

AK LEGISLATURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE FILES SCOMM 157 3367

nothing law enf. in Elim. People call troopers
+ they respond out of Nome.

Community policing classes perhaps to engage
the community to become responsible like
they are for searches.

(6) 10:49 SK. AK back
10:53 former VPSO when pgm got started
Serving in one's own village is very, very difficult
~~Rep~~ Was excited + expected to serve long time
but after arresting friends + family, it paled
difficulties same on fast, so out quickly
w/ VPSO Kids go home early - no bike riding etc
until well hours. Now it's all back

Did not want to move from the village

11/

11/5/07 VPSO Task Force with VPSOs
Biggest turnout
Close to 25

12:50-12:55

Eric Osborne

- ① Wife moved to White Mtn work for Maniag?
Friendships come first like the old west.
Son hit by car, hit and run?

VPSOs asked to preserve evidence but at trial was
very different
Concerned about drugs
Wife no longer has job

② 12:55 Jim Knapke

2:00 VPSO Pgm Mgr Tanana Chiefs conf. (43 villages)
attended law enf conf Kotz

heard comment re

"VPSO pgm less than successful"

respectfully disagree

W/ VPSO (Smallest + 150
largest + 370 +
5 funded positions)

deal w myriad of problems not just law enf.
Want more VPSOs in their villages
Communities like to keep track of their VPSO - valuable
to them

Pgm is successful many thankful for them
see it continue

Reg. non-p to manage

entry level adequate as hourly rate
but need add'l support - housing, fuel & others

prefer to be in employment of the non-profit
affords them latitude
Cultural - use tribal courts, circle? sentencing

1:06 Charles Hartful Hartzell Angoon
 (3) 1:12 used to have FT police - lost funding went to VPSO
 Constantly getting Thanks from parents &
 Community member, even some he has
 arrested.

in Angoon VPSO is an asset.
 are needed asset in all rural communities
 have volunteers EMS, volunteer fireman
 oversight comes from Juneau

Was from outside, was initially very trying
 to fit in. Were not friendly, were suspicious
 need to earn their trust - took nearly full year

(4)

1:12
1:16

~~Mark Hagen?~~
 Kim Hushaway Hadlik Huslia
 VPSO 6 years

close ties to NP, elders, oversight = ^{reason for my} success

fine equip ready, medevac, law enf - alcohol & drugs
 Suicide prevention

very successful program

can only be as good as the community
 wants them to be

Supports Lien

Jim Paulick

- 1:17 Donald West - Kawerau Shishmanuf ?
 ④ 1:19 in schools, teach safety classes
 good rapport w/ his troopers
 gets respect

- 1:18 Hutz O'Malley Thorne Bay
 1:31 limited in what they can & can't do
 ⑥ Training is not adequate, lacking certain areas
 increasingly open culture, evolving
 worked for AVCP & KANA - has seen difference
 Non P can have w/ their l.e.'s. and has seen
 The difference the Coordinator can make.

has gotten stagnant
 needs of rural AK are changing but program is not.
 becoming more law enf. focus

- 1:32 Michael 'Leo ...' St George Island
 1:34 been there a year Pop 110-115 now 95-100
 quite a bit of trng firefighting, ETT, etc Tourists
 ⑦ 2 arrests DUI and burglary Thistle plots
 long distance down 14-18 days at a time
 Sat phones - Clinic has & sometimes borrow, but unreliable
 Know-zee likeow!

- 1:35 Richard Kraus (~~Kras-ee~~) Aleutian Pribilof
 1:40 relationship between non profit & DPS
 would like to see strengthened
 ⑧ becoming state EE - not in favor of it nor are the
 VPSOs he's talked to

- ② ~~Mark~~ (Bow-caj)
 1:40 Tim Beauchase Eagle
 1:45

1:45 Evan Wongola (Woosteryuk)
1:48 Bristol Bay, Troopers, City

(10)

1:49 Roy Jones - Larsen Bay w/KANA
1:58 & yrs VPSO

① became one - grew up in village, saw difficulties
when they came into village
wanted to be proactive not so arrest but to
stop the routine of what was causing problem

likes idea being under corporation
if state ce - is there funding will we still get paid?
if so, why not just give to corp?

gets total coop fm KANA, always behind him
good Supt fm Troopers.

tough living in the village, have to deal
with every day problems

give him office, pay for his fuel for office & car

1:58
2:07

Dan Becker fm EKmar: BBC
or Becker

② since 1990
have too many bosses and are get confused who's doing
what

if state took over, would take out politics but then
would have new set of rules to deal with & may
not be capable

Sheaded beast - City Councilman could be mad at
someone & create problems. no coin

non-p if given the tools would be able to do the better job

need better working relationship between non profits & DPS.

World like cola ; choose to live in rural AK, is my choice

tiered pgm is excellent idea - need something to look fwd to. need APSC to recognize the VPSOs receive over the years

would take community council out of the mix if he had his way

2:09

2:12

Tanana

(13)

understand 3 headed beast discussion - deals with works w/ non-profit

2:12

2:15

White Mtn & also mayor
VPSO

(14)

City role in pgm - necessary, getting more difficult

what this
for
on

have elec & heat no running water or fresh toilet
had VPSO 16 years

2:15

(15)

Dan Arnulson - White Mtn

2:15 Jim Mc _____ VPSO Non wall ik
 2:25 ~~Nanavallik~~

- previous.
 (16) Community supportive when he got there
 village now, asked to come to this village

establish himself, clean up, what does community want
 Tribal leaders, elders, kids express gratitude to him
 including ones he's arrested.

training is minimal
 would like to apply ^{to state} for a certificate

Donny left

2:27 Otis Rowles-Kobuk
 2:30 VPSO 10 years

(16)
 Worked a lot of OT
 no sick leave, lost 6 days of vacation

now gets 30 days/year used to be 36

lost 2 - 2½ yrs of retirement

only time truly get time off is when not in village

need to have protection, not just charge things overnight

How is funding allotted?

Non-P - 15% of ~~total contract~~ ~~of what?~~ ~~PS?~~ contract?

2:40 Major Glick
- Troopers recognition awards

~~FM~~ fm oversight troopers, Citizens, non-profit

John Peratrovich - Savonga 11/13/05 7/1/06

Roy Jones - Larsen Bay 6/8/07
commendation for bravery

2:45 ended

DRAFT

Alaska State Senate
Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO) Task Force
Report to the Senate

February 15, 2008

**** D R A F T ****
Senate Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO) Task Force
Report to the Senate

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Senate VPSO Task Force Members

Senator Donald C. Olson, Chair

Senator Hollis French

Senator Fred Dyson

Commissioner Walt Monegan, Department of Public Safety

Attorney General (AG) Talis Colberg, Department of Law

Public Member Loretta Bullard, President, Kawerak, Inc.

Public Member Myron Naneng, President, AVCP

Committee Aide: Denise Liccioli, staff to Senator Olson

Authority and Direction

The Senate VPSO Task Force was established by Senate Resolve No. 6 in the first session of the Twenty-fifth Alaska State Legislature. The Senate VPSO Task Force was created to find ways to strengthen and improve public safety in rural Alaska by identifying problems with the VPSO program, and ways those problems might be addressed.

