



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of Military and
Veterans Affairs**

Office of the Commissioner

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The Honorable Chris Tuck
Alaska State Legislature
404 Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Tuck:

Thank you for introducing House Concurrent Resolution 25 to designate June 27, 2016, as "Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day." We support this and, indeed, any effort to increase awareness of psychological injuries in all their forms, especially the emotional trauma of military combat.

As you correctly note in your resolution, combat veterans and other military service members often struggle with post-traumatic stress, sometimes for decades. The human and economic costs of allowing these injuries to go untreated can be enormous, on a personal level, for sufferers' families, and to Alaska society in general. It is in our greater interest to confront and surmount psychological injuries; understanding they are indeed injuries and not individual shortcomings is an important step toward bettering our collective mental health.

Treatments for these injuries are steadily improving, but many sufferers remain reluctant to seek assistance. People seeking treatment for mental health challenges are too often seen as personally responsible for their conditions, which does not inspire people to ask for help, especially those from a military culture that expects strength, self-reliance, and resilience in the face of everything a hostile world can throw at them. The stigma attached to the term "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" carries the implication the person suffering is at fault or somehow inadequate to deal with the aftermath of an externally applied injury. Anything we can do to eliminate that stigma is worth pursuing. This resolution represents one more step toward recognizing and diminishing this long-standing injustice.

Please let us know how we may assist you in gaining the necessary support to pass this measure through the Alaska State Legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Laurel J. Hummel".

Laurel J. Hummel
Brigadier General, Alaska National Guard, and
Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs