

Amanda Price
Commissioner

www.DPS.Alaska.Gov



Department of
Public Safety

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OP-ED

January 28, 2020

Focusing on the Fundamentals

By: Colonel Bryan W. Barlow, Director of the Division of Alaska State Troopers

I am not new to Alaska or to the Alaska State Troopers, having served more than 20 years in the ranks. However I write today as the new Director for the Alaska State Troopers (AST), I want to introduce myself to Alaskans and take time to tell you what I want to accomplish while serving as Colonel for this great agency. Sports coaches often tell athletes of all ages that fancy plays aren't what win games, its learning and mastering the fundamentals. I plan for AST to do just that: focus on our fundamentals.

What does that mean? It means continuing to prioritize recruitment and retention of high quality state troopers, filling our support staff vacancies, developing employee wellness initiatives, and placing focus on in-service and advanced training.

Under the Dunleavy Administration, the Department of Public Safety has received a lot of support designed to build this agency into the healthiest it's been for quite some time. We need to keep this momentum up or risk losing valuable talent from both our civilian and our trooper ranks. The goals of increasing the numbers of Troopers available to serve Alaska include decreasing the amount of time it takes for a Trooper to respond to a call for service, more active community engagement from our Troopers, and opening more Trooper posts in rural Alaska. The Alaska State Troopers are, for all purposes, a rural police agency and my focus is on strengthening our agency to serve Alaskans all through this great state more effectively.

We have seen recent success in our efforts to be a competitive employer. Our ability to recruit and retain troopers has made positive strides recently by becoming more competitive with salary rates. We must continue to be competitive by investing in our staff in other ways, like expanding training opportunities and managing expectations. Our troopers also need to be able to share their workload. When our troopers are spread thin and work too much, we risk burn out. We can't afford to recruit and train troopers just to watch them hang up their Stetson because we over worked them. This is hard on dedicated people and it is hard on budgets. Troopers need to be able to use their days off instead of getting recalled to support a short-staffed patrol shift. Just like anyone else, they have families, they get sick and they need to decompress after a long physically and mentally demanding shift.

To further support our troopers, we need to fill our vacant support staff positions. If a trooper is at a post completing tasks that an administrative assistant should accomplish, then that trooper is not out on patrol and not able to focus on what they were trained to accomplish. We need our support staff. We need Troopers. One does not exist without the other. Every position in our agency holds immense value in making the DPS work efficiently. The Alaska DPS is an incredibly dedicated and professional group of people, but they need support. Investing in all of them will result in the best possible level of service to the citizens we serve with the resources we have. Thankfully, the budget proposed by Governor Dunleavy reflects his commitment to make Alaska safe by including funding for the DPS to fill all its vacancies.

I look forward to working with everyone as we focus on our fundamentals and drive towards getting our Division of Alaska State Troopers to be the most effective as possible in our service to all of Alaska. Strengthening the Alaska State Troopers strengthens Alaska.

###

Colonel Bryan W. Barlow has served his entire 20 plus year law enforcement career with the Alaska Department of Public Safety. He has worked in both the Division of Alaska State Troopers and the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers in a variety of roles and locations.