The Senate VPSO Task Force was directed to consider whether statutory changes are necessary or desirable and to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Senate by February 15, 2008, after which it is terminated.

Senate Resolve No. 6 is shown as Appendix 1.

Methodology

The Senate VPSO Task Force met during September, October, and November in Nome, Savoonga, Gambell, Bethel, Mountain Village, Emmonak, and Kodiak to take public testimony on this important issue. Over 100 people testified during these meetings. The Senate VPSO Task Force also accepted written testimony from 9 people in addition to testimony given at the hearings.

The Task Force asked testifiers to state their problems or concerns about the program and to concentrate on their recommendations and ideas for restructuring and improvements that would make the program more effective. The Task Force received many recommendations; a full list of recommendations made can be found as Appendix 2.

Following the public meetings where testimony was accepted, the Task Force met in public work sessions in Anchorage during November and January to decide on its recommendations and report contents, which resulted in this report.

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History of the VPSO Program

One of the best documents describing a brief history of the program was provided by Loretta Bullard, one of the public members of the Task Force. Following is that document; the original source of the document is unknown.

"The VPSO program was a response to problems with the training, turnover, and performance of the village police officer program in the 1970s.¹ It was based largely on the idea that law enforcement ought to be 'home-grown' rather than imposed, should encourage local initiative and participation, should incorporate local traditions, and should include elements of social work and public safety.² It combined responsibility for law enforcement, firefighting, search and rescue, water safety, and emergency medical into one position.³ And, as local employees under the direct control of village councils, it intended for VPSOs to be 'responsive to community needs and priorities.'⁴

James Messick and William Nix, two of the principal designers of the VPSO program, wanted villages to have control over the program. They believed that the imposed Western legal system was ineffective and was not supported by local people. However, they thought that villages lacked the organizational capacity to run the program. Therefore, they gave control of the management of the program to the regional native nonprofits.⁵ The State Troopers were to serve as technical providers but not tell the VPSOs what to do. And 'the day to day control of the VPSOs ought to come from the city' or the village, increasing 'local control and self-determination at the village level.'⁶

Training was designed to be more extensive and relevant to rural needs and included follow-up training and supervision in the field by oversight Troopers specifically assigned to the program. A steady and sufficient income was intended to help reduce turn-over. In addition, the program represented 'a long term career ladder for the rural, often Native individual to enter into the public safety field.'⁷

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Funding level and numbers of officers:

In 1979, a small pilot program was launched with an original request for \$500,000.⁸ However, when the legislature received the request, it increased the project's funding to over \$2.9 million, supporting 52 VPSO positions.⁹ And by FY 1982, the program had grown to 108 VPSO positions and 7 oversight officers, costing \$6,729,700 per year.¹⁰

The program grew through the 1980s and 1990s. In FY 1990, the VPSO program supported 125 positions in 123 villages with a budget of \$6.5 million.¹¹ And by FY 2002, the program had a budget of \$9.1 million.¹² However, the program was cut in FY 2004 to \$5.8 million.¹³

Initial Response from the Troopers:

When the VPSO program was first created, the Troopers resisted the program 'as it seemed to take away some of their authority and (possibly) cut into their budget and offended their sense of professional law enforcement.'¹⁴ Commissioner Nix had to 'read them the riot act,' and threatened to move the program into another division and take away their control over the program.¹⁵

Qualifications:

The Alaska Police Standards Council was advised by the Attorney General's office in 1982 that VPSOs were not considered police officers unless they worked in a 'second class' city for a municipal police department.¹⁶ The certification process then shifted to being part of the contractual arrangement with the regional nonprofits.¹⁷

One of the biggest problems with qualifications was the prohibition on hiring officers with arrest records. For example, in 1981 eighteen of the twenty six applicants for the VPSO program had arrest records.¹⁸ Commissioner Nix thought it was inappropriate to view arrest records as a barometer of moral character in rural communities. Instead, he thought the decision should rest with the residents of the villages themselves.¹⁹

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Program Operation:

In 1989, the program operated similarly to the way it operates today. The native nonprofit in each region contracted with the State to manage the VPSO program. The villages in each region appealed to their nonprofit for a VPSO, and the nonprofit allocated VPSOs based on available funding.²⁰ VPSOs were hired and fired by the nonprofit in close consultation with the village councils and the Troopers.²¹

Supervision by the Troopers:

Supervision for VPSOs in the 1980s was managed by oversight troopers in the regional hubs. In 1987, there were 5 oversight officers for 116 VPSOs.²² It was their responsibility to check the work of the VPSOs, contact them by phone at least once a week, visit them in the field at least every two months, conduct in-field training, follow up on actions taken by the VPSOs, check their notebooks and records, ensure that VPSOs submit their bi-weekly reports on time, arrange for external training and travel, maintain contact with village council members, approve the hiring by VPSOs of emergency guards to hold detained or arrested suspects, and submit personnel evaluation forms on their VPSOs and a monthly recap record of their own activities.²³

VPSO training:

In the 1980s, new VPSO recruits attended a six week course at the Trooper Academy in Sitka. They received 60 hours of EMT training, 90 hours of firefighting training, and instructions on water safety, search and rescue, and how to organize a volunteer fire department.²⁴ They received no training in firearms. And every year, they were required to return for a one-week training course at the Academy.²⁵

Snapshot – TCC 1989:

In 1989, salaries for VPSOs in the Tanana Chiefs Conference region ranged from \$21,612 to \$28,080 per year.²⁶ There were 18 VPSOs and 6 VPSOs in the 42 villages in the region along with 6 State Troopers stationed permanently in the region.²⁷

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The FY 2008 budget for the VPSO program is \$5.4 million. There are 51 VPSO positions authorized, but there is a very high turnover rate ranging from 30% to 48%, over the last 6 years for which data exists.

The current starting salary, without overtime or pay incentives, for a VPSO is \$16.55 per hour, or \$32,273 per year, based on a 37.5 hour work week.

¹ "The Village Public Safety Officer Program: A Conceptual Design to Improve Law Enforcement and Public Safety in the Rural Areas of Alaska," Department of Public Safety, Commissioner William R. Nix, 1980; "Innovation in Policing: Bureaucratic Entrepreneurship in the Development of the Village Public Safety Officer Program in Alaska," Otwin Marenin, 1989, p. 11-12.

² "Innovation in Policing" at p. 13.

³ Id.

⁴ "The Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) Program in Rural Alaska: Trends and Prospects," Otwin Marenin, 1989, p. 25

⁵ "Innovation in Policing," at 17.

⁶ "The Village Public Safety Officer Program: A Conceptual Design to Improve Law Enforcement and Public Safety in the Rural Areas of Alaska," Department of Public Safety, Commissioner William R. Nix, 1980, p. 4, 11; "Innovation in Policing," at 17.

⁷ "Innovation in Policing," at 13.

⁸ "The VPSO Program, Concept, History and Operation," State of Alaska, undated, p. 5.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Id.; "The Village Public Safety Officer Program: Providing Public Safety Services to Rural Alaska," Patrick Jolley, 1990, p. 48; "The VPSO Program," Marenin, p. 25.

¹² "VPSO Comparison Gov Request to Authorized FY 83 to FY 05," State of Alaska, Department of Public Safety, 2004.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ "The VPSO Program," Marenin, at 18.

