

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 20, 2009

The Honorable Sarah Palin
Governor
State of Alaska
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Palin:

I write to underscore the request of a Fairbanks veteran to urge your support and action to advance an Alaska State Veterans Cemetery, likely to be located in Alaska's Interior. During my Veterans Town Hall meeting in Fairbanks earlier this week, veteran Morgan Solomon asked that I approach you about this issue. His request, in firm and colorful language, received the overwhelming support of the more than 40 veterans in attendance, and my support as well.

As you know, at issue is a federal program which provides support to states to establish veterans' cemeteries. I commend you for including \$250,000 in your original Fiscal 2010 capital budget submission for initial architecture and engineering for this cause. But I was disappointed that you eliminated it in your revised budget as part of your overall budget cutting exercise. Meanwhile, I understand the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs can submit a grant pre-application to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for construction of the cemetery, but has not yet done so.

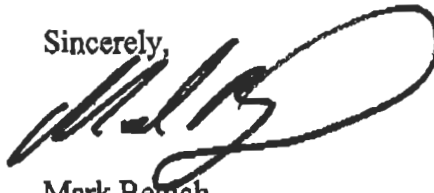
The VA estimates that 1,500 veterans will die in the next 10 years in the Fairbanks area. A Veterans Cemetery in the Interior is broadly supported by Alaska's veterans community and would serve as a relatively affordable yet highly visible way to demonstrate our respect to the men and women who have served and sacrificed so much for our state and nation.

Governor Palin
February 20, 2009
Page 2

As a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am pleased to work with you and your departments on this vital issue and to ensure that a pre-application is well received by the VA when it is submitted.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Begich', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Mark Begich
U.S. Senator

CC:

Morgan Solomon

LTG (AK) Craig Christianson, DMVA

Senator Gary Stevens, President, Alaska State Senate

Senator Joe Thomas

Senator Charlie Huggins

Representative Mike Chenault, Speaker, Alaska House of Representatives

Representative David Guttenberg