

SARAH PALIN
GOVERNOR
GOVERNOR@GOV.STATE.AK.US



P.O. Box 110001
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0001
(907) 465-3500
FAX (907) 465-3532
WWW.GOV.STATE.AK.US

STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

January 27, 2009

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It was with great concern that I learned of the recent decision by the Department of Defense to rescind the program that currently provides retirement payments to veterans of Alaska's Territorial Guard (ATG). This unfortunate decision was made without any notice to those affected and will cost a group of elderly Alaska veterans a significant portion of their retirement income at a time when the cost of living, particularly in rural Alaska, is substantially higher than in the rest of the United States.

In 2004, Congress fully vetted this issue and decided that service in the ATG was the same as military service. This is the right and proper way to honor these brave individuals who answered the call of duty during times of great national peril.

Prior to World War II, Alaska's territorial Governor was authorized by Congress to organize a two-branch military response organization - the organized National Guard, and the ATG, which would mobilize to help defend Alaskans in the event of an invasion. An estimated 6,600 men and women, mostly Alaska Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts, responded to that call. Instead of hunting, trapping and fishing, they patrolled rural Alaska and served as the eyes and ears of the Army for more than five years without pay and benefits.

It took our nation almost 60 years to have these defenders of our territory honored for their time in the ATG, and for their service to be counted the same as federal military service. While most died waiting for their recognition, some have survived to receive their honorable discharge from the United States Army.

Now they are being told, again, that their ATG service is not worthy of federal recognition, and that is not right.

These people are our heroes.

President Barack H. Obama

January 27, 2009

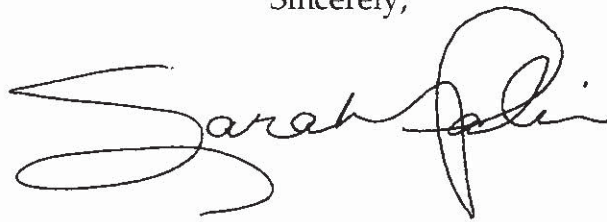
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The stellar service of these mostly rural, mostly Native, soldiers is to Alaska today what the service of the militia at Lexington and Concord was to New England.

I urge you to remember all that these valiant members of the ATG sacrificed while defending this country and ask that you reconsider this decision and immediately reinstate the retirement benefits that Congress already recognized in 2004 and that these heroes have certainly earned.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Palin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "S" at the beginning and a distinct "P" at the end.

Sarah Palin
Governor

cc: The Honorable Robert Gates, Secretary, Department of Defense
The Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary, Department of Veteran's Affairs
The Honorable Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate
The Honorable Mark Begich, United States Senate
The Honorable Don Young, United States Congressman
Major General Craig Campbell, Adjutant General/Commissioner
Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Jerry Beale, State Veterans Administrator, Office of Veteran Affairs,
Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Talis Colberg, Attorney General, Alaska Department of Law
Michael Nizich, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor

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bcc John W. Katz, Special Council to the Governor
Mark Kelsey, Special Assistant, Office of the Governor
Craig Tillery, Deputy Attorney General, Alaska Department of Law

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0101.01 comments thoughts concerns

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