¹⁵ Id.

¹⁶ "Innovation in Policing, Marenin, p. 18.

¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ Id.

¹⁹ Id. at 19.

²⁰ "The VPSO Program," Marenin, p. 26.

²¹ Id. at 26.

²² Id. at 27.

²³ Id. at 27.

²⁴ Id. at 27.

²⁵ Id. at 27.

²⁶ Id. at 26.

²⁷ Id. at 26.

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Findings and Issues

The main findings are not new, and are essentially the same concerns that existed and were behind the creation of the program about 30 years ago. The Task Force members heard from many testifiers that there have been many other studies and reports written over the years, each expressing the same or very similar concerns, yet nothing changes. Overall, there is a feeling of inequity, whether perceived or real, when comparing public safety provided to urban residents of the State of Alaska to public safety provided to the rural residents of the State. The lack of visible change from any of the previous reports or studies contributes to this feeling since it is seen as meaning that the rural residents are not important enough to be worth the time and money it might take to make some of the changes.

The Task Force repeatedly heard that the residents of rural Alaska want to be treated fairly, and are as deserving of and entitled to protection, peace, and dignity as the residents of our state who happen to live in an urban area. They point to several things to support those comments, including the area/number of miles covered by a VPSO compared to a Trooper; the respect and support given to a Trooper compared to a VPSO; pay and other benefits such as retirement and health insurance, and the equipment and facilities provided to VPSOs compared to other law enforcement.

It was for these reasons that the Task Force decided to concentrate its recommendations to things that could be implemented over the short run to show good faith and progress; and to limit the recommendations to a small number, no more than 5, to ensure clear direction for needed improvements.

The main areas for the findings revolved around five main issues:

- Recruitment and retention. No matter how much money or how many positions are authorized, public safety cannot be strong until we can get and keep good people in the positions that are authorized. Recruitment often results in no acceptable applicants; and once filled, these positions turn over frequently. Some of the reasons given were:

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- Too much stress and not enough down time or counseling when faced with traumatic events and/or long hours or days in a row
- There are not enough VPSOs, no backup, need more than one in many locations
- Pay too low, can make more elsewhere
- Not enough benefits or housing, no future
- Do not like arresting family and friends
- Not enough equipment or adequate facilities to do the job, need to use their own, buy their own.
- Sometimes a good candidate cannot be considered due to having a police record from something they did a long time ago when they were younger; have since reformed, but not given the chance.

Other ideas discussed involved whether or not VPSOs should become state employees, and whether or not there should be tiers within the VPSOs to recognize differences in what is asked of each VPSO, and the different training, background and longevity each might have. The concept of becoming state employees seemed to have cautious support in most areas with the exception of the AVCP area. Admittedly, each of the options would help with advancement opportunities. Becoming state employees would help with the benefit package, equipment and facilities, and backup and support. The concerns expressed regarding becoming state employees were mostly related to loss of control over the hires and over the program itself. There was a strong feeling that VPSOs need to come from the rural parts of the state, with an understanding of the culture in the village.

The Task Force frequently heard the need for more VPSOs. Not only in additional communities, but also for multiple VPSOs in a single location, and for a possible itinerant cadre of VPSOs to go from village to village, to assist with backup and for those times when more than 1 VPSO is needed.

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It is clear that criteria needs to be established, or if already established, then reconsidered for which communities should have a VPSO and how many. Criteria that needs to be included:

- The size of the community
- Proximity to troopers
- Proximity to other villages
- Support and commitment of the community
- Amount and level of crime/disfunction in that community
- VPSOs should be allowed whether the community is on or off the road system

In many cases, people who are capable and currently good citizens cannot qualify to become a VPSO because of a criminal record. Too often, people do things when they are young that they regret and that they would not do as an adult. Or sometimes a person may have an isolated instance of doing something stupid that is shown as being just that, and it might have happened a long time ago. People do change, especially if the mistake was made when they were young, and/or it was an isolated occurrence rather than a pattern of behavior. There needs to be a way of pardoning past crimes in some cases so that people who are now on the right path qualify to become a VPSO. With the difficulty in finding VPSOs and with the high rate of suicide among youth especially, this change if done carefully could make a big difference.

- Governance and policies. There is a real need for a short and long term plan. The writing of a 5-10-20 year plan is needed and would best be done by the non-profits.

The expectations of the VPSOs, as well as for contract management, reports, training, and other areas needs to be better defined, and communicated to all.

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If VPSOs remain as contract employees rather than becoming state employees, there needs to be better grant management between the Department of Public Safety and the non-profit that holds the contract. There also needs to be provision in the contract to cover CPI increases to salaries and the other costs of running the program.

If VPSOs do become state employees, they need to be hired at the regional/local level. Current VPSOs would also like to be given credit for time already served.

The community support really needs to be strengthened. The example was given of what happens when a search and rescue is needed: the whole village comes together to help and take responsibility. Yet when it comes to the other things that affect public safety in the village, the support of the community is not always there. It was clear from the testimony from VPSOs that they really need the support and respect of their community.

Some ideas expressed that would help strengthen community support:

- Promote VPSOs as a respectable career choice
- Perhaps create an ad campaign for VPSOs similar to what is done for Troopers
- Provide assertiveness training to locals so they will be able to confront those who are known in the community to have drug/alcohol problems
- Form Village Public Safety Committees to deal with:
 - Fires
 - Search and rescue
 - Citizen patrols
 - Community policing
 - Neighborhood watch
 - Eyes and ears of the VPSO or other law enforcement in the community
 - Backup and assistance to the VPSO, VPO, TPO

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An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is how the saying goes, and this is very true of law enforcement in rural Alaska as well. For example, better lighting would help. Sometimes it is simple human nature that fear of being seen is a strong motivator for not doing things one should not do. Educations programs and teen centers or other activities that would provide something for the residents to do would also help to keep things positive and provide something to do other than get in trouble, especially for the youth in the villages.

Many people expressed their respect and belief in the power of some type of Elders program, too. Particularly when working with youth, and being able to "nip things in the bud" before small troubles become big. The elders in the community are more concerned with teaching the youth their boundaries, rather than finding a way to punish. It could be an effective way of turning youth around and putting them on track, teaching them respect for themselves and others, as well as keeping some of them "out of the system".

Tribal courts might be another way of dealing with some crimes.

- Responsibilities and training. The VPSOs do get concentrated training when they are hired. Not only is that welcomed and necessary, but more training would be better, and also in other areas like search and rescue, and their other areas of responsibility. They need that kind of concentrated training once or twice per year, in addition to the day to day situations, questions and answers, and ongoing training.

They need regular, onsite, visits by the Trooper assigned to the area. The Troopers need to be trained in the culture and ways of the village, too.

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Sometimes it is the VPO that needs training and/or direction, which could perhaps be provided by the VPSO. This would help to strengthen their standing, as well as another way of having trained backup that is sometimes needed.

The VPSOs would also like to be trained on youth prevention programs, so they can do things like the DARE program in the schools. This could be a dual advantage not only by the prevention of crime, but also by escalating how VPSOs are viewed in the community.

