



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of Military and
Veterans Affairs**

Office of the Commissioner

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March 7, 2016

The Honorable Bob Herron
Alaska State Legislature
406 Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Herron:

Thank you for introducing House Joint Resolution 30 encouraging use of the term "Post-Traumatic Stress Injury" instead of "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." We support this and, indeed, any effort to increase awareness of psychological injuries in all their forms, especially the emotional trauma of military combat.

As you correctly note in your resolution, combat veterans and other military service members often struggle with post-traumatic stress, sometimes for decades. The personal, familial, and societal costs of allowing these injuries to go untreated can be enormous, in both human and economic terms. It is in Alaska's greater interest to help Soldiers, veterans, and others confront and surmount psychological injuries; understanding they are indeed injuries and not individual shortcomings is a significant step toward bettering our collective mental health.

As your Resolution points out, we have seen significant advances in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries, yet many sufferers remain reluctant to seek assistance. People seeking treatment for mental health challenges are too often seen as personally responsible for their conditions. This discourages people from asking for help, especially those from a military culture that expects strength, self-reliance, and resilience, even in the face of the violent chaos of military combat.

The stigma attached to the term "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" carries the implication the person suffering is at fault or somehow inadequate to deal with the aftermath of an externally applied injury. We appreciate your Resolution's intent to dispel that notion and eliminate the stigma of psychological injuries caused by external events. Your resolution is an important step toward recognizing and diminishing the long-standing injustice of this inaccurate and outdated term.

Please let us know how we may assist you in passing HJR 30 through the Alaska State Legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Laurel J. Hummel".

Laurel J. Hummel
Brigadier General, Alaska National Guard, and
Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs



March 11, 2016

Representative Bob Herron
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HJR 30 – Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Resolution

Dear Representative Herron,

Please accept our sincere gratitude for your efforts in the fight to overcome the public stigma and discrimination associated with post-traumatic stress, and help bring honor and parity to all those who have been wounded in action against an enemy of the United States. With the number of service members and veterans, as well as their families now suffering from invisible wounds and their unwarranted consequences, the importance of your efforts here cannot be overstated.

In the end the fight against stigma is a war of words and the more voices to be heard, the larger the arsenal. The presentation of HJR 30 legitimately makes Alaska a pioneer in this resolve. Only fitting from the state whose motto is *North to the Future*.

Respectfully,

Thomas Mahany
Executive Director
Honor for ALL

April 7, 2016

Commissioners Hummel and Doehl:

I am the Executive Director of Honor for ALL, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to establishing visible honor for invisible wounds. I write today to inform you of and ask for your help in our efforts to establish a recurrent national day of recognition when we can honor, without exception, all our wounded.

In 2015, the United States Senate, House of Representatives and 8 individual states presented resolutions and/or proclamations designating 27 June as Post-traumatic Stress Awareness Day. Some still standing with the word disorder, but many making the progression to Post-traumatic Stress *Injury* Awareness Day. I can report to you that at present 37 of the 50 states are now on board to present PTSI Awareness Day resolutions and/or proclamations for 2016. One of these is the state of Alaska thanks to the efforts of Representatives Herron and Tuck on the legislative resolution side.

By introducing the word "injury" in lieu of "disorder" in the designation, it our intention is to effectively diminish the stigma associated with invisible wounds and their perception as mental illness. We believe the use of the word disorder conveys a negative image which can discourage some from seeking care and others from caring. Its use in this instance also assails the sense of honor that should accompany any wound received by a service member in action against an enemy of the United States. It is not our intention to eliminate any established clinical language, only to offer a kinder, more honorable civic term. Precedent for such a dual name allowance is documented in DSM-5 under §300.23 - *Social Anxiety Disorder, Social Phobia*. One diagnosis with two allowable names. No difference in criteria, eligibility or benefits.

With your help we can overcome this deplorable stigma and better ensure our service members and veterans embrace their invisible wounds in a timely, confident manner, ultimately saving lives and preserving families.

For addition information, please contact me directly via return email or by phone 248 224 4875.

Thank you for your consideration,

Thomas Mahany

Executive Director



Honor for ALL

Visible Honor for Invisible Wounds