



April 21, 2009
PR#09-040

End of Session Highlights for DPS

(JUNEAU, Alaska) – With the passage of the FY2010 Operating Budget for the Department of Public Safety as put forward by the Governor, DPS is able to provide significant improvements to public safety services to Alaskans. Included is full funding for Trooper positions, added Village Public Safety Officers and full implementation of the Alaska Bureau of Highway Patrol, all in an effort to make Alaska safer for its residents and visitors.

Not only does DPS have full funding for all authorized trooper positions, but all of the 43 vacancies as of August 2008 – with half of them in rural positions – are now filled.

This is an encouraging development but recruitment efforts won't stop there. The department will continue to recruit to fill new positions and keep up with natural attrition of personnel, looking both inside and outside Alaska, and with focused efforts to recruit rural Alaskans, women, and returning members of our National Guard. A change in hiring rules now allows DPS to hire already trained and certified officers directly as State Troopers. Not only does this attract highly-qualified law enforcement officers from across Alaska and the country, it saves training costs and time and augments the ranks with officers from varied backgrounds.

The Alaska Bureau of Highway Patrol is working in partnership with 5 municipalities to make Alaska roads safer, with two teams based out of Fairbanks and Mat-Su. With approved funding for 10 Trooper positions and 3 support positions we are now able to move forward with plans to improve current teams and also place an additional team on the Kenai Peninsula. These multi-agency units consist of Alaska State Troopers and patrol officers from local police departments that have statewide jurisdiction and will work to reduce fatalities and major injury collision through proactive, sustained and high-visibility enforcement, education and technology. The focus of the Bureau is on impaired driving enforcement, aggressive driving and speeding enforcement, as well as young driver education and collision investigations.

The Village Public Safety Officer program is now fully funded to support not only the 15 new positions from FY2009, but includes additional funds for 15 new VPSO positions for FY 2010. This, along with additional legislation that allows DPS to more affectively contract the program, and filling rural trooper vacancies will greatly expand public safety services in rural Alaska.

The Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault received a \$1.3 million increase in funding for FY 2010. Most of these funds will be granted to programs across Alaska to strengthen their ability to provide safety and advocacy for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and support prevention efforts in their communities. Some of the remaining monies will be used to support research on the prevalence, incidence and consequences of violence against women to provide baseline information by which to measure our success in providing safety services.