- Program Funding. Funding is definitely an issue. It would take a lot of money to do everything that is requested. Some of the fixes will only be able to happen if additional funding comes from the State. If we are to have more VPSOs and pay them more to attract and retain good candidates, it will come with a price tag.

In addition, CPI increases to the salary of VPSOs need to be programmed in on an annual basis. It is only because of the technicality of being contract employees that this is not done routinely, as it is with state employees. The regions also want more say in what the VPSO is paid in their region to account for differences in cost of living.

CPI increases are also needed to cover things like fuel and utility increases, replacement of uniforms and equipment, etc. This could also be accomplished by including some type of stipend in the contract, or even by increasing revenue sharing in locations that provide support to a VPSO.

Other ways to tap into more funding would be to partner with other agencies such as the National Guard. Support might also be available from the Denali Commission, HUD, USDA, Alaska Housing, and the regional housing authority. These avenues need

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to be explored to see what is available that would be of benefit to the program.

Some suggested using the money from forfeitures to pay some of the cost of public safety in rural Alaska. Perhaps establish some type of Rural Public Safety Fund and deposit those funds and other funds into that fund for use in rural areas.

- Support. The frequency and quality of communication with the oversight Trooper needs to be improved. Sometimes the response from the Trooper is slow or too late to be very helpful. The Troopers are also being pulled in different directions, and sometimes see what is happening in their area as being more critical. Other times, it is simply weather that may keep them away. Regardless of the reason, better communication and frequent interaction between the VPSO and oversight Trooper is needed.

There is a critical need for VPSO housing, and adequate facilities and equipment. Some villages do not have any housing for VPSOs; others have housing, but it is substandard. Many villages have public safety facilities that are so poor as to be nonexistent from a practical stand point. The lack of equipment was also frequently voiced as a concern. Many VPSOs use their own snowmobiles, ATVs, etc., and buy their own gas. Due to the geographic challenges that exist in rural Alaska, radios and satellite phones would make a difference.

A possible partnership with the National Guard (NG) would be advantageous from a number of sides. First, the possibility of having NG members become VPSOs would help with having trained and capable people hired. Also, many villages have armories that stand idle for most of the year; perhaps these could become dual purpose facilities through some type of partnership.

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The NG has a lot of equipment available, too, and perhaps a partnership with them could assist with the lack of equipment.

Other possible partnerships include the school systems and the technical centers. Perhaps they could develop and offer a course on building and maintenance, and have the students build a facility, or add on to a facility, or do some type of upkeep to facilities. The student would gain experience in construction and credit toward their coursework; and the village would get a facility or improvements to their facility.

There is an urgent need for counseling and some type of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program. VPSOs often have to spend all day and night on a tragedy like a search and rescue, then go right back out in very little time, often with little sleep, and be on the job again. Troopers are required to take time off and have counseling when critical incidents occur; the same support should be provided to the VPSOs.

With a list that contains so many important and essential items to public safety, there is clearly more that needs to be done than can reasonably be accomplished in a short time. The Task Force weighed each of the many suggestions including some of their own to narrow down the lengthy list to just a few items. Again, this in no way indicates a lack of importance for anything that did not make it to a recommendation; rather it only indicates the commitment of the Task Force to being able to make some changes immediately.

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Recommendations

After careful consideration of the possible ways that could be employed to strengthen public safety and the VPSO program in rural Alaska, it was difficult to narrow down the recommendations to a short list. Many of the possibilities which are not included as a recommendation are worthy of further consideration. Please refer to Appendix 2.

For the recommendations that follow to be successful, it is incumbent upon DPS to support and collaborate with the nonprofits in developing plans and implementing changes - to the degree the plans or changes are significant to the program or grant agreements. With them working together, we as a State, can honor those elders and others who came before the Task Force to share their thoughts and knowledge on this topic, and to truly have an impact on the public safety in rural Alaska.

Statutory changes are not necessary to achieve any of the recommendations of this Task Force. The statutes governing the VPSO program, AS 18.65.670 and AS 18.65.680, are brief and are shown as Appendix 3. However, should it be decided at a later date to have VPSOs become state employees, the appropriate statutes would require changes.

However, in keeping with the intent of staying focused on only a few items, the VPSO Task Force recommendations are:

Increase the base pay to \$20 per hour, and program CPI increases into the base pay annually. The current base pay of \$16.55 per hour was consistently voiced as one of the reasons for difficulties in recruiting and retaining VPSOs. Even Transportation Security Officers make a higher starting wage with much less risk in their day to day duties, and much less training required; and they enjoy the backup and other support lacking for VPSOs. Health Aides with no experience or training start at approximately that wage, but once they become credentialed, their wage increases substantially by about \$6.50 per hour. Without exception, every comparable field with duties similar to some part of what VPSOs are required to perform, will earn a higher wage.

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Report to the Senate**

In order to prevent the erosion of the base wage, CPI increases need to be budgeted for annually and DPS should request increases in their budget to cover those CPI increases, similar to what is done for state employees.

DPS estimates the cost to implement this in FY 2009 as \$_____.

The nonprofits should develop and maintain a short and long range plan.

This would be an effective tool for requesting changes to the program, grant, or other terms; and to continue to build on the recommendations in this report, and the testimony heard by the Task Force. It would also allow time to plan for adjustments and to phase in meaningful changes over some type of schedule.

They should immediately establish criteria for which villages get a VPSO and how many. The criteria should include:

- o The size of the community,
- o The proximity to Troopers,
- o The proximity to other villages,
- o The amount and level of crime and dysfunction, and
- o The support and commitment of the community

Whether or not the village is on the road system should not by itself be one of the criteria.

At a minimum, other items for consideration and inclusion in the short term plan are:

**** D R A F T ****

**Senate Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO) Task Force
Report to the Senate**

- Whether or not VPSOs should have levels; for example, a "VPSO I" could be a trainee, while a "VPSO III" could be the most experienced and/or credentialed VPSO
- Whether salary differentials are needed to recognize cost of living differences between the villages
- Finding ways to increase community support of VPSOs
- Determining ways in which the VPSO image can be elevated
- Whether Village Public Safety Committees should be formed; and if so, the function and tasks for which these committees would be responsible
- How to provide and/or improve on the housing, facilities, and equipment provided to VPSOs in carrying out their duties
- Whether other funding sources, such as the Denali Commission, USDA, HUD, etc., can be applied for and used to support the VPSO program in some way

The nonprofits and DPS should develop some type of organized trauma debriefing program. Often, they have to deal with and/or clean up after suicides or other incidents that are not only stressful in terms of the time it takes, but the incidents take a toll on the mental health of the VPSO as it would on any other human being. The stress on a VPSO after dealing with a trauma deserves the support and requirement of some type of counseling and/or debriefing program for his/her own health and well being.

DPS should pursue partnerships with other agencies to provide and/or improve on the facilities and equipment available. These partnerships may also encompass other mutual areas of interest, but should certainly look at the possibility of cooperative agreements for the use of facilities and equipment.

The Adjutant General of the National Guard (NG) testified such an agreement would be mutually beneficial for encouraging the employment of NG members, as well as for the possible use of facilities and equipment.

**** D R A F T ****

**Senate Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO) Task Force
Report to the Senate**

Partnerships with the technical centers around the State should also be pursued, especially in terms of the possible development of a curriculum offered to students in building, expanding, remodeling, and/or maintaining facilities.

