

Alaska State Legislature

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SB 60 Alaska State Defense Force Powers

Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 60 outlines the duties and powers of the Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF) and allows trained members to bear arms. State Defense Forces are guaranteed under the U.S. constitution and may not be called, ordered, or drafted into the armed forces of the United States by the President, preserving their separation from the National Guard. (32 U.S.C. § 109)

Since Alaska has had a history of our guardsman being called forward, the ASDF is necessary for keeping Alaska and Alaskans safe. In 1999, 8 men died on the Turnagain Pass hill in an avalanche. The ASDF was the first on the scene, brought heated tents, and stayed the whole time. Even after everyone else left, ASDF stayed because the 8th person had not been recovered. ASDF stayed until he was. In 2003, ASDF members were called to assist the Alaska State Troopers and the National Guard with an attack on TAPS by Al-Qaeda was suspected by CIA, NAS, and FBI intelligence, fielding over 150 troops to Valdez, Yukon River Bridge, and Pump Station 9. In 2006, the Richardson Highway was washed out and the Valdez Police Department couldn't spare the officers required to close the road on both ends while the DOT ran equipment 24 hours a day. ASDF members were sworn in by Valdez PD and we set up headquarters at the National Guard Armory for 11 days and saved the state a fortune if they had had to hire flag-holders.

ASDF can assist in times of natural disasters, help conduct search and rescue missions, and allow Alaska State Troopers to tend to public safety matters while ASDF controls traffic or other duties. Because of regular ASDF training, and the fact that the majority of ASDF members are prior military or law enforcement officers, the bill would allow ASDF to be armed so they can more safely serve Alaskans when in harm's way.

For maintaining high training standards and morale, for ensuring a full force, equipped and ready at any given time, it is important that the rules and duties are consistent from administration to administration. Please join in supporting our Alaska State Defense Force by adding this important framework to statute, and in doing so, increase disaster assistance and security for Alaskans.

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