

SPONSOR STATEMENT

SB 308 – Increasing the duration of certain provisions of domestic violence protective orders from six months to one year

SB 308 addresses the duration of long-term domestic violence protective orders. Currently, six months is the practical limit on a long-term domestic violence protective order – otherwise known as a DVPO. SB 308 doubles the length of DVPOs to one year. Short-term, or *ex parte*, protective orders are not affected by this bill, and they would continue to be granted for a maximum of twenty days under current law.

The two parties to a DVPO are the petitioner, who is the person asking for the court's protection, and the respondent. Long-term DVPOs are only granted by a judge after formal notice to both parties and a hearing. In order to grant a DVPO, the judge must make a finding that the respondent has committed an act of domestic violence against the petitioner.

There are several benefits to this proposal. Of primary importance is that extending the time frame of a DVPO allows the petitioner a longer period of protection without having to go back to court to confront the respondent. A second benefit of extending the term of the protective order is that court system resources will be conserved. In many instances, petitioners are forced to return to court for a second order because the respondent's behavior has not changed. Granting the DVPOs for one year will decrease the need for repeat court proceedings.

Alaska continues to struggle with high rates of domestic violence, and extending the length of the domestic violence protective order is one way to address that problem. Currently, only five states have shorter terms for DVPOs than Alaska's. The vast majority of states, however, give judges the authority to impose DVPOs

of up to a year, or even longer, which has been shown to have a positive effect on the numbers of repeat offenses and requests for additional protective orders.

To look at some comparative statistics -- currently in Anchorage there are some 3,000 annual court filings for DVPOs. By comparison, Miami-Dade County, Florida, with a population of over two million, has only 7,000 filings per year. The lower ratio in Miami-Dade can be explained in part by the fact that in Florida there is no upper time limit on DVPOs.

Please join me in taking another step in our progress toward eliminating the scourge of domestic violence from our community and support SB 308.