



January 21, 2011

Senator Bill Wielechowski
Chairman
Senate Affairs Committee

REF: SB 33

One of the most frustrating and difficult problems we often face as the state's only statewide Veterans Foundation (501c3) representing about 80,000 veterans and their families, is when a veteran or service member dies or is killed in action and we can not find their family.

This happens more then you would think. It's really part of our culture now that many elderly veterans, as a result of divorce or estrangement, die without an ability to notify their next of kin. Just in December of last year we had a two tour Marine, Vietnam Veteran die at home alone and our best efforts and those of the US Department of Veterans Affairs as well as the Department of Defense were unable to find his ex-wife nor his son so that they could be involved in his internment at our National Cemetery.

We strongly support this bill, introduced by you on behalf of our active duty, guard, and reserves that makes it clear that the State of Alaska is in line with most other states in a process that provides for the disposition of service members remains.

We hope this bill becomes law this session, so that this year we can have a process recognized by the State to address this tragedy.

Paul Sheehan
Executive Director