

ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE ADOPTED RESOLUTIONS

Resolution #2021-09

A resolution in support of increased funding for community and regional jails, and a base level of funding for Village Police Officers.

WHEREAS, Alaska has a unified court system, and the criminal justice system is the obligation of the State; and

WHEREAS, local governments have the option to adopt police powers, with more than 70 having done so; and local law enforcement enforces State and municipal law; and

WHEREAS, the State has separated local law enforcement into two classes, one of which is Village Police Officers (VPOs), who have different training requirements than other public safety professionals in the state, but very similar responsibilities to other local law enforcement, and more responsibility than Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs) who received more training; and

WHEREAS, the State invests \$14 million in the VPSO program (2023), a necessary component of the overall public safety system in Alaska, for about the same number of officers as VPOs, which it contributes nothing to; and

WHEREAS, increasing public attention on public safety, including recruitment and retention, hiring practices and training, performance and outcomes, and operations, necessitates an increased level of commitment to and investment in these systems; and

WHEREAS, at the same time, 15 local governments provide community and regional jails on behalf of the State's criminal justice system; and these jails are an integral part of local and state law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, State funding for community and regional jails was static for seven years is still below FY15 levels in 2023; and in many cases, State funding is only 50% of the full cost of managing the jail on the State's behalf, and in all cases deficient; and

WHEREAS, if local governments are to effectively deliver public safety in Alaska, then the State must better contribute to their ability to do so; and

WHEREAS, additional State investment is needed to improve and adjust to the demands of these roles, to attract and retain qualified officers, and to expand training and preparedness.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that AML calls on the Governor and Legislature to fully fund community and regional jails, requiring at least an additional \$5 million more than the \$14 million currently budgeted; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that funding should be appropriated in support of Village Police Officers, to include at least coverage of police professional liability insurance, travel for training and training expenses, and a base level of pay, the estimated total of which will represent half of what the State invests in the VPSO program.

Updated December 2023.

Adopted by the majority of AML members at the Annual Business Meeting, November 20, 2020.