

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2009

The Honorable Bill Wielechowski
Co-Chair, Joint Armed Services
Committee
State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau, AK 99811

The Honorable Nancy Dahlstrom
Co-Chair, Joint Armed Services
Committee
State Capitol, Room 411
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Senator Wielechowski and Representative Dahlstrom:

We write to follow up on the issue of the retirement pay for 26 former members of the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG).

As you know, in June 2008 these individuals were issued military retirement credit for the period of their service in the Territorial Guard and they began receiving a modest increase in their retirement pay. However, in January 2009, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) stopped the retirement payments, based on a finding that they were erroneously awarded due to a misinterpretation of the law.

We immediately contacted the Secretary of the Army seeking a solution and to his credit, Secretary Pete Geren tapped the Army Emergency and Extraordinary Expense Fund to continue the retirement payments for two months. At the same time, we introduced legislation in Congress providing lifetime retirement pay to these Guardsmen. The regular order in the Congress is to consolidate all defense-related legislation into one defense authorization bill, followed by a defense appropriations bill. Accordingly, it is unlikely that the Congress will consider our legislation until later this year. These bills are usually sent to the President in the summer and fall.

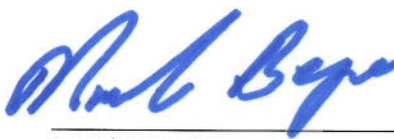
We have been asked by members of the Alaska Legislature whether it would be appropriate for the State to consider a special appropriation representing the difference in retirement pay that each of the 26 would receive if his Territorial Guard service were credited toward military retirement and what each will receive as a result of the January 2009 DFAS reinterpretation for the remainder of calendar year 2009.

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We think it is important to maintain the economic safety net for these 26 elders and are supportive of this approach. These payments would serve as a "bridge" so these Guardsmen can continue to receive the modest increase in retirement payments to which we all believe they are entitled while we continue to pursue a permanent solution.

On behalf of these Alaska Territorial Guardsmen, thank you in advance for your consideration of our views.

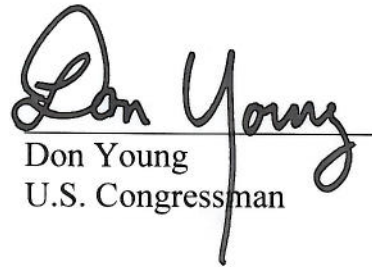
Sincerely,



Mark Begich
U.S. Senator



Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator



Don Young
U.S. Congressman