

Written Testimony of Nelson N. Angapak, Sr.
Veteran, U. S. Army, Honorable Discharge, 1969 to 1971
Submitted to: House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs,
House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs
In support of HR 6

My name is Nelson N. Angapak, Sr.; and I am a Yupik Alaska Native and a U. S. Army veteran, I served in active duty from 1969 to 1971. I was honorably discharged from the United States Army in 1971. I have served as an advocate of the veterans, especially the American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian veterans, who have served in the U. S. Armed Forces good part of my professional and private life.

This written statement is in favor of the passage of HR 6.

I've advocated for improved delivery of healthcare for Alaska Natives and in particular, those who live in rural Alaska and rural America when I served on the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans of the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs for 6 years. I've served as a team member of the Alaska Federation of Natives on advocating for Congressional Legislation that would authorize Native Allotments for the Alaska Natives who served in active duty in the U. S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War Era. I'm happy to advise you that President signed S. 47 into law on March 12, 2019. This law authorized Native Allotments of the Vietnam War Era and the heirs of these warriors who have passed on.

Thank you for the introduction of this resolution and thank you for accepting this written statement testimony in support of the passage of HR 6: A RESOLUTION Expressing support and appreciation for the National Native American Veterans that is being considered by the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs, House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

This is a great resolution coming from the Alaska State Legislature supporting the construction of the National Native American Veterans Memorial on the grounds of The National Museum of the American Indian. I was fortunate enough and privileged to have attended the grand opening ceremony of the museum on September 21, 2004. The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye and the Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell, member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, both U. S. Senators welcomed and honored approximately 20,000 American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Americans who attended the grand opening of our museum. It was reported that this was the largest gathering in Washington D.C. of indigenous people of the United States of America to its time.¹

HR 6 properly and correctly has the following provisions:

WHEREAS: Native Americans across the United States, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, have a long, proud, and distinguished tradition of military service in the armed forces of the United States; and

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Museum_of_the_American_Indian

WHEREAS: Native Americans have historically served in the armed forces of the United States in numbers that far exceed their representation in the population of the United States;...

Alaska Natives and Native Americans have a long and proud history of military service, serving in greater numbers on a per capita basis than any other ethnic group in the United States of America. More than 42,000 Alaska Natives and Native Americans served in the military in the Vietnam Era, and over 90% of these service men and women enlisted as opposed to being drafted.²

The museum will honor the Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians who have served in the U. S. Armed Forces from the time this nation became a nation. These men and women have defended this nation; and many of them were killed in action in the battlefield theaters across the world. These include, but is not limited to the following:

- Alaska Territorial Guards (ATG): In 2000 Congress passed legislation that granted U. S. Veteran status to the Alaska Natives who served in active duty as members of the Alaska Territorial Guard, this was a branch of U. S. Army, during World War II. These men and women served, some as long as five years, without ever receiving monetary compensation of any type. This statute allowed former members of ATG to receive their discharge documents in form of DD214 for the time they served in active duty during WWII. The patriotism of these men and women to the United States of America was demonstrated by their willingness to serve in active in the U, S. Army although they served without ever paying paid for their service. While no members of ATG ever faced combat during their time in service, they were prepared this nation in battle if it ever happened in Alaska during their time in service.³
- Navajo and Other Code Talkers: During World War II, the Marine Corps used one of the thousands of languages spoken in the world to create an unbreakable code: Navajo language. This contribution by the code talkers led, in part, to the military victories that the U. S. Armed Forces experienced during WWII.⁴
- Lori Ann Piestewa, Hopi Indian, became first ever Native American woman in the history of the United States of America to die in combat situation while serving in the U. S. military; and furthermore, she was the first woman in the U.S. military killed in the Iraq War.⁵

Conclusion

I am humbly asking you all to consider voting in favor of HR 6.

I ask this written statement be incorporated into the hearing record of HR 6. If you have any questions regarding this written statement, please send me emails with those questions at nangpak@gci.net.

² <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/BIA/OJS/ojs-careers/history/index.htm>

³ <http://veterans.alaska.gov/alaska-territorial-guard.html>

⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2008-featured-story-archive/navajo-code-talkers/>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lori_Piestewa