

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE SENATE RULES COMMITTEE

Introduced: 1/28/09

Referred: Finance

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States Department of Defense to pay veterans benefits retroactively**
2 **and to continue to provide retirement benefits for members of the Alaska Territorial**
3 **Guard who served during World War II.**

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

5 **WHEREAS**, in 1942, the Alaska Territorial Guard was formed by Territorial
6 Governor Ernest Gruening in response to Japanese activity around Alaska; and

7 **WHEREAS**, during World War II, approximately 6,389 members of the Alaska
8 Territorial Guard served without compensation in the state while the Alaska National Guard
9 was deployed; and

10 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Territorial Guard engaged in combat with the enemy,
11 protected the lend-lease route that stretched from North America to the Soviet Union, and
12 rescued downed airmen; and

13 **WHEREAS** sec. 8147 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2001 (P.L.
14 106-259, 38 U.S.C. 106) requires the United States Secretary of Defense to issue certificates
15 of honorable discharge to members of the Alaska Territorial Guard based on the nature and

1 duration of each individual's World War II service; and

2 **WHEREAS** Alaska Territorial Guard members who have been honorably discharged
3 are considered to be on active duty for the purposes of all laws administered by the United
4 States Secretary of Veterans Affairs, including laws relating to veterans' benefits; and

5 **WHEREAS** approximately 25 Alaska Native elders who served in the Alaska
6 Territorial Guard are still receiving benefits; and

7 **WHEREAS** the recent decision of the United States Department of Defense to reverse
8 the determination that service in the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II be
9 regarded as active duty for military retirement purposes is of grave concern because it will
10 leave approximately 25 Alaska Native elders who live in the most remote parts of Alaska
11 without critical funds to pay the costs, among the highest in the nation, of heating fuel and
12 food during an already tough Alaska winter;

13 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the United
14 States Department of Defense to honor the service provided by the Alaska Territorial Guard
15 by providing retroactive benefits and continuing retirement benefits for members of the
16 Alaska Territorial Guard; and be it

17 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
18 Department of Defense to assess the effect of the loss of military retirement benefits on
19 Alaska Native elders to determine how best to compensate them for the loss of payments; and
20 be it

21 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that
22 a senior official from the United States Department of Defense issue official apologies to the
23 Alaska Native elders who were members of the Alaska Territorial Guard and who received
24 letters indicating that their benefits would be discontinued.

25 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
26 the United States; the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, United States Secretary of Veterