

Alaska State Legislature

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Representative Lesil McGuire
Chair, Judiciary Committee

TALKING POINTS

PFD Eligibility for Peace Corp. Volunteers

“An Act relating to service in the peace corps as an allowable absence from the state for purposes of eligibility for permanent fund dividends; and providing for an effective date.”

- The Peace Corps is an entirely voluntary government service, just as the military is.
- Peace Corps Volunteers make a two-year minimum commitment to serve their country overseas.
- Alaskan Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) were originally eligible to receive permanent fund dividends until they were removed in 1998. The only other group ever removed from the allowable absence list was U.S. national team (Olympic) athletes.
- Even after the PCVs and athletes were removed in 1998, a new group, the merchant marines, was added in 1999 that had never been on the allowable absence list before.
- According to the Peace Corps Office of Communications, there are currently 32 Peace Corps Volunteers from Alaska (although this number fluctuates as volunteers start or complete their 2 years of service) and 711 Alaskans have served or are serving since 1961.
- If Peace Corps Volunteers are added to the number of Alaskans eligible to receive permanent fund dividends, the reduction (if any) in the amount of each check would be a matter of pennies. In 2000 and 2001, each check would have been eight cents smaller.
- Peace Corps Volunteers only receive a only small living stipend while they serve overseas. Receiving the Alaskan Permanent Fund would nearly double their yearly income while abroad. And today’s younger volunteers face higher student loan debt and re-establishment costs when they return home.
- Peace Corps Volunteers answer questions about what its like to be an Alaskan and an American every day they are abroad. They are the best ambassadors of goodwill we have. In the words of President Bush, “they are willing to sacrifice for causes greater than themselves.”