have not had anyone work here for a few years as a VPSO. Lack of interest, no applicants or do not qualify.

2. No housing and even if we did get a house available we probably would run into the Insurance problem and liabilities issues if we owned the house and wanted to let the person or persons use the building.

3. I like the Idea that if we do not use our existing money for the VPSO, then can we use this to have a trooper posted or stay here a few days or a day a week? This would help cut down our problems of Teen Drinking and Adults drinking and contributing to a minor. and other problems.

4. If not a trooper then someone who is a trained officer, like a certified or someone trying to get a certificate for a police job, willing to do a "FLOAT" or internship type position for Nunam Iqua come out and stay and get "ON the Job Training".

This way the money that is allocated to Nunam Iqua could be used for Nunam Iqua.

I understand that this may not seem like a solution, but, something is better than letting the problems escalate.

Get a sneak peek of the all-new AOL.com.

Denise Liccioli

From: Carin Finch [carin@unicom-alaska.com]
Sent: Friday, August 31, 2007 7:11 AM
To: Denise Liccioli
Subject: Public comment on the VPSO Program

Nunam Iqua has been eligible for a VPSO over the years, but primarily due to a lack of housing, there has been no VPSO in the village. The result is that funding, which the legislature provided to help Nunam Iqua with public safety, does not accomplish the intended goal.

Recommendation:

VPSO funds be allocated by community.

If a community does not utilize their VPSO funds by hiring a VPSO, the funds would go to the nearest Alaska State Troopers.

The Alaska State Troopers would use those funds to provide additional assistance to the community.

Carin Finch
Box 28
Nunam Iqua, AK 99666

Denise Liccioli

From: Sen. Donny Olson
Sent: Monday, August 27, 2007 4:58 PM
To: Denise Liccioli
Subject: FW: VPSO Program testimony

-----Original Message-----

From: Howard T. Amos [mailto:pantungan@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, August 24, 2007 10:44 AM
To: Sen. Donny Olson
Subject: VPSO Program testimony

My name is Howard T. Amos, I'm from Mekoryuk, Alaska.
I'm a former VPSO and manager as well. Today is August 24, 2007.

Village Public Safety Officer Program benefits each village that hires them. For a tribal or a City oriented communities without a VPSO struggle financially. Here are some problems:

1. A VPSO burns out because he/she is a human.
2. A VPSO supports his/her job by using own personal: Boat, 4-wheeler, vehicle, pay for their own gasoline/oil, put up troopers in their own homes.
3. VPSO's live with guns all their lives for personal/subsistence hunting. It is a crime to hire a police officer without any type of firearms protection. VPSO's lose their lives because the State of Alaska say its too risky, cost too much for insurance. Lawyers cannot say we can't handle firearms.
4. Cost of Living is astronomical in villages, everybody knows that, and yet VPSO's are like laborers. Compare their job with an Alaska State Trooper. People wonder why the turnover rate is so high, VPSO are paid pennies compared to an Alaska State Trooper.
5. Life Insurance, Retirement and other wonderful benefits that Troopers enjoy should benefit a VPSO as well.
6. VPSO's has cream of the crop, let them visit other VPSO who may be on verge of burnout to give encouragement and possibly help them do their job for several days.
6. Last but not least, We in villages are American citizens and deserve as much Police, Fire and Water safety protection as an average United States citizen.

Quyana,

Howard T. Amos
(907) 827-8621

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	A	B	C	D
103				
104				
105	Police			
106		Budgeted 2006-2007	Actual from 7/06-05/24/07	Proposed 2007-2008
107	REVENUE			
108	Fines & Penalties	\$3,000.00	\$1,010.00	\$1,000.00
109				
110	TOTAL REVENUES	\$3,000.00	\$1,010.00	\$1,000.00
111				
112	EXPENSES			
113	Wages & Salaries	\$112,840.00	\$90,931.52	\$112,840.00
114	Fringe Benefits	\$17,000.00	\$13,673.27	\$14,669.20
115	Personnel Expense Other	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
116	Workman's Compensation	\$4,125.00	\$6,268.50	\$6,435.90
117	Telephone	\$1,550.00	\$1,187.61	\$1,250.00
118	Office Supplies	\$0.00	\$2,166.19	\$2,000.00
119	Postage & Freight	\$150.00	\$88.65	\$100.00
120	Program Supplies	\$2,500.00	\$573.25	\$700.00
121	Equip Repairs & Maintenance	\$250.00	\$323.43	\$350.00
122	Vehicle Fuel	\$3,000.00	\$2,721.20	\$2,040.00
123	Consultants	\$0.00	\$2,908.82	\$350.00
124	Equipment Purchases	\$800.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
125	Legal	\$750.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
126	Miscellaneous Expense	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
127				
128	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$143,765.00	\$120,842.44	\$141,435.10
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130	Operating Income (Loss)	-\$140,765.00	-\$119,832.44	-\$140,435.10
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Village Police Sast, officers

SUGGESTIONS
AND
IDEAS

June 18, 2007

Captain Steven Arlow
Alaska State Troopers C-Detachment
4500 West 50th Ave.
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Captain Arlow:

On June 08, 2007 at approximately 0200 hours VPSO Roy Jones received a phone call from Joan Squartsoff stating that her house was on fire. When Officer Jones arrived at the Squartsoff residence he observed through a living room window that the interior of the house was engulfed in flames and thick, black, smoke was pouring out of a bedroom window. Unable to immediately locate Ms. Squartsoff, and at great risk to his personal safety, Officer Jones entered the house; low-crawling through the front door and into the living room. Despite his vision being impaired by the smoke, Officer Jones was able to locate Ms. Squartsoff who was lying on a sofa, wrapped in a blanket. Officer Jones grasped Ms. Squartsoff's ankle, pulled her from the couch to the floor, and out through the front door. After briefly assessing Ms. Squartsoff's condition, and finding her to be stable, Officer Jones re-entered the house and searched for other possible victims. Once satisfied that the residence was clear, Officer Jones successfully fought the fire, using several portable extinguishers.