Acceptable housing needs to be provided to VPSOs. The provision for housing is not required by DPS or by program requirements, but is an option that the nonprofits try to use whenever possible as an incentive to recruitment and retention of VPSOs. This recommendation will be a difficult one to implement, yet it is an important one because of the effect on recruitment and retention.

Some villages are able to provide dedicated housing to their VPSO, but the housing is not always acceptable. It may be too small for a family, or it might not be well maintained. Other villages have dedicated housing for a group of jobs, but not specifically for the VPSO. In those cases, the housing may already be in use by one of the other positions. Building additional housing is expensive which makes that option not viable.

What else can we say or do to provide or require them to provide better housing?

Closing remarks. The Task Force recognizes that fulfilling the recommendations in this report will take a large commitment by the nonprofits, the communities involved, DPS, and the legislature. The commitment is one not only of time and resolve, but also of funding.

The VPSO Task Force recommends the legislature carefully consider the recommendations in this report and take any action necessary to implement these findings and recommendations.

Appendix 1

Senate Resolve No. 6

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Appendix 2

List of Suggested Solutions

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Appendix 3

Alaska Statutes 18.65.670 and 18.65.680

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**** DRAFT ** Senate VPSO Task Force ** DRAFT ****

List of suggested solutions (with like suggestions grouped together)

Prepared by Senator Donald Olson's office

November 29, 2007

- **Cover indirect costs fully**
- **Funding is limited to one year at a time which creates problems for things like leave pay outs, etc.**
- **Liability issues**
- **Form VPSO endowment fund**
- **Western AK Narco team – direct money to VPSO program**
- **Need money for youth courts in villages**
- **Need money to run Tribal courts**
- **Help fund Elder intervention program in Emmonak**

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- **More magistrates in villages**
- **Stop drugs/alcohol from getting into villages in the first place**
- **Tribes need to be able to intervene and destroy home brew/drug selling - need search warrants – can't just confiscate**
- **Juvenile offenses to Tribal court**
- **Develop youth Tribal diversion panel for drinking youth – replicate throughout the State to address juvenile delinquent problems**
- **Increase punishment for bootleggers**
- **Need a 911 help line (easy access)**
- **Reinstate cops program**
- **Expand the number of kids who can attend Nat'l Indian Policing Academy**
- **Rural exchange program – village to village**
- **If convicted of felony, can't carry weapons – need to allow exemption for hunting**

**** DRAFT ** Senate VPSO Task Force ** DRAFT ****

List of suggested solutions (with like suggestions grouped together)

Prepared by Senator Donald Olson's office

November 29, 2007

- Have bush airlines search all bags
- State get over paranoia over W/W tribes

EXAMPLE OF PERSON/VILLAGE WHO TURNED THINGS AROUND

- Abraham – Agathluk VPO example of “turned around”
 - o 5+ years working as a VPO
 - o VPO all time low
 - o Work whole year, get two weeks
 - o Cases stacked up
 - o Only 2 people working
 - o No training
 - o Has more support
 - o Has 2 vehicles
 - o Applicants can't hire – on probation or convicted felon
- Doing good in Bethel stopping drugs/alcohol

**** DRAFT ** Senate VPSO Task Force ** DRAFT ****

List of suggested solutions (with like suggestions grouped together)

Prepared by Senator Donald Olson's office

November 29, 2007

PAY ISSUES

- **Increase VPSO wage**
- **Bump VPSO salary schedule to allow for CPI**
- Recognize cost of living differences
- Perhaps have levels of VPSOs to reflect more training, certification and/or experience, differences in what a VPSO in one village does compared to another
- Salary placement should be left up to regional contractors, not pre-determined by the State
- Lower duties of VPSO or pay what they're worth
- AST=higher paid prisoner transport

BENEFITS

- **Provide medical, dental, retirement benefits**

ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- **VPSOs become State employees** (one region (a big one) is opposed to this)
- **Tiered law enforcement**

BACKUP AND WORKLOAD

- **VPSOs need organized trauma debriefing program and counseling**
- **More than 1 VPSO per community**
- **Circulate itinerant cadre of VPSOs amongst villages**
- **Provide backup to VPSO**
- **Hire VPSOs from villages, place in other villages than their own**
- Place Troopers in villages
- Station VPSO/AST in units

**** DRAFT ** Senate VPSO Task Force ** DRAFT ****

List of suggested solutions (with like suggestions grouped together)

Prepared by Senator Donald Olson's office

November 29, 2007

- Want teams
- VPSOs serve more than 1 village
- Put more Troopers in the villages

EQUIPMENT

- **Provide equipment so they don't have to use their own**

HOUSING

- **Make housing available – in many cases, none available or is substandard**

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDINGS

- **Fix up/renovate Public Safety buildings**
- Build prototype housing/jail cell combination facilities

PARTNERSHIPS

- **Develop partnerships to access money and to strengthen program**
- **Pursue contractual relationship with the National Guard to share facilities and equipment; and to promote the hire of NG members as VPSOs.**
- **Develop partnerships with the technical centers and school systems to have students build/expand facilities as a course offering for credit**

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROGRAM REVIEW

- **Develop 5-10-20 year plan to improve public safety**
- **Identify roles of tribe-city-state as it relates to law enforcement**
- **Model VPSO program on Health Aide program**
- **Provide avenue for waiver of clean background criteria in some cases**
- **Establish criteria for which villages get a VPSO and how many. Criteria to include:**

**** DRAFT ** Senate VPSO Task Force ** DRAFT ****

List of suggested solutions (with like suggestions grouped together)

Prepared by Senator Donald Olson's office

November 29, 2007

- **Size of community**
- **Proximity to troopers**
- **Proximity to other villages**
- **Support and commitment of community**
- **Amount and level of crime/disfunction**
- **Can be on road system**
- Add to job description – assist ICWA staff when home visits required – serve court orders
- Look at VPSO P/P - amend/waive if need be
- Liaison in regional non-profits – state employee over State VPSOs
- Need to develop/shape law enforcement stats
- Need to include rural Alaskans on justice related boards/issues
- Arm the VPSOs
- When hiring, look at the character of the applicant; need to be strong
- Tribes participate in evaluating VPSO

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- **Build community support - VPSO need support at their ground level**
- **Need to get whole village involved in providing law and order in village**
- **Promote/hire VPSOs similar to what is done for AST**
- **Form Village Public Safety Committees; include SAR, fire, citizen patrols, community policing, neighborhood watch**
- **Provide assertiveness training to locals to confront alcohol/drug dealers**
- **Give each Tribal Council the option to search/seize alcohol/drugs**

**** DRAFT ** Senate VPSO Task Force ** DRAFT ****

List of suggested solutions (with like suggestions grouped together)

Prepared by Senator Donald Olson's office

November 29, 2007

- Show VPSO qualifications at career days
- Need to teach respect for law enforcement

