

ALASKA STATE SENATE VPSO TASK FORCE

SENATOR DONALD C. OLSON

CHAIR

EMAIL:

Senator_Donny_Olson@legis.state.ak.us

(907)465-3707

(907)465-4821, FAX



ALASKA
STATE CAPITOL
ROOM 514
JUNEAU, ALASKA
99801-1182

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

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VPSO Task Force Releases Report to the Senate

(ANCHORAGE) - The VPSO Task Force has completed its report to the Senate, after holding many hearings throughout rural Alaska on how to improve public safety in the state's most remote communities. The Task Force is chaired by Sen. Donny Olson, D-Nome.

"If the Task Force recommendations are implemented, relief is coming to rural Alaska," said Senator Olson. "The VPSO Task Force did a remarkable job coming up with succinct recommendations to improve public safety in rural Alaska. Public protection is the highest priority of any government and that wasn't happening and our attempt was to guarantee this for all Alaskans."

The Task Force issued a list of findings and recommendations in its report that focused predominately around making improvements that would address the difficulty with recruitment and retention of VPSOs and the resulting impact on public safety in rural Alaska.

The main recommendations from the report are to:

- Increase the pay by approximately \$4.50 per hour (starting pay would go from \$16.55 per hour to \$21 per hour),
- Increase the number of authorized VPSOs by 60 over a four year period.

- Provide a small stipend of \$1,000 per VPSO to each community with a VPSO, to mitigate the cost of maintaining the public safety building and equipment used for public safety purposes in the community.

Other recommendations direct the Department of Public Safety and the regional Non-profits that manage the VPSO contracts to work in collaboration to develop a long range plan, a trauma debriefing program to support and assist VPSOs after traumatic incidents, to improve the public safety facilities and equipment, and to pursue alternative solutions to the problem of providing acceptable housing for the VPSOs.

Sen. Hollis French, D-Anchorage, Sen. Fred Dyson, R-Eagle River, Walt Monegan, Commissioner of Public Safety, Alaska Attorney General Talis Colberg, Loretta Bullard, President of Kawerak, Inc., and Myron Naneng, President of the Association of Village Council Presidents are also members of the Task Force.

The report, testimony from the hearings and other information used by the Task Force to conclude its report can be found on the Senate Bipartisan Working Group's website at ak.senate.org

For more information, contact Senator Olson at (907) 465-3707.

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