It is clear that VPSO Roy Jones' actions on June 08, 2007 were instrumental in saving the life of Ms. Joan Squartsoff. His concerted firefighting efforts with portable extinguishers prevented the residence from becoming fully engulfed, and substantially reduced the threat of fire to the adjacent dwellings and the community at large. For these selfless acts of courage above and beyond the call of duty, I am recommending that VPSO Jones receive a commendation, and that his current application for promotion to Sergeant be approved without further delay.

Sincerely,
KODIAK AREA NATIVE ASSOCIATION

Valent L. Maxwell
VPSO Coordinator

Comments and Ideas Expressed Regarding VPSOs

In no particular order, but the following were expressed (mostly verbally) with the intention of making known to those on the Task Force. The comment or idea is written as expressed, without verification or comment.

- Comment made by Senator Dyson: Could the VPSOs be part of the National Guard by sharing equipment and facilities?
- Sheldon Jackson College has developed a program with a justice emphasis, at the request of the Sitka Police Chief and others. It is a 2 year program, possible to do in less time. Arliss Sturgelewski has some information to share with the Task Force on this, and when she brings it to Senator Olson's staff, it will go out to you.
- (From Myron Naneng/AVCP):

We have a booklet where we did an inventory of needs for VPSO's here in our region a couple of years ago. Many of the issues still remain and new issues have come up since.

Oversight Troopers need to have cultural awareness training with VPSO's and villages that they work with. They are not missionaries who are to change the way people live in villages and the village structure of community policing needs to be respected by them. Villages also do their own community policing and they need to be supported to reduce any activity that is considered to be criminal, including orders by some villages that have had their Tribal courts outline restrictions for their own tribal members on behalf of their village.

Housing needs is a need that we have to constantly work on with communities. State troopers in hubs have been built apartments that force them out of their own homes to be placed into one location, rather than around the community to help with community policing. One standard that is considered in the urban site is considered different for some hub locations.

VPSO's are placed under strict scrutiny and limits, when even State Troopers have violated a game law are relocated elsewhere, where many of our VPSO's are not able to relocate and have a desk job as some troopers have the luxury of.

These are just some of the issues that we have to work with in villages and region. We would like some consideration of these issues and work to resolve them where our VPSO's can work in harmony with oversight troopers and their community members in having safer communities. Qu yana.



Native Village of Shungnak
P.O. Box 64
Shungnak, Alaska 99773

Phone: (907)437-2163
Fax: (907)437-2183

Fax Transmittal Form

Honorable Mayor Whiting
Honorable Pres. Greene
To: Honorable Pres. Bolan **From** Tickett
Rep. Jule
FAX #: Rep. Olsen

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465-4586✓

442-7827✓

465-4821

265-4123

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Fax: (907)437-2183

URGENT

☐

REPLY

☐

REVIEW

☐

FYI:

☐

DATE SENT: 6-25-07

TIME SENT:

OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER. 2**Message:**

This letter is for the protection, health
and safe well being for our community
our people need to step up and
do something now before something
happens and is too late to help.

Thank you

Crystal Tickett

for Charlene Tickett

Please help us get a VPSO to our village!!

June 21, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in regards to all the alcohol related incidents we have had here in Shungnak. Being a health care provider, I have seen a lot. I am very concerned about people drinking as well as underage drinking. I think that alcohol importation and home brew making in the villages should be stopped.

Shungnak is a dry community. Everyone traveling to Shungnak should have baggage checked. No matter who the person is. Recently a house burned down because of a brew party and a near death incident which involved weapons, also hidden domestic violence. We have our children looking up to us and we should be giving a good example, and by writing this letter of concern to you. I hope to see something done with this ongoing importation and home brew making.

Charlene Tickett
Charlene Tickett
CHP Shungnak

Denise Liccioli

From: Tom Okleasik [okleasik@gci.net]
Sent: Friday, June 08, 2007 11:06 AM
To: Sen. Donny Olson; Rep. Richard Foster; Rep. Reggie Joule; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Albert Kookesh; Kim Elton; Rep. Beth Kerttula
Cc: Mike Coumbe
Subject: Fw: seattletimes.com: Beer-tax increase pitched to pay for more state patrol

Kia ora all,

FYI on a tax in OR - great potential to help fund VPSOs statewide that are so greatly needed particularly with alcohol abuse as the main cause.

Tom Okleasik

> This message was sent to as a service of The Seattle Times
> (<http://www.seattletimes.com>).

> -----
>
> Beer-tax increase pitched to pay for more state patrol Full story:
> http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2003739411_beertax08e.html
> html

> By Brad Cain
> The Associated Press

> SALEM, Ore. -- Several lawmakers formally pitched a nickel-a-bottle increase in Oregon's beer tax Thursday to help pay for more Oregon State Police troopers, but the idea seemed to go flat almost immediately.

> At a news conference, the lawmakers said the Legislature's recent approval of a budget allowing the Oregon State Police to hire 100 more troopers to patrol roads and freeways was a step in the right direction.

> But they said that is 39 troopers short of what's needed to restore around-the-clock coverage on the state's major highways, and far below the trooper numbers of the early 1980s.

> "We're in a crisis in this state, and it's getting worse," Sen. Rod Monroe, D-Portland, said at a news conference with Rep. Sal Esquivel, R-Medford, and Sen. Rick Metsger, D-Welches.

> To create a permanent, dedicated source of money to put more troopers out on the roads, the three lawmakers proposed the nickel-a-bottle beer-tax increase.

> Esquivel said it would reverse the "bipartisan erosion of this organization" over the years.

> However, the idea met with opposition from House Minority Leader Wayne Scott, whose caucus would have to provide at least some Republican votes. Approval would require at least 36 of the 60 House members, and the majority Democrats number just 31.

> Scott said House Republicans are opposing tax increases in general, even if it's for a good cause like putting more troopers on the road.

> "It's a regressive tax. It puts the burden on the wrong people," the Canby lawmaker said, adding that he worries the increase might hurt

> Oregon's microbrew beer industry as well.

>

> On the Democratic side, House Speaker Jeff Merkley said Wednesday that

> while there might be an argument for using a beer tax increase to help

> pay for increased patrols, it's not an issue that's at the top of the

> agenda as the 2007 Legislature enters its final weeks.