TRAINING AND PREVENTION

- **More communication with oversight Troopers**
- **AST needs to spend quality time in village**
- **Train VPSO to do prevention with kids, like DARE training in schools**
- **VPSO provide leadership/direction to VPOs**
- **Provide report writing training**
- Teach kids (3rd/4th grades) about laws, law enforcement respect - put in curriculum
- Cultural sensitivity training for all AST
- VPOs need training! SAR clueless Do training via video conferencing
- Send Trooper in to train VPO – come in once per month to check on them
- Train VPSO/AST to fly planes
- VPOs need training, orientation, ethics, etc confidentiality
- Provide training to VPSOs to help health aides and VBC
- Look at training schedule
- Better prepare VPSOs for academy
- Have native organization provide cultural training to VPSOs
- Improve services in rural Alaska to prevent misbehavior

OTHER MONEY ISSUES

- **Pay O:M/rent to cities for VPSO space**
- **State provide rent/utilities for VPSOs in villages**

List of solutions – compiled by Loretta Bullard from speakers at the hearings

- Reinstate cops program
- Increase VPSO wage
- Make housing available
- Circulate VPSO itinerant amongst villages
- Provide medical, dental, retirement benefits
- Provide backup to VPSO
- Build community support
- Have VPSOs become State employees
- Provide equipment so they don't have to use their own boat, snow machine
- More communication with oversight Troopers
- Tiered law enforcement
- Provide assertiveness training to locals to confront alcohol/drug dealers
- Have bush airlines search all bags
- Need to teach respect for law enforcement
- VPOs need training! SAR clueless
- More magistrates in villages
- Juvenile offenses to Tribal court
- Train VPSO to do prevention with kids
- More then 1 VPSO per community
- VPSO provide leadership/direction to VPOs
- Do training via video conferencing
- Place Troopers in villages
- Hire VPSOs, place from other villages

List of solutions – compiled by Loretta Bullard from speakers at the hearings

- Pay O:M/rent to cities for VPSO space
- Build housing/jail cell combo
- Fix up/renovate Public Safety buildings
- Look at VPSO P/P - amend/waive if need be
- Send Trooper in to train VPO – come in once per month to check on them
- Stop drugs/alcohol from getting into villages in the first place
- VPSOs need organized trauma debriefing program
- Form VPSO endowment fund
- Western AK Narco team – direct money to VPSO program
- Train VPSO/AST to fly planes
- Station VPSO/AST in units
- State provide rent/utilities for VPSOs in villages
- Lower duties of VPSO or pay what they're worth
- AST=higher paid prisoner transport
- ✱ - Develop 5-10-20 year plan to improve public safety
- ✱ - Model VPSO program on Health Aide program
- Cultural sensitivity training for all AST
- State get over paranoia over W/W tribes
- ✱ - Develop partnerships to access money to strengthen program
- Need money to run Tribal courts
- Promote/hire VPSOs
- Develop youth Tribal diversion panel for drinking youth – replicate throughout the State to address juvenile delinquent problems

List of solutions – compiled by Loretta Bullard from speakers at the hearings

- ~~Examine closely - discuss closely with AVCP~~
- Give each Tribal Council the option to search/seize alcohol/drugs
- Provide avenue for waiver of clean background criteria
- If convicted of felony, can't carry weapons – need to allow exemption for hunting
- Improve services in rural Alaska to prevent Mis behavior
- Identify roles of tribe-city-state as it relates to law enforcement
- Need money for youth courts in villages
- Tribes need to be able to intervene and destroy home brew/drug selling
- Bump VPSO salary schedule to allow for CPI
- Show VPSO qualifications at career days
- Need a 911 help line (easy access)
- Expand the number of kids who can attend Nat'l Indian Policing Academy
- Teach kids (3rd/4th grades) about laws, law enforcement respect - put in curriculum
- Help fund Elder intervention program in Emmonak
- Rural exchange program – village to village
- VPOs need training, orientation, ethics, etc confidentiality
- Need to develop/shape law enforcement stats
- Need to include rural Alaskans on justice related boards/issues
- Abraham – Agathluk VPO example of “turned around”
 - o 5+ years working as a VPO
 - o VPO all time low
 - o Work whole year, get two weeks

List of solutions – compiled by Loretta Bullard from speakers at the hearings

- o Cases stacked up
- o Only 2 people working
- o ^{No} ~~Do~~ training
- o Has more support
- o Has 2 vehicles
- o Applicants can't hire – on probation or convicted felon
- Want teams
- Doing good in Bethel stopping drugs/alcohol
- Need search warrants – can't just confiscate
- VPSOs serve more than 1 village
- Arm the VPSOs
- When hiring, look at the character of the applicant; need to be strong
- Increase punishment for bootleggers
- Put more Troopers in the villages
- Provide report writing training
- Add to ^{job description} ~~juvenile delinquent~~ – assist ICWA (?) staff when home visits required –
serve court ^{orders} ~~hearings~~
- Tribes participate in evaluating VPSO
- AST needs to spend quality time in village
- Provide training to VPSOs to help health aides and ~~ABC~~ ^{VBC} (?)
- Cover indirect costs fully
- Look at training schedule
- Need housing for VPSOs

List of solutions – compiled by Loretta Bullard from speakers at the hearings

- Better prepare VPSOs for academy
- Liaison in regional non-profits – ^{state}~~staff~~ employee over State VPSOs
- VPSO need support at their ground level
- John – Elim – need to get whole village involved in providing law and order in village
- Have native organization provide cultural training to VPSOs

Village Public Safety Committee – Fire, SAR
Citizen patrols
community policing
neighborhood watch

Solutions

- Reinstate cops program
- Increase VPSO wage
- No housing available
- Circulate VPSO amongst ^{Itinerant} Villages.
- ↑ med, dental Retirement Benefits
- provide bonus to VPSO
- build community support.
- have VPSO's become State employees
- equipment - use own boat, snow machine.
- more communication w/ Oversight Troopers
- Tiers Low Enforcement
- provide assertiveness training
to locals to confront
alcohol / drug dealers.
- have bush airlines search all logs.
- need to teach respect for low enforcement
- VPO's - need training! ^{arrest - "} SAR - clueless
- more magistrates in villages
- J.d. offences → tribal court.
- * - train VPSO to do prevention w/ kids.
- more than 1 VPSO per community
- VPSO provide leadership/direction to
- do training via video/conferencing VPO's
- place troopers in villages.
- hire VPSO's / place from other villages
- pay O:M/rent to cities for VPSO space
- build housing/jail cell combo
- fix up / renovate Public Safety Bldg.

Solutions

- look at UPSO P/P - ^{amend/} waive if needed
- send trooper in to train ~~with~~ UPO -
come in 1 a month to visit them.
- stop drug/alcohol from getting into
villages ~~first~~ in the first place
- UPSO's need ^{organized} trauma debriefing program.
Critical incident Stress Management
- Form UPSO ^{Public Safety Trust Fund} Endowment Fund
- West AK Narco team - direct B's to UPSO
-2- program.

Solutions

- train VPSO/AST to fly the planes
- station VPSO/AST in units
- State provide rent/utilities for VPSO's in villages
- lower duties of VPSO. or pay when they're worth
- AST = high paid prisoner transport.
- develop 5-10-20 year plan to improve model VPSO program by public on Health Aide safety Program.
- cultural sensitivity training for all AST.
- State get over paranoia over w/w times
- develop partnerships to access \$'s to strengthen program
- need \$'s to run tribal courts
- promote/hire VPSO's -
- develop youth diversion panel for drinking youth - replicate throughout state to address j.d. problems.
- examine closely - discuss closely w/AUCP.
- give each tribal council option to search seize alcohol/drugs.

