



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resolution is an important step toward recognizing and diminishing the long-standing injustice of this inaccurate and outdated term.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 blue ink that reads "Laurel J. Hummel".

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