>

> "I think there's a lot more conversations about a tobacco-tax increase,"

> Merkley said, referring to the behind-the-scenes talks about boosting

> cigarette taxes to help pay for children's health insurance.

>

> Esquivel said the state needs to act now to protect public safety by

> creating a permanent funding source for state police. The Medford

> lawmaker said he wasn't fazed by Scott's comment that his fellow House

> Republicans won't support a beer-tax increase.

>

> "What's popular isn't always right," he said.

>

> The proposal by Esquivel and the others would put 70 percent of the

> revenue into a special fund that could be tapped only to pay for

> Oregon State Police. The rest would go to cities and counties, which

> could use it for public safety, or alcohol- and drug-treatment programs.

>

> A spokeswoman for Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Anna Richter Taylor, said the

> governor believes lawmakers need to come up with a permanent,

> dedicated funding source for state police, so the agency doesn't have

> to compete with other interests in budget deliberations.

>

> Richter Taylor said that while the governor is glad to see efforts to

> find a dedicated funding source for state police, the beer-tax

> proposal advanced by the lawmakers is lacking because "it doesn't

> specifically dedicate money to alcohol and drug treatment."

>

> Monroe said lawmakers need to raise the beer tax this session, because

> the 100 new trooper positions recently approved by the Legislature

> could be at risk in future tough times.

>

> "Once the economy goes down again, the state police will end up losing,"

> the Portland senator said.

> =====

>

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NEWS
ARTICLES

Denise Liccioli

From: Allison Biastock
Sent: Thursday, September 27, 2007 1:36 PM
To: Denise Liccioli
Subject: for the record

Hi Denise, the Senator asked that this section from the "Trooper Beat" section of the Sept 27th Nome Nugget newspaper be included as part of the official record.

"On September 14th, Nome Alaska Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Enforcement completed an investigation and filed charges in Nome District Court on a family alcohol importation operation in Gambell. Martha Thomas, 35, of Nome, was sending three (3) of her underage children on numerous alcohol importation trips to Gambell, between August 2006 and March 2007. Investigation revealed that her sister, Susan Aningayou, 20, of Nome, was also importing alcohol on numerous occasions during the same time period and also selling alcohol in Gambell, with their father, Reginald Aningayou, 59, of Gambell. Martha Thomas and Susan Aningayou's brother, Brian Aningayou, 32, of Gambell, was receiving all of Thomas' children's imported alcohol and selling it in Gambell. The investigation revealed that over 140 – 50ml bottles of alcohol were transported, bartered or sold for \$250.00 each in Gambell, during this time frame. Gambell is a local option community that voted to ban the importation and sale of alcohol, effective 9/1/81. The following charges were filed in the Nome District Court; Martha Thomas, License or Permit Required, 12 counts, Alcohol Importation, 12 counts and Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor, 13 counts. Susan Aningayou, License or Permit Required, nine (9) counts, Alcohol Importation, nine (9) counts and Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor, one (1) count. Brian Aningayou, License or Permit Required, 15 counts, Alcohol Importation, 15 counts, and Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor, 13 counts. Reginald Aningayou, License or Permit Required, nine (9) counts, Alcohol Importation, nine (9) counts. The case was submitted to the Nome Juvenile Intake and Nome DAO."

Thanks! Sounds like the trip went well!

Allison Biastock
Office of Senator Hollis French
Anchorage 907 269 0234
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10/1/2007

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Rural policing gets hard look

KOTZEBUE: Kinship, lack of resources are challenges.

By TAMAR BEN-YOSEF
The Arctic Sounder

(Published: September 4, 2007)

BARROW -- When the Northwest Arctic Borough, along with the state Department of Public Safety, scheduled a law enforcement conference in Kotzebue, it had no idea what to expect.

Neither did the Alaska State Troopers, who to an extent expected to arrive and temporarily serve as the community's punching bag for complaints and allegations.

But that was about as far from the truth as anyone could have predicted.

People who came to the conference last month at the National Guard Armory in Kotzebue meant business. And they were fully ready to work with the troopers to get it done.

They even came bearing awards of recognition and a song of prayer for those who work hard to protect their lives.

The Northwest Arctic Region struggles daily with some of the highest rates in Alaska for suicide and alcoholism, which inevitably leads to high rates of criminal charges for domestic violence and assault.

Fed up with the endless cycles of violence and the inability to control it, the region's leaders, law enforcement officials, Village Public Safety Officers program operators and interested residents worked for solutions.

The problems were evident from the welcoming remarks of borough Mayor Sikauraq Martha Whiting.

Currently, only one state trooper is assigned to the entire region, with one more arriving next month. Of 10 villages in the borough's jurisdiction, only two have VPSOs -- one for both Shungnak and Kobuk and another for Selawik.

With low pay, limited housing and often awkward family connections to the offenders, the VPSO job generally is not a sought-after position.

And even if there were to be VPSOs in every village, most do not have adequate holding cells, halfway homes or the personnel available to supervise anyone until troopers arrive.

For instance, when juveniles or inebriates are to be watched or removed from homes, the hospital or jail becomes the detox or holding facility. For lack of better facilities and staff, those individuals often are treated much like criminals instead of people who would benefit from counseling.

With commitments to fight the war on drugs and alcohol, borough residents now appear ready to take matters into their own hands.

"We need to take ownership of the plans," said Walter Sampson, president of the Leaders Assembly in Kotzebue. "That way if we make a mistake we can look at our plan and see what we did wrong."

Among the speakers and presenters were state Sen. Donald Olson, D-Nome, and state Rep. Reggie Joule, himself a resident of Kotzebue. Both joined Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan for an afternoon live interview on KOTZ radio with Suzie Erlich.

The three spoke of their vision for the region with regard to law enforcement and more specifically, the VPSO program.

Monegan said he strongly supports the VPSO program but was not pleased with its tendency to ebb and flow. His vision includes making the VPSOs state employees.

"I would like to codify the program and make it so that it is a permanent part of the public safety horizon," Monegan said.

Putting VPSOs all across the state, in the communities, is something long overdue, he said.

IMPROVING CULTURAL AWARENESS

They also commented on previous frictions between the community and the local troopers and the necessity for cultural cross-training and orientation for law enforcement personnel stationed in the villages.

"It would be beneficial for the community to form an elders' advisory group, so that when a new trooper comes in, the group would meet him and they could give the cultural orientation, and then the trooper would fly out to the villages and do a meet and greet, see what the town is about," Monegan said.

Leaving the conference with pages of suggestions on possible solutions, improvements and goals, residents remain aware of the work ahead for all those involved.

Most knew the conference was just the beginning.

But all seemed to agree, according to voiced opinions, that it was a beginning in the right direction.

And that, many said, already is better than what was there before.

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Denise Liccioli

From: Ginny Austerman
Sent: Thursday, August 30, 2007 12:56 PM
To: Denise Morris
Cc: Denise Liccioli
Subject: RE: Emailing: Alaska Newspapers, Inc.

Thank you, Denise. I'm forwarding this on to Sen. Olson's staff person, Denise Liccioli. Denise is the Committee Aide for the VPSO Task Force. I'm sure she will appreciate the coverage.

From: Denise Morris [mailto:DMorris@anjc.net]
Sent: Thursday, August 30, 2007 12:49 PM
To: Ginny Austerman
Subject: FW: Emailing: Alaska Newspapers, Inc.

This may be helpful as well.

Denise Morris
President/CEO
Alaska Native Justice Center
3600 San Jeronimo Drive, Suite 264
Anchorage, AK 99508
907-793-3550 phone
907-793-3570 fax

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Northwest Arctic residents, leaders rally to end violence

Law enforcement meeting develops "new beginnings"

TAMAR BEN-YOSEF
tbenyosef@alaskanewspapers.com

When the Northwest Arctic Borough initiated, along with the state Department of Public Safety, a law enforcement conference in the Kotzebue they had no idea what to expect.

Neither did the Alaska State Troopers, who somewhat expected to arrive and temporarily serve as the community's punching bag for complaints and allegations.

But that was about as far from the truth as anyone could have predicted. People who came to the Aug. 15-16 conference at the National Guard Armory in Kotzebue meant business. And they were fully ready to work with the troopers to get it done.

They even came bearing awards of recognition and a song of prayer for those who work hard to protect their lives.

The Northwest Arctic Region struggles daily with some of the highest rates in Alaska for suicide and alcoholism, which inevitably leads to high rates of criminal charges for domestic violence and assault.

On the surface, the scenic region surrounded by a rich sea and a busy subsistence lifestyle is a calm and neighborly community - home to families connected to each other with ties deeper than the ocean's floor.

Yet underneath there are challenges that leave these quiet-spoken people seemingly helpless in the face of these modern-day truths.

Fed up with the endless cycles of violence and the inability to control it, the region's leaders, law enforcement officials, Village Public Safety Officers program operators and interested residents worked for solutions.

The problems were evident from the first welcoming remarks of borough Mayor Sikauraq Martha Whiting.

Currently, only one state trooper is assigned to the entire region, with one more arriving next month. Of 10 villages in the borough's jurisdiction, only two have VPSOs - one for both Shungnak and Kobuk and another for Selawik.

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The three spoke of their vision for the region with regard to law enforcement and more specifically the VPSO program. They also commented on previous contention between the community and the local troopers and the necessity for cultural cross training and orientation for law enforcement personnel stationed in the villages.

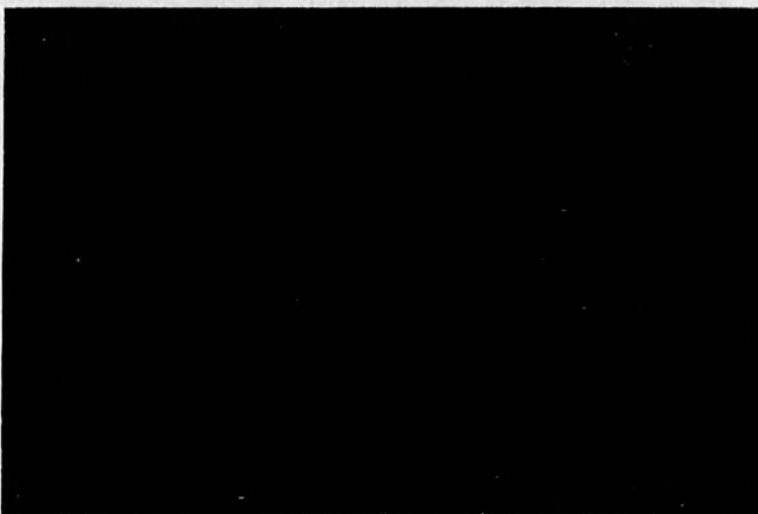
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Tamar Ben-Yosef/Alaska Newspapers

Alaska state Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan, state Sen. Donny Olson and state Rep. Reggie Joule speak about the future of rural law enforcement at a KOTZ Radio show in Kotzebue, Aug. 15.



Tamar Ben-Yosef/Alaska Newspapers

Alaska state Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan hands an award of recognition to Shungnak and Kobuk's village public safety officer. Otis Rolls, as Miss Arctic Circle, presents the framed Native Art award.

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Policing the Bush (April 19, 2005)

State Supreme Court makes right call in discrimination case

(Published: July 28, 2007)

When a drunk or angry resident in a small Alaska village goes on a rampage, it is a terrifying experience for the entire community. Residents have to hunker down and defend themselves while they wait for state troopers to fly in. Response time is measured in hours, not minutes. Bad weather can delay the trooper response even longer. The village may have a local public safety officer, but VPSOs are not trained to step into a violent situation.

This hybrid system of law enforcement -- a local safety officer with trooper backup -- isn't ideal. Some Bush communities would like more protection using highly trained troopers. They and some Native interests charged that the hybrid policing system reflected illegal discrimination against Alaska Natives, not the realities of life in the Bush, which include tough choices driven by limited resources.

Friday's ruling from the Alaska Supreme Court gave the right answer to those claims. The state's way of supplying police protection in the Bush is not discriminatory. It is a practical response to the difficulties of policing a vast, dispersed array of communities.