III - Emmonak -

~~Revolutions~~

- provide avenue for waiver of ~~the~~ clean background criteria
- convicted of felony - can't carry weapons = need to allow exemption for hunting.
- improve services in rural AK - to prevent misbehavior.
- Identify roles of time - city - state as it relates to law enforcement -

- tribes
- \$'s for youth court in villages need to be able to intervene; destroy home brew / drug selling.
 - bump salary ^{VPSO} schedule to allow for CPI
 - short VPSO qualifications at career days
 - need a 911 - help line (easy access)
 - Expand # kids who can attend Nat'l Indian Policing Acad.
 - teach kids (3-4 grades) about laws, law enforcement respect. (put in curriculum)
 - help fund Elder intervention program in Emmonak.
 - Rural Exchange Program - village to village

~~prob~~ - VPO 's need training,
orientation, ethics, etc.,
confidentiality

- Need to develop / shape law enforcement
State

Need to include

rural Allocations on Justice related

State Boards/
councils

Agathluk

Abramson - VPO example of "turned around"
5 + yrs. w/ as VPO, "moral"

VPO - all time low

- wk whole year - get 2 weeks
- cases stacked up
- only 2 people w/eq.
- do training.
- no more support
- no 2 vehicles
- applicants can't hire -
on probation or convicted felon

WANT teams -

doing good in Betnes

stopping drug/alcohol

need search warrants - can't
just confiscate

- VPSO's serve more than 1 village
- Arm the VPSO's.
- when hiring, look @ the character of the applicant - need to be strong.
- increase punishment for bootleggers.
- put more Troopers in the villages
- provide report writing training
- assist ICWA staff when home visits required - serve court hearings.
- times participate in eval. VPSO.
- AST needs to spend quality time in village

add to
ja.

Kodiale -

- provide training to VPSO's to keep H.A's & VBC.
- cover indirect costs fully
- look at training schedule.
- need housing for VPSO's
- better prep work VPSO's for academy
- liaison in reg NP's - staff employee over state VPSO's
- ✓ VPSO need support at their ground level.

Town - Elimi -

need to get whole village involved in providing ^{local order} in village

- have Native org provide training ^{cultural}
to UPSO's

11/19/07 - facilities unfederal
have Nat'l Guardsman
like UPSO's, - General
Campbell

did
not
include



Get list of returning / current
guardsmen - recruit
for UPSO's

Village guardsmen -

"weekenders"

2000 guardsmen

90% filled.



Village
Public

Noted
Rural #'s increasing.

Safety Committee - Fire, SAR.

Citizen Patrols -

- Community Policing -

- Neighbourhood Watch -



~~City / IRA council - is being tested?~~

~~break for ~~it~~ lunch~~

~~12:45 pm~~

~~→ Pay - State Employee~~

~~- Tipped Low Enforcement~~

~~Public Safety - like Health Aid
program~~

Kawerak testimony to the State VPSO Task Force on VPSO Issues – November 5, 2007.

The Alaska State Constitution states: "All persons have a natural right to life, liberty and are entitled to equal rights, opportunities and protection under the law." In the arena of Public Safety and "equal protection", this is not the case. Many, many communities in rural Alaska are without any law enforcement whatsoever. In these communities, residents call upon the Alaska State Troopers to respond when situations arise in their communities where law enforcement is needed. Unfortunately, because of weather, other priorities, and Trooper staffing levels, in many instances, the AST are not always able to respond promptly, with the net result that situations are not contained, lives are put at risk or lost, evidence is lost or destroyed, and people are victimized and live in fear. If a property crime occurs in Rural Alaska, you can wait months for Trooper response.

We encourage the Alaska State Legislature and the State DPS to make a commitment to support the VPSO program and rural Law Enforcement and budget accordingly. Certainly, over the past four years, the VPSO contractors have felt like the VPSO program has not been a priority of the State . . . and in fact have felt like the unwanted step children of the State. In an early meeting with the VPSO contractors, the previous DPS Commissioner stated very succinctly, that "when it came to asking the Legislature for a dollar for a VPSO or a dollar for a Trooper. . . he would ask for a dollar for the Troopers every time."

We believe there is much room for improvement and welcome this opportunity to make recommendations on how the provision of public safety in rural Alaska can be improved.

There is a public interest in keeping our children, families and communities safe. The safety and security of citizens in our communities is a fundamental responsibility of government. If the State of Alaska cannot or is not going to diligently seek to fund and implement the protection of its citizens, we recommend that the State of Alaska support a recommendation that was presented to the Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission - to restore to Alaska's federally recognized Tribal Councils on a pilot basis, the ability to control alcohol and illegal substances within five miles of the village radius. The old saying: "Lead, Follow or Get out of the Way" comes to mind. The State of Alaska has opposed restoring the ability of the IRA and Traditional Councils to address alcohol and drug issues, asserting that the responsibility for law enforcement rests with the State, but the state has not adequately met that responsibility and has opposed efforts by village councils to regain control over their community.

Probably 95% of the crimes in rural Alaska occur when the individual is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. . . and while the State DPS has done a much better job cutting down on the flow of alcohol and drugs to the villages. . . anecdotal evidence suggests that people are increasingly "brewing their own." Given the current inability to control/address alcohol issues in rural Alaska, we are fearful what will happen once meth gets a foothold in the bush. It doesn't have a foothold yet, but people need tools at the local level to contain these issues before they gain a foothold. Currently the system is - call the VPSO (if your community has one - 130 rural communities are without), call the

occurs frequently – and both the health aides and the VPSO's don't want to do it. Who can blame them? No one wants the responsibility of cleaning up a scene after a traumatic death! Over the last ten years, we have had 62 suicides in the Bering Straits Region. Every single one of these suicides had to be responded to . . . and cleaned up after. These are the very real issues that are discussed at our board meetings. . . . because there is a need and because alcohol and drugs, and the resulting impacts on our families and children are not adequately controlled within our communities.

The VPSO program in the Bering Strait Region and in other regions in the State is having a hard time with recruiting applicants. Kawerak does not receive any funds for recruiting. I recommend that the State start an ad campaign to recruit for the VPSO positions as they do for other State programs, particularly as this was an activity that the state stated they would undertake (and was funded to do) in the 2005 IHS grant's scope of work the State received. For example, during the Alaska Federation of Natives convention in October 2006, the Alaska State Troopers had a nice recruitment display for AST, current color photos, brochures to hand out and small items to pass out, for example: pens, cups and breath mints. Next to the display was the VPSO recruitment poster board with outdated photos and no other advertisement materials.

