



Fairbanks North Star Borough

MAYOR'S OFFICE

Mayor@fnsb.gov
Main: (907) 459-1300

Representative Grier Hopkins
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 3
Juneau, AK 99807

April 12, 2021

Dear Representative Hopkins,

Thank you for sponsoring HB144, "An Act establishing the Alaska Military Affairs Commission; and relating to the duties and powers of the Alaska Military Affairs Commission." The FNSB Assembly has identified the creation of a legislatively authorized Military Affairs Commission as a legislative priority for 2021, with the goal of providing advice, counsel, and recommendations to the Governor, the Alaska Legislature, and State agencies on initiatives, programs, capital projects and legislation that continue and increase the role that Alaska's military installations, the national Guard, and National Reserve play in America's defense strategy and the economic health and vitality of the State.

Global and US national security issues are increasingly becoming more focused on the Arctic. With this additional focus, Alaska's importance as a strategic location is only becoming more prominent. It wasn't long ago that Alaska was fighting to keep its military bases from being closed. Now, Alaska is experiencing significant growth in military presence. While much of the attention has been focused on the Interior as a result of the basing of two F35 squadrons – and the more recent announcement of four KC-135 stratotankers – at Eielson Air Force Base, there are opportunities, risks, and concerns statewide.

Currently, there lacks a statewide coordinated effort regarding military policy. The establishment of this Commission builds upon the goals of the first Alaska Defense Forum, hosted in Fairbanks in 2019, to increase statewide collaboration and communication regarding the defense industry and military-related issues throughout Alaska. Locally, FNSB has found success in this approach through the work of the Tiger Team, which advocated against the closing of Eielson Air Force Base and strongly supported the basing decision of the F35 squadrons.

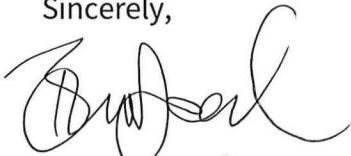
While Alaska is strategically located to meet the needs of US national security, there are challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed. First, the military is increasingly concerned about the quality of life of service members and their families. Issues such as the quality of education and the availability of spousal employment are now being used in basing determinations. Other issues, such as available infrastructure and utilities, are also of concern. With the establishment of a Military Affairs Commission, the state can be better



prepared and positioned to support not only the installations and their missions, but the service members and their families as they integrate into our community

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Bryce J. Ward

Mayor

Bryce.Ward@fnsb.gov

(907) 459-1300