Yes, almost all the affected, arguably underserved communities are Alaska Native. But that is a coincidence of culture and geography, not proof of discrimination.

This case isn't like the separate-and-unequal school systems that were deliberately created by Southern states in the segregation era. Those states made no secret that they were delivering second-class services to what they considered second-class citizens.

In cases like that, it takes pressure from an independent judiciary to get legislators and governors to do the right thing. With law enforcement in the Bush, the driving force is a legitimate question of how best to use limited resources.

It's true, those limited resources make it easier for the Legislature and governor to shrug off the state's responsibilities and stint on the money for Bush law enforcement. And the increasingly urban-dominated Alaska Legislature is becoming less and less attuned to the needs of Alaska's predominantly Native Bush.

Unfortunately for rural Alaska, it has suffered a drastic erosion of political power since Alaska's oil boom began. Three reapportionments have shifted legislative seats from the Bush into faster-growing urban areas. Gone are the days when Bush political titans like Sens. John Sackett and Frank Ferguson or Rep. Al Adams controlled a Finance Committee. They played like a mini-Ted Stevens, steering abundant government cash to their constituents' needs.

With rural Native political power waning, it's understandable that some might turn to the courts for help. But the judiciary is reluctant to second-guess government spending priorities unless some law or constitutional standard is clearly violated. That wasn't the case here.

In a world of unlimited resources, Alaska could no doubt deliver much better law enforcement in rural Alaska. More troopers would help. Alaska's network of village public safety officers could be expanded. Their training could be better. Their pay could be improved.

Like many important public services these days, rural law enforcement is probably underfunded. That situation may be unwise and inequitable, but the Alaska Supreme Court is correct: It is not illegal.

BOTTOM LINE: Law enforcement in the Bush may be underfunded, but it is not because of illegal discrimination against Alaska Natives.

Ethics law

Quit the partisan stalling

Republican Attorney General Gregg Renkes got out of office without getting sanctioned under the state's executive branch ethics law. The ethical standards in the law are not terribly specific, and the lawyer that his fellow Republican Gov. Frank Murkowski hired to review the case gave Mr. Renkes the benefit of the legal doubt.

Come to find out, the lawyer for the state personnel board would not have been so kind to the departed Mr. Renkes. The board's independent attorney concluded that Mr. Renkes' investment of at least \$70,000 in a company whose interests he was promoting was in fact "significant." That commonsense finding would have triggered the public interest protections of the state ethics law.

Both lawyers who looked at Mr. Renkes' case agreed on an important recommendation for the future. They said the standards in the state ethics law should be more specific. Instead of using vague terminology like "significant interest," the law should set a bright line test for when the state's ethical protections kick in.

Setting that line should not be a partisan issue, but it's being treated like one. This case arises from a controversy inside Republican ranks, so nobody from the Legislature's Republican majority has stepped forward to fix this obvious problem. Nor has the governor offered lawmakers a proposed bill of his own.

Democratic lawmakers, in the minority and out of power, have jumped into the breach. Republican inaction has left them plenty of room to score partisan points by standing up for a stronger ethics law. Republican lawmakers have ignored the Democrats' bill.

That kind of knee-jerk, partisan stalling is a disservice to Alaskans. The governor's lawyer, Bob Bundy, offered lawmakers a detailed proposal for a tight, but not suffocating, ethical standard. Before the Legislature adjourns in May, Republicans should join ranks with Democrats to pass Mr. Bundy's recommendation or something very close to it.

BOTTOM LINE: The Legislature shouldn't go home next month without tightening up the state's executive ethics law.

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Forum highlights shortage of rural police, judicial service (October 4, 2004)

The Associated Press

(Published: July 28, 2007)

ANCHORAGE (AP) - Rural villages lack adequate police and judicial service, according to speakers at a forum organized by the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council.

Village residents said police are underfunded, inadequately trained and sometimes culturally insensitive.

Dozens of speakers called for more officers, stronger support of tribal courts and quicker response from Alaska State Troopers when major crimes occur.

"We're no different than the urban areas, said Sharon Clark of Clark's Point, a Bristol Bay village of about 66. "We deserve justice in our smaller communities."

Panelists, including most members of the newly formed Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission, also heard some successes, highlights and advice for improvement during the meeting Wednesday.

But a common theme among about three dozen rural residents who testified at the summit, sponsored by the Alaska Federation of Natives and Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, was the need to beef up the village public safety officer program. In many communities, the VPSO acts as a deterrent to crime.

The state has never funded the program well enough to put an officer in every village. There are currently about 65.

As a health aide visiting villages near Nome, Jenny Lee said, the presence of a VPSO has made her job easier by making villages safer and more stable. Many who testified said the state should fully fund the program and hire officers in every community.

Several VPSOs said they are on the job 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which contributes to the community's well-being. Dan Harrelson of White Mountain said he also teaches boating safety and enforces helmet laws, resulting in fewer accidental injuries. Enforcing curfew can improve student test scores, he said.

Others said that in villages with no officer, small crimes such as vandalism and truancy increase. Abused wives may have no one to turn to for protection. School counselors and village officials might have to respond to suicides or sexual assaults, speakers said.

The new commission, which U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens created last January, has been asked to consider new ways of improving rural law enforcement and justice, including laws and forms of government.

State officials have said, however, that funding increases are unlikely.

The state's rural law enforcement program relies on troopers posted in hub communities such as Bethel and Dillingham to respond to serious crimes. Many complained that trooper response often is slowed by the troopers' stretched resources, weather or what some rural residents view as indifference.

The rural justice commission holds its first official meeting this week, at which it will set out a plan for the coming year, said federal co-chairman and U.S. Attorney Tim Burgess.

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Plea for funding VPSO program preceded officer's suicide

The Tundra Drums

(Published: July 28, 2007)

APRIL 24, 2005 -- *EDITOR'S NOTE: Simeon Askoak, a longtime Village Public Safety Officer in Russian Mission, delivered these remarks to the rural justice commission in Bethel on April 6. Two days later, he committed suicide.*

My name is Simeon Askoak, and I'm the VPSO in Russian Mission. I've been the Village Public Safety Officer in Russian Mission for 13 years now and of my 13 years that I've been a VPSO, we've been struggling every year to get our VPSO funding from the state to be continued on to another new year.

VPSO funding is very limited. Our fiscal year '05 operating budget from the state was not approved until November '04 of last year, and the program was about to be closed, shut down, until fiscal year 2005 and was finally approved by the governor.

At this time the village of Russian Mission, the City Council of Russian Mission, has no funding. The small communities like the Village of Russian Mission are broke right now and because of that, starting in the month of November of 2004, I began purchasing my own heating fuel for the public safety office, fuel for the vehicle that I use. Also, I pay for the fax and phone bill that I use.

I'm still paying for all these expenses. I pay for certified mail of my reports to the Alaska State Troopers, to the district attorneys, out of my own pocket.

When I was asked why I was doing that, I told them that the city government can no longer afford to pay for these expenses. And, last month sometime, on the 23rd of March, I could no longer afford to pay for those expenses, so the city and the police department ran out of heating fuel. The water line froze and then the water utilities company came by and said, "We're shutting down your water and sewer because you haven't been paying for them in the last few months."

And that's my dilemma at this time.

We need adequate, full funding for the VPSO program and we need to have it guaranteed that we'll always get the funding yearly from the state.

We're constantly facing this dilemma that the VPSO program will no longer be here. Last year we were almost shut down, and the VPSO fiscal year contract was extended through September 2005 of this year. And after 2005 I do not know what is going to be happening.

The VPSO program's motto is, "First Responders; Last Frontier." We are the first responders, we are the only law enforcement out in most of the villages that we have and there are only 24 VPSO positions funded at this time by the state.

In the rural communities, we are the only law enforcement agencies available. We enforce state laws, for instance drug and alcohol importation cases. We secure and investigate burglaries.

Sometime last month, in the course of two days, I did the same exact thing when our store was burglarized in the village.

What I did was, I secured the scene, I gathered evidence and I investigated, until I found the suspect. This is called doing the "legwork" for the state troopers.

And that "legwork" that I do and other VPSOs do, that is the backbone of the investigation. Without that, without that crucial intervention in the first few hours of the investigation, all the evidence would be destroyed and there would not be, we would not be able to apprehend the perpetrator later on.

We have been constantly seeking to obtain our basic police certification from the Alaska Police Standards Council for years, but we still haven't obtained that. I know we are unarmed. We still respond to "gun" calls, we still conduct "legwork investigations," for the troopers, and why haven't we been certified, even the basic police certifications?

Also, when a veteran VPSO retires, he has to go out and find another job in order to continue supporting his family. We are not in the state retirement system. The PERS (Public Employee Retirement System), we are not receiving that. If we do have to, we will have to buy into the PERS program, we would have to buy so many years and it's expensive to get it started.

And we'd buy that out of our own pockets.

The Russian Mission Public Safety Police Department has been closed as of March 23, 2005. That's due to lack of funding for heating fuel, water and sewer. The water and sewer bill has not been paid, and also I'm afraid that the light and power will be shut down pretty soon. The idea of fund raising to help the Russian Mission Public Safety came up, and I think this is pathetic to our program. It's degrading me as a VPSO. There should always be funding available from somewhere, like from the state, to keep it going.

And we just don't have the options or any other source of funding right now for the village of Russian Mission.

Simeon Askoak's Bethel speech was transcribed by The Tundra Drums.

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VPSOs walk a fine line in villages

By ALEX deMARBAN

ademarban@adn.com

(Published: July 28, 2007)

Evan Wonhola faced the harsh reality of being a village public safety officer early one morning, when a man in New Stuyahok threatened to kill his family.

The man's wife crawled on the floor of the house, crying, "What are we going to do?"

Rural justice, and finding ways to improve it, was one of several Native issues that delegates discussed at the 41st annual Alaska Federation of Natives convention in Anchorage on Thursday.

After the usual round of speeches from politicians, an estimated 3,000 delegates attended seven work sessions with the goal of solving such problems as global warming, costly energy and subsistence rights.

In one session, members of the Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission, created by Congress in 2004, heard disturbing stories from villagers and local safety officers about the lack of village law enforcement.

That commission traveled around the state, gathering stories about rural justice and presenting recommendations in a draft report released last year. The final report is about to be released, members said.

The state Department of Public Safety has addressed some of the concerns, such as recently adding several new village public safety officer positions, Bill Tandeske, commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, said by phone Thursday evening.

There is now funding for 80 village officers, who augment troopers in rural Alaska. But only 49 of those positions are filled.

The VPSO program reached its peak in the 1980s with 124 officers, according to a media report. There were 65 officers in 2004.

A handful of village officers who spoke at Thursday's meeting said VPSO numbers are falling because officers are underpaid, overworked and stressed out. The possibility of enforcing laws in small villages against cousins and aunts discourages prospects and working lonely hours with little support doesn't help, they said.

They told stories about officers who use their own snowmachines to transport suspects and about officers' houses becoming holding cells. Village officers, who may not carry guns, sometimes spend days waiting for troopers to arrive to deal with dangerous criminals, they said. Some said support has worsened since the state cut general funding to villages, cutting off money that once helped pay for their equipment or gasoline.

David Charles, a village public safety officer in Akiachak, said he pays for his own gas and works overtime unpaid. VPSOs quit, he said, because of the tough treatment they sometimes face from other villagers.

"Some days it's miserable for a VPSO," he said. "Some days you sit in your office and start crying."

Pay has improved, said Loretta Bullard, president of Nome-based Kawerak, a Native regional nonprofit serving the Bering Strait region, from about \$11 an hour a few years ago to about \$19 today. The Department of Public Safety has also increased funding, Tandeske said.

It spent \$422,000 18 months ago, buying four-wheelers and other vehicles for every village public safety officer who asked, he said. Many of the complaints are outdated stories, he said.

"Some say there's not enough money, so you raise salaries," he said. "We instituted a retention bonus. People say they're paying for their own vehicles. I just don't buy it."

Dealing with other issues, such as housing of village officers, is a legislative issue, he said.

That's where Sen. Ralph Seekins, R-Fairbanks, may come in. Head of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Seekins created a six-person legislative task force on VPSOs this year that will travel across the state listening to villagers. It's due to make a report to the Legislature in January.

Seekins owns a Ford dealership and frequently travels to Northern Alaska villages with mechanics to fix vehicles.

"The stress is terrible," he said. "There's no trauma counselor. What do you do if you have to wipe blood off the walls after a murder? How do you handle that?"

Daily News reporter Alex deMarban can be reached at ademarban@adn.com.

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Tough job in the Bush

Help wanted: village police

(Published: July 28, 2007)

Alaska is having a rough time recruiting Village Public Safety Officers. Little wonder, when you consider the conditions:

Remote villages, family ties that can trump the law, unforgiving wilderness at the doorstep, high rates of alcohol abuse with all the violence and misery it causes, Alaskastate troopers sometimes a day or more away.

Think of Anchorage patrolled only by unarmed officers.

Think of trying to be the law in a small village where you're the outsider.

Think of how many people you know who could handle police work, diplomacy, firefighting, safety education, search and rescue, snowmachine mechanics and the right response to both perpetrator and victim of a violent crime, both of whom may be relatives.

What's amazing isn't that the state struggles to fill the ranks or the high turnover rate (40 percent, according to an Alaska Justice Center study published in 2000). What's amazing is the degree of success. Right now 48 of 51 positions are filled in Alaska villages. But as Maj. John Glick, deputy director of the Department of Public Safety, pointed out, that can change any time.

The state's 2008 capital budget includes two hopeful appropriations from federal funds. It has \$2 million to train and equip VPSOs and another \$2 million for VPSOs to fight bootlegging.

The key word, though, is "hopeful."

A lot has to happen before Bush residents will see more law enforcement.

In passing the state budget, Alaska lawmakers merely agreed to accept federal money that hasn't arrived yet. Ted Stevens is working on the \$2 million for training and equipment. Alaska has to fill those last three state-funded VPSO slots before it can qualify for the other \$2 million of federal money to fight bootlegging. With the federal money, the state could afford 80 VPSOs.

If the state could find them. That, as Maj. Glick said, is the "crux of the problem."

The problem is getting some attention.

Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan will go to Kotzebue next month to discuss improving the VPSO program. Among his ideas: creating uniform standards and a career advancement track for



It's hard to be a cop in a small town, especially one you grew up in, said Alvin Brown, with son Wallace, 4, and daughter Alexis, 10, mid-June in Mountain Village. Brown, currently the Village Public Safety Officer, has worked in law enforcement 18 years.
(ERIK HILL / Anchorage Daily News)

all three types of Bush law enforcement officers. It would allow VPSOs, tribal police officers and village police officers hired by local communities a way to upgrade their skills and eventually earn full trooper or police status.

State Sen. Donnie Olson will chair a VPSO task force, which will hold fact-finding meetings in Western Alaska and Kodiak this fall.

For all the difficulties -- or maybe because of all the difficulties -- the state's VPSO program needs state, federal and community support. When the program works, it puts respected, trusted officers on the ground in Alaska villages, officers who know the people and are comfortable in the culture. They can respond to emergencies -- or, better, prevent them.

Two years ago, some rural advocates lost a lawsuit that tried to force the state to put more troopers into small Bush communities. The suit contended VPSOs were a second-class, discriminatory substitute for real police officers.

The courts said it was not their job to second-guess the type or level of public safety protection.

However, the suit did make a good case for better law enforcement in the Bush. The \$4 million for VPSOs could go a long way to help.

BOTTOM LINE: VPSO program needs support and reorganization -- but, most of all, a steady stream of good recruits.

Who's up? Who's Down?

EVEN Lisa Murkowski: Gives up her sweet deal with Bob Penney for Kenai riverfront property, but still insists she paid the going price. S-u-r-e. Bob didn't get rich by cutting ordinary suckers a break like that.

DOWN Don Young: Prostate surgery goes well, but feds start looking into criminal charges. He may get bit by a mink that's wearing a lawman's badge.

DOWN Ted Stevens: Offers hair-splitting defense of Veco help on Girdwood house: We paid all the bills we got. Unanswered question: Did Bill Allen hold on to some?

UP Alaska seniors: The check is on its way. Gov. Sarah signs senior benefits bill, after she had to call the Legislature into a special session to pass it. Take that, John Coghill.

DOWN Conoco Phillips: Second-quarter profits plunge because it won't play ball with strongman Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. Alaska's tax regime looks pretty good in comparison.

EVEN Marc Marlow: Well-connected developer seeks Anchorage tax break for another long-shot rehab project downtown. Maybe he can hire Vic Kohring again to help him get it.

UP Alaska National Guard: Most popular governor in the country visits unit in Kuwait. Former Miss Wasilla delivers a real morale boost.

EVEN Mat-Su: Valley crackdown makes headway against meth labs, but heroin use spikes upward. Pick your poison.

DOWN Alaska dieters: Even one diet soda a day is bad for you. Arghhh! Pass the spring water, please.

DOWN Reona Kobayashi: Japanese student gets robbed three different times during summer visit to Mat-Su. Three strikes like that, and we'd be outta there.

EVEN Maggie: Controversial local elephant still in the headlines, still in Anchorage. Isn't her 15 minutes of fame up yet?

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Small-town cop: Keeping the peace in Mountain Village

By JOEL GAY

Anchorage Daily News

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AUG. 2, 2005 -- Alvin Brown hates calls early in the morning. As the village public safety officer in one of the biggest villages in Western Alaska and an 18-year veteran of rural law enforcement, he knows that early calls typically mean bad news -- assaults, rapes, fights and accidents, often alcohol-induced and usually difficult.

He has been slugged, kicked, shot and hit in the head with an ax so hard it still hurts.

But one call stands out that ended better. No one was injured, Brown tracked down \$55,000 in stolen cash and he got a public commendation from a personal hero.

It wasn't a typical experience for a village cop, but then again, Brown, who weighs 305 pounds, cuts his hair in a high flat-top and wears owlsh glasses, doesn't seem like a typical cop.

Around 3 one August morning in 1999, Brown was watching a video at the home he shared with his parents and children when his VHF radio picked up a short, mysterious call.