Although there has been an improvement in the starting wages of the VPSO, the VPSO salary is still not at market. Currently, the VPSO starting salary is \$16.55 an hour, there are also a parole and probation funds that can bring up to an additional \$2.50 an hour to the VPSO salary. This is up from \$15.05/hour 1 year ago. Another positive change is the addition of retention incentive bonuses added to the salary schedule. Currently there is no cost of living allowance (COLA) in the program; we recommend the State add a COLA to the program. VPSO's, once they reach Step M in the pay scale, (which is at 8.5 years of service) stop receiving pay raises. We would like to see the VPSO program continue to provide raises to help with retention. Kawerak annually adjusts our corporate wide salary schedule to adjust for the previous year's rate of inflation per the Anchorage Consumer Price Index – with the exception of the VPSO program. We take the Anchorage CPI rates for the two previous six month periods, add them together, divide them by two – and adjust our salary schedule up effective January 1 of each year to correct for the previous year's inflation. For 2007, for example, our corporate wide salary schedule was increased by 3.97% - which brought our salary schedule current to the rate of inflation for Anchorage. We do this annually to keep our schedule current with inflation – since if we didn't, the 3% merit increases that we provide for above average performance would not even keep current with inflation. The State contract prohibits us from annually adjusting the VPSO salaries to keep current with inflation.

Most of the cities' holding cells and office spaces are in dire need of repair or upgrades. Most cities in rural Alaska are financially hurting due to the cut of revenue sharing and higher costs of operating (i.e., high fuel, insurance, PERS). Some communities in the Bering Strait Region have only one holding cell that is not suitable for holding both adults and juveniles together. Some buildings do not have running water and use a bucket in the corner of the holding cell (not even a honey bucket!) for human waste. Kawerak recommends that the State assist with upgrading the holding facilities and office

vehicle control.) A career track would promote retention of VPSO's and help ease DPS's recruitment difficulties for Troopers.

Kawerak requests that the Commissioner "develop a template cross-deputization agreement between the State and tribes that can be used as a basis for individually negotiated agreements." State policy makers question the existence of tribes in Alaska . . . but in the field, we have found that the Troopers have been willing to work with Tribal Peace Officers. In one of our communities, we were unable to hire a VPSO for five years, since it was a larger community with many social problems, and residents were unwilling to put their lives on the line for the \$12-13 an hour. The Tribal Council in desperation funded two Tribal Peace Officers out of their Bureau of Indian Affairs funding, to maintain law and order. The Tribal Peace Officers would arrest individuals and call the Troopers. In this instance, the Troopers had no problem working with the Tribal Peace Officers. Somehow the State policy and legal people need to move beyond the rhetoric and to set in place solutions and systems that work collaboratively and effectively in rural Alaska. We were fortunate in eventually hiring an individual to work in this community, who did a wonderful job for three years. He resigned to become a Security Guard because he could make \$22 an hour, with considerably less stress.

There is a perception perhaps, that VPSO's don't receive much training. In fact they do. Currently, VPSO's receive 602 hours of training at the Sitka Academy in order to become a certified VPSO. Municipal Police Officers and Alaska State Troopers each receive 900 (?) hours of training. Pretty much the only difference between the training provided to VPSO's and AST & Municipal Police Officers is that AST and Municipal Police Officers receive training on handling guns and cars. Certified VPSO's have undergone significant training (for which we are very thankful), but it's our perception that the VPSO's are not adequately recognized (or compensated) for their training and the work they do. The VPSO's are truly the "First Responders in the Last Frontier" and they need to be afforded the respect, support and pay, their very difficult position is due.

Kawerak has not had a grant awarded on time since 2003. In 2004, Kawerak was prepared to send letters of termination to the VPSO's due to the fact we still did not have a grant in place. Our grant awards have been consistently awarded well after the start of the state fiscal year. By not receiving grant awards on time, Kawerak is placed in the position of funding the VPSO program out of our own fund balance (which would otherwise be earning interest) or laying off the VPSO's. We have kept the VPSO's on staff - and footed the bill out of our own pockets. We recommend that the State award the grants in a timely manner.

DPS needs to allow contractors more flexibility with the VPSO budget. I would recommend that if there is lapsed money in the VPSO personnel line item that the Non-profits (in consultation with DPS) could spend the money on much needed equipment or supplies, for example, gas, snow machines, ATV, VHF radios or computers. This will provide the tools and equipment required for the VPSO's to aid in Search and Rescue, community patrol, and basic communications. Guidelines could be set up during the contract negotiations.

housing unit filled to capacity with two or three generations . . . because there is no housing available. When VPSO's come from outside, they are often shocked at the quality of the housing that is available to them and soon resign because of the housing conditions. The housing units available in most communities are likely old, with mold issues, poorly insulated and therefore **very** expensive to heat, small, lack water and sewer, and generally dilapidated. VPSO's (particularly those with families) don't stick around when faced with this kind of housing.

Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority, our regional housing authority has indicated that a BSRHA housing unit can be set aside for rent/use by a VPSO in each community, if the Tribal Council passes a resolution approving that action. We have sent a letter to each council encouraging them to do this. However, the Council may or may not take this step. The tribal council has to consider setting aside one unit for the VPSO, versus trying to meet the needs of 10-20-30 families in need of housing within the community, who have been on a list, waiting to purchase a home for the last five-ten years.

We know that the DPS has taken steps to provide for Trooper Housing in rural areas and have expressed interest in building trooper outstations in some of the sub regional centers around the state. We support constructing trooper housing and facilities in those communities where housing and facilities are not available. But we also encourage the State to help address the need for VPSO housing in our very remote, over crowded communities by designing and perhaps helping to construct modular housing units for VPSO's. We understand that upon construction of the Trooper housing in Bethel, troopers in Bethel who owned their own homes, relocated to the Trooper housing and subsequently rented their own homes out for income.

On a positive note, I wanted to announce that the Kawerak's Board of Directors recently established a VPSO work group to examine ways that people and councils at the local level can help recruit, support, recognize and encourage retention of VPSO's.

We recommend that the new administration look at the current policies and procedures and work with the contractors to make changes that pertain to the VPSO program. We encourage this Task Force to consider making funds available to:

- fund indirect as negotiated in Indirect Cost Agreements;
- adequately fund VPSO's and Director's salaries,
- fund office space and holding cells leases for VPSO's;
- develop recruiting and retention materials;
- station VPSO's in on road communities; and
- place more than 1 VPSO in large communities.

We also recommend that the Department of Law be included when negotiating changes to the VPSO contractual agreements. We also recommend that the State consider moving management of VPSO contracts to DCCED but retain the tri-party agreement between the regional non-profit, AST and the city or tribe.



VPSO Task Force List of Concerns and Recommendations, as Expressed at Hearings

Several concerns were consistently voiced by many:

- There is a ***feeling of inequity*** whether perceived or real. Public safety is a State responsibility and they want to be treated fairly. Rural Alaskans deserve protection and are as entitled to peace and dignity as the residents of this state who happen to live in an urban area.
- There is also a ***disparity when you look at the area/number of miles covered*** by VPSOs compared to what is asked of a Trooper; it is not just about the population, other factors need to be considered.
- VPSOs really need the ***support and respect of their community***. And they need to ***understand the culture and village***. Which is a lot of why they ***need to come from the rural parts of the State***, not an urban community, no matter who hires them and how they are hired.
- There ***needs to be regional control and input***, including hiring, into their safety issues. Perhaps ***recruiting several VPSOs from larger villages*** to go to other villages; with those from smaller villages going to other villages rather than their own village. ***No one wants to arrest their family or friends***, so this would be one way around that, while still having someone who could adjust and fit in to the culture of the village in which they will reside.

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