

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI

SB 222: Appropriation for Base Closure & Realignment Strategies Sponsor Statement

"I believe that in the future, whoever holds Alaska will hold the world. I think it is the most important strategic place in the world."

- U.S. General [Billy Mitchell](#) to the U.S. Congress in 1935

Defense Secretary Panetta recently announced that the Pentagon will seek new rounds of military base closures as part of the budget-cutting process. Over the next decade, the Army will drop from 562,000 to 490,000 soldiers and the Marine Corps from 202,000 to 182,000 marines in an effort to cut \$487 billion. These cuts could have a devastating impact on Alaska's and our nation's security.

During the 2005 Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC), Eielson Air Force Base was originally designated for realignment. A strong community and state effort opposed the Department of Defense recommendation by pointing out the critical strategic importance of Eielson, the loss of training opportunities, and the fact that its realignment would not have produced the estimated savings DoD anticipated.

As the Department of Defense begins to review options for budget cuts and base closure and realignments are considered, states across the nation have begun advocating for their military bases and personnel. It is of vital importance that Alaska uses every avenue to persuade the President and Defense Secretary that Alaska's geographic location is of great strategic importance for the nations' security. In addition, Alaska's military force is of great importance to our economy with 32 military installations, more than 23,000 active duty service members and more than 37,000 active family members, contributing approximately 13 percent to Alaska's economy.

Senate Bill 222 proposes to appropriate \$300,000 to the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs for a specialized consulting firm to advocate to the United States Department of Defense, U.S. Congress and the President that Alaska's military bases and service members are of strategic importance to the defense of our nation. It is imperative that Alaska begins a strategic effort to protect our military bases and personnel. Passage of SB 222 will provide Alaska another tool to fight for Alaska's Armed Forces.