"Store," a voice said.

Brown, a native of Mountain Village, knew the voice. It was the village police officer on duty that night, but whose radio battery was almost dead.

"There was just enough power to say one word. Then he'd turn it off, and turn it on again and say another word," Brown recalled recently while sitting in his cramped office in the Mountain Village City Hall. "Which store," Brown asked back. "Yup'ik," came the reply. Officer Brown was on it.

The other cop had found the Yup'ik Store's lock broken, its back door open and the safe missing. Together the two officers found fresh shoe prints and ATV tracks nearby. Brown quickly recognized a clue that an urban detective might not, and took photos of the tire tracks.

"These tracks were not like any other ATV," he said. "These tires were a different tread," and at first light the two Bush detectives traced the machine six miles out of town. The tracks suggested the perpetrators had gone into the brush, so Brown and his partner followed.

Stumbling around in brown bear country at 6 a.m. was spooky. "All we had was OC (pepper) spray, batons and handcuffs," Brown said. "We were just about to give up when we found the safe." Empty.

But it was enough to get a search warrant and keep looking, he said. The officers then went door to door in the village. They soon found their ATV outside a home, along with shoe prints matching those at the store.

The juvenile driver admitted his involvement, which led the officers to another suspect's home. Behind the second house, they saw a section of tundra that appeared disturbed. Suspicious, they dug and dug and dug, without success, Brown said. All the while, their suspect smiled cockily, he said.

"Then we tried one more time," and struck pay dirt -- a black plastic bag with neatly wrapped stacks of bills inside, Brown said. "The guy's face dropped," he said.

In two days, Brown and his partner found the \$52,000 lost in the store robbery, plus another \$3,000 they believed was stolen but weren't sure from where. The store got back its money. The state kept the three grand, Brown said.

The big payoff for Brown came later, when he received what he considered the ultimate compliment. Col. Glenn Godfrey, the first Alaska Native to command the Alaska State Troopers and who later went on to become the commissioner of public safety, asked to meet Brown at a village police graduation ceremony in Kotzebue.

"He walked right towards me," trailing a small crowd of curious officers, Brown recalled. "He shook my hand and thanked us for our investigation. And during graduation, he told everyone about it." Brown named his son Wallace Glenn Brown after his law enforcement hero, he said. Godfrey's official commendation still hangs on his office wall, along with maps, drawings by his son and daughter and a photo of his graduation from the troopers academy, which provides the required training for VPSOs.

Such are the rewards of a law enforcement career in rural Alaska. In 18 years, he worked for either the Mountain Village tribe, the city or the agency that administers the VPSO program on the lower Yukon. For several of those years, he drove a taxi during days and was an officer at night.

"I was young back then," said Brown, now 39. He isn't in law enforcement for the money. He earns \$17.63 an hour, plus a bonus for acting as probation officer for Mountain Village's 17 convicted felons.

He doesn't do it to carry a gun. VPSOs aren't allowed to anywhere in the state, even though they occasionally face down people with firearms. Brown was unarmed when he got shot one New Year's Eve. A drunk who had been shooting into the air lowered his rifle, then accidentally fired a .223-caliber bullet that ricocheted off the frozen ground and hit Brown in the thigh. It's still there and sets off airport security every time, he said.

He isn't a cop because of the family prestige. He's arrested brothers, sisters, cousins and other relatives for bootlegging, domestic violence and assault. Until he got his own home, his parents cringed whenever the phone rang early.

"They worry that I may not be coming back," he said. Brown is a cop because he likes it, he's good at it and because Mountain Village needs it, he said.

"I know how these people are, and they know how I am," he said. "Even the alcohol and drug dealers respect me, because I treat everyone with respect."

It's hard to be a cop in a small town, especially one you grew up in, Brown said.

"It doesn't bother me at work. But when I go home, it hits me, 'What's Dad going to think' " when his son arrests a relative or friend? "It turns out he's thanking me for arresting the guy."

Job satisfaction comes in small doses too, he said. After troopers in Bethel acted on a tip he had

passed on, they prevented a shipment of booze from reaching Mountain Village during the school's graduation in late May.

"This was the first time in the history of high school graduation here we got no calls on alcohol," Brown said. Usually they start coming in at 3 or 4 in the morning.

He brightened up while telling about a marijuana sale gone bad. Village sources told him someone had come to Mountain Village with \$500 to spend on pot. A runner took the stranger's money and said he would return in five minutes with the dope, "but he never came back," Brown said, smiling.

Another time, a Mountain Village bootlegger came back from the Last Chance liquor store near Nulato with 10 cases of booze, which he hid several miles outside of town. With a bottle selling for \$120 to \$150, it's easy money, Brown said.

But this bootlegger made a strategic error: he told one of his runners where he hid the liquor. By the time he checked his stash, it was gone, Brown said.

As VPSO, Brown is usually involved in fire calls, emergency medical work and search and rescue. One of his scariest days, he said, was when a snowmachine driver got stuck in the Yukon River slush one spring. Brown heaved a grappling hook with all his might and landed it perfectly on the machine's ski. He pulled the man to safety.

Brown would like to spend another 15 years in law enforcement, he said, then possibly be a magistrate.

He may not make it after an episode in May. Brown and another officer responded to an early morning domestic violence call. According to charges filed later, a man whacked Brown in the temple with the back of a single-bit ax.

Brown had fierce headaches for weeks, and when we passed through the village earlier this summer he still suffered memory loss and daily headaches, he said. His knee jumped steadily the whole time he spoke. "It's pretty tough on me," he said.

Though he returned to work, the longtime cop said he was throttling back a bit.

"I'm starting to learn more about taking time off from work," he said. "It helps a lot."

As we spoke, Brown had a steady stream of calls, including several about a dispute at someone's house. Finally he excused himself, saying he had business. He put on his brown VPSO hat, climbed on his four-wheeler and drove off to keep the peace in Mountain Village.

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IN-DEPTH COMMUNITY RESEARCH REGARDING PUBLIC SAFETY IN RURAL ALASKA

April 2005

Prepared for

Alaska Federation of Natives

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