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Bailey
2/2/09

CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5()
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY

Offered:
Referred:

Sponsor(s): SENATE RULES COMMITTEE

A RESOLUTION

Urging the United States Department of Defense to continue to provide retirement benefits for members of the Alaska Territorial Guard who served during World War II.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS, in 1942, the Alaska Territorial Guard was formed by Territorial Governor Ernest Gruening in response to Japanese activity around Alaska; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, approximately 6,389 members of the Alaska Territorial Guard served without compensation in the state while the Alaska National Guard was deployed; and

WHEREAS the Alaska Territorial Guard engaged in combat with the enemy, protected the lend-lease route that stretched from North America to the Soviet Union, and rescued downed airmen; and

WHEREAS sec. 8147 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2001 (P.L. 106-259, 38 U.S.C. 106) requires the United States Secretary of Defense to issue certificates of honorable discharge to members of the Alaska Territorial Guard based on the nature and duration of each individual's World War II service; and

WHEREAS Alaska Territorial Guard members who have been honorably discharged

are considered to be on active duty for the purposes of all laws administered by the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs, including laws relating to veterans' benefits; and

WHEREAS approximately 25 Alaska Native elders who served in the Alaska Territorial Guard are still receiving benefits; and

WHEREAS the recent decision of the United States Department of Defense to reverse the determination that service in the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II be regarded as active duty for military retirement purposes is of grave concern because it will leave approximately 25 Alaska Native elders who live in the most remote parts of Alaska without critical funds to pay the costs, among the highest in the nation, of heating fuel and food during an already tough Alaska winter;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the United States Department of Defense to honor the service provided by the Alaska Territorial Guard by continuing retirement benefits for members of the Alaska Territorial Guard; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature thanks the Alaska Congressional delegation for their swift action on behalf of the remaining elderly members of the Alaska Territorial Guard by their introduction of S. 342, which provides for the treatment of service as a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II as active service for purposes of retired pay for members of the United States armed forces; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that the United States Department of Defense continue to use its emergency and extraordinary expense funds to provide retirement benefits for the Alaska Territorial Guard members until the United States Congress passes S. 342 or H.R. 744, or the United States Department of Defense reverses its January 2009 decision.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States; the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs; the Honorable Pete Geren, United States Secretary of the Army; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.