

Karen Sawyer

From: Rowland, Mindy B (GOV) [mindy.rowland@alaska.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2009 5:44 PM
To: GOV Legislators All; GOV Legislators Staff Partial
Subject: Governor Palin Pleased with Army Payments to ATG Veterans

Dear Legislator,

Our valued AK Territorial Guard Veterans will be able to continue receiving their retirement benefits. Let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you
Mindy

Mindy Rowland

Deputy Legislative Director
Office of Governor Sarah Palin
465-3994

Governor Palin Pleased with Army Payments to ATG Veterans
Letter urges President Obama to permanently reinstate benefits

January 28, 2009, Juneau, Alaska – Governor Sarah Palin applauded Secretary of the Army Pete Geren's decision to continue retirement payments to the Alaska Territorial Guard members on a temporary basis. A congressional fix will be needed to fully reinstate the retirement money rightfully earned by these veterans.

The Alaska Territorial Guard members are primarily Alaska Natives living in rural areas.

"Rural Alaskans face the highest food and energy costs in the nation, and these veterans need their retirement checks now more than ever," Governor Palin said. "Using the emergency fund to provide monetary protection for these 26 veterans is the right thing to do."

Governor Palin sent a letter directly to President Barack Obama asking him to honor these Native Alaskan veterans who gave their service without question during World War II, and asked for nothing in return. She urged the president to immediately reinstate their retirement benefits.

"The nation is in an economic downturn, and this is the worst time for the Army to cut these retirement checks to veterans who are in their late 80's and early 90's," said Palin.

A copy of Governor Palin's letter to President Obama can be found at:
<http://gov.state.ak.us/pdf/GovernorJan29-PresObama.pdf>



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Army ends retirement payments to Alaska Territorial Guard members

Todd Walker
Updated: 01/23/2009 02:43:39 PM AKST

They served Alaska and America in their time of need in World War II. Just recently, members of the Alaska Territorial Guard were recognized for that service, but now, surviving members are about to lose a major lifeline.



(KTVA)

"We've been informed that the Army intends to stop payments for retirement benefits for those members of the ATG," said Lt. Gen. Craig Campbell, Commissioner of the Department of Military

and Veterans Affairs.

Those retirement benefits paid up to \$1,000 per month to the 27 surviving servicemen. Exactly why the payments are being taken away has not been made clear.

"(The Army) believes the current program isn't compliant with public law," Campbell said.

That law was written by Sen. Ted Stevens in 2000. It provided honorable discharges for ATG members, but the only specification about benefits says they would not be paid retro-actively, nothing requiring a benefit payment.

"If this is the way we are going to treat our veterans, our WWII veterans," said Bob Goodman, president of the Alaska Territorial Guard Association, Inc.. "Seniors that are 80 and 90 years old, and their surviving spouses, we are



Lt. Gen. Craig Campbell, Commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, explained the Army's reasoning, Thursday, January 22, 2009. (KTVA)

pretty sick."

Goodman has been fighting for ATG members for years.

"Once they started issuing the discharges," he said. "I don't see how they can take the entitlements away from the people who have already drawn the discharges."

Goodman said Lt. Gen. Campbell and Gov. Palin have been dragging their feet for years in regards to ATG issues and that it wasn't a priority of Campbell's.

Campbell said it's unconscionable the Army would take this kind of action. It's so

unconscionable that it made it's way to the floor of the U.S. Senate. Sen. Lisa Murkowski said she and the rest of Alaska's congressional delegation are working to shore up any vagaries in the law and is disappointed in Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

"I believe you owe an apology to these people," she said.

ATG members who received the checks may owe the money back to the federal government. Any other benefits they currently get, like healthcare, may also be cut off.



Bob Goodman, president of the Alaska Territorial Guard Association, Inc., denounced the Army's actions. Thursday, January 22, 2009. (KTVA)

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Army provides pay to militia members

by Rachel D'Oro
The Associated Press
Wednesday, January 28, 2009

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- Sen. Mark Begich says the Secretary of the Army has decided to provide emergency funds to surviving members of a World War II Alaska militia whose retirement pay was being cut off because of a legal technicality.

Army officials last week said a military analysis determined the law recognizing the Alaska Territorial Guard's service as federal active duty had initially been misinterpreted.

Julie Hasquet, a spokesperson for Begich, said Army Secretary Pete Geren will dip into an emergency fund to cover the pay for 26 former members of the largely Alaska Native guard for two months while Congress works on legislation to fix the law.

Hasquet said the survivors will receive a one-time emergency payment equal to two months pay.

The benefits amount to as much as \$557 a month.



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