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February 16, 2009

The Honorable Carl Gatto, Chair
House Military & Veterans' Affairs Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 108
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

HB 97 (Guttenberg)—Support

Dear Chair Gatto:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we urge you and your colleagues on the House Military & Veterans' Affairs Committee to support HB 97, authored by Representative David Guttenberg and co-sponsored by Representatives Berta Gardner and Beth Kerttula.

HB 97 would establish a fund for the maintenance of and development of future veterans' cemeteries in Alaska. As you know, the only veterans' cemeteries are in Anchorage and Sitka yet the Fairbanks area alone has over 11,000 veterans, many of whom are AARP members. Certainly veterans and their families would like to have a cemetery closer to where they live.

Burial in a veterans' cemetery is one of the last honors we can offer our fellow citizens who have served in the Armed Forces. We think it is a well-deserved tribute to these men and women who served our country. It is a proper thank-you to the veterans and their families.

Undoubtedly there may be some costs associated with a new cemetery. HB 97 does provide some provisions for partial funding although additional funding might be required. Our veterans didn't weigh the costs when they joined the armed services. Surely we can bear the costs of this final thank-you to them.

AARP recommends an "AYE" vote on HB 97.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marie Darlin

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Representative David Guttenberg