



February 24, 2017

Senator David Wilson

REF: SB 46

Making October 25th African American Soldiers' contribution to building the Alaska Highway Day

Please include this statement in any bill hearings on SB 46 and if possible, I will attempt to testify during any hearings provided I have adequate notice and am not on travel.

Although, as an Alaskan since 1972, I have been aware of the contributions of American Black's serving in the U.S. Army for the construction of a large portion of the Alaska Highway, I did not know that America per se was not aware nor celebratory of this extraordinary achievement by black Americans at a time and place few would have expected given the racial segregation within the services still at that time.

My review of the history of this challenging work by the 93rd, 95th, and 97th Engineer Regiments in the critically strategic effort to build a road from the lower 48 states to the Alaskan Territory as an important component of our effort to defend America during and after the Second World War – and the absolute silence across our media and in our schools, reminds this soldier of coming home from Viet Nam in 1966.

The soul of the congressionally chartered Viet Nam Veterans of America national veterans service organization is, "Never again . . ." "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.

The Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. was founded by Chapter 904/Anchorage of Viet Nam Veterans of America and the Alaska State Council of VVA. So, "Never again . . ." is a constant heart beat in who we are and why we exist and what we are committed to.

Therefore, it is with strong feelings that the Foundation speaks out in support of SB 46 and that Oct 25th be remembered for the extraordinary achievement of these men, otherwise not allowed to express their liberty because of the color of their skin, but still absolutely committed to the basic notions of this republic. The Foundation will also plan to participate as it is allowed in the celebrations and memorial events later this year.

We will also be reaching out to each of the 50 State Council Presidents of VVA and asking them to join this effort by Alaska to notice, honor, and celebrate the commitment and success of these extraordinary men. Our hope will be to engage national media so that more Americans become aware of this story and that we remind all Americans of this every October 25th for years to come.

This action is consistent with our 501c3 status as it is an extension of our mission to educate Americans and their representatives on the value and commitment of our service members, veterans and their families to our most basic freedoms and responsibilities.

It is an honor,

Ric Davidge, MPA
Chairman