

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATORS THERRIAULT, Olson

Introduced: 1/28/09

Referred: Finance

A RESOLUTION

1 **Supporting the efforts of the Alaska Congressional delegation to restore military service**
2 **retirement credit for members of the Alaska Territorial Guard who served during**
3 **World War II.**

4 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 **WHEREAS**, in 1942, as World War II engulfed the nation, Governor Ernest Gruening
6 organized the Alaska Territorial Guard; and

7 **WHEREAS** nearly 6,400 Alaskans, mostly Alaska Natives, volunteered to defend the
8 territory; and

9 **WHEREAS** members of the Alaska Territorial Guard engaged in missions directed by
10 the United States military, including combat with the Japanese, rescuing downed pilots, and
11 protecting the Lend-Lease route between Alaska and Siberia; and

12 **WHEREAS**, in 2000, because of the efforts of Alaska's U.S. Senator, Ted Stevens,
13 the United States Congress passed legislation that required that service as a member of the
14 Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II of an individual who was honorably discharged
15 be considered active duty for purposes of all laws administered by the United States Secretary

1 of Defense; and

2 **WHEREAS** those who served in the Alaska Territorial Guard have received credit
3 from the United States Army for active duty service in the United States Army for purposes of
4 military retirement payments; and

5 **WHEREAS**, based on a new interpretation of the law, the United States Department
6 of Defense has denied military retirement benefits, effective February 1, 2009, for 25 Alaska
7 Native elders who served in the Alaska Territorial Guard and who had qualified for and were
8 receiving retirement benefits; and

9 **WHEREAS** the benefits for the Native elders who served in the Alaska Territorial
10 Guard will be reduced by an average of \$386 a month, and some by more than \$500 a month,
11 which is a substantial portion of their income; and

12 **WHEREAS** U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, U.S Senator Mark Begich, and U.S.
13 Representative Don Young have prepared and intend to introduce legislation to correct any
14 related deficiency in the law; and

15 **WHEREAS** the 25 Alaska Native veterans of the Alaska Territorial Guard are entitled
16 to the military retirement benefit they are now being denied;

17 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports the efforts of the
18 Alaska Congressional delegation to secure and restore credit for military retirement for
19 service during World War II by members of the Alaska Territorial Guard; and be it

20 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that President Obama should direct the United States
21 Secretary of Defense to issue an apology to the veterans of the Alaska Territorial Guard for
22 the adverse decision made by the United States Department of Defense.

23 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
24 the United States; the Honorable Robert M. Gates, United States Secretary of Defense; and
25 the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the
26 Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.