

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE DAN SADDLER

To Co-Chair Thompson and Members of the MLV Committee:

Though I can't be there today, I wanted to put on record my strong support for HB 316, Military Facilities Zones. I was pleased to work on this legislation during the interim with Representatives Thompson and Feige, and to see it come before our committee. I see HB 316 as an important legislative tool to strengthen the position of military facilities in our state.

Alaska has 32 different military installations that are critical elements in our state economy. There are more than 24,000 active-duty, Guard and Reserve troops serving in Alaska, with an annual payroll of more than \$1.5 billion. About 13 percent of the state economy depends on the military, with the impact being especially significant near the larger installations.

These bases are a significant part of our nation's defense structure. They defend the nation's airspace and outer space; rapidly deploy forces around the world in times of crisis; support global logistics and transportation functions; and provide training opportunities that are unmatched elsewhere in the world.

We've heard recent news that does not bode well for Alaska's military bases. We've heard news of nearly half-trillion dollars in defense budget cuts over the next 10 years. We've heard of the possible loss of F-16s from Eielson Air Force Base, and of HC-130s from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. We've heard that nearly 270 civilian jobs are being cut from these two bases. And we've heard the Secretary of Defense raise the prospect of another round in the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process that could mean the further diminution of the military's presence in Alaska.

HB 316 can provide a number of significant benefits to our state and nation:

- It will provide a mechanism for bringing new federal and state money to bear on the bases.
- It will help develop infrastructure that can improve living conditions and economic prospects for the communities surrounding military facilities.
- It will help Alaska's bases become more efficient and better able to effectively perform their missions, strengthening the case against their realignment or closure.
- It will provide a mechanism to fund expansion of existing facilities to embrace new missions.
- It will help protect private - and public-sector jobs.
- It will provide another positive demonstration of Alaska's support for the military.

I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this legislation; please join me in supporting its passage.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Saddler".

Rep. Dan Saddler, Co-Chair, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee