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To: Sen. Donny Olson

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 necessariy 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