

March 21, 2017

Dear Representative Tarr and Senator Wilson:

We would like to thank you for your work and the work of your staff members on HB 94/SB46. We also thank the numerous co-sponsors of these two bills and the members of the House State Affairs Committee for passing SB 46 out of committee as the bill that will go forward. Listening to the hearing today, we were amazed to hear about the African-American soldiers who worked so bravely and expertly in the building of the Alaska Highway. We know the story of the Highway itself, and we, as many Alaskans did, traveled that highway on our move to Alaska fifty years ago . But we have never heard the specific story of the men who helped in the building effort who were at the time segregated members of the Army.

Their story is long past due in the telling. The testimony today of a New Orleans son, whose father had served, eloquently provided the most compelling reason to make October 25 a day of recognition for the contributions of African-American soldiers in the building of the Alaska Highway. He explained how he had tried to research the stories the his father told about the building of the Highway, but he could find no information on the role of the African-Americans in this effort. These soldiers were an important part of that time period, but their story had barely been recorded. This will now change when SB 46 becomes law. And it is important that Alaskan children be introduced to this history, so we were glad to hear that curriculum materials are being prepared. Thank you again for your efforts to bring this story to its rightful place in the history of Alaska and World War II.

Sincerely,

Bob and Judy Andree, Juneau