

Alaska State Legislature

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 13, 2002

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Dividends Restored to Peace Corps Volunteers **McGuire's HB 314 Would Approve Allowable Absence for Service**

(JUNEAU) – Alaskans who volunteer for Peace Corps service will once again be eligible to receive Alaska Permanent Fund dividends, under a bill that Rep. Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage) sponsored and the House passed unanimously today.

“Peace Corps volunteers had an exemption back in 1983 that allowed them to be out of state for more than a year but still receive dividends,” McGuire said. “That exemption was suspended in 1998, but this bill remedies that situation and reinstates Peace Corps volunteers’ eligibility to receive the dividend just like other qualified Alaskan.”

Given Alaska’s small population and the relatively small percentage of Americans who volunteer for the service, House Bill 314 would restore dividend eligibility to only about 30 men and women, and would cost other recipients just a penny in decreased dividends, McGuire said.

“But more important than the money is the message this bill sends that volunteering is important to us as Americans and that it’s valued by us as Alaskans,” McGuire said. “In his state of the union address, President Bush called for Americans to commit to at least two years of service to their neighbors and nation sometime in their lifetimes. This bill would make it easier for Alaskans to respond to the president’s call.”

The Peace Corps is a federal program in which U.S. citizens who make a two-year commitment receive training in a foreign language, and in agriculture, public health, education or other skills that they then use to raise the standard of living in underdeveloped nations.

“Most the Peace Corps volunteers live on very tight budgets,” McGuire said. “They don’t even receive a salary, just a stipend that lets them live at the same standard of living as the people they serve, and a readjustment allowance of about \$5,000 if they finish their two years. This bill is an opportunity to provide them the same financial boost that other Alaskans get, and to encourage their efforts.”

Another element of the bill would let the Department of Revenue investigate dividend fraud cases and levy fines as administrative proceedings, saving the state the high costs of criminal prosecution of such cases.

[HB 314](#) moves next to the Senate for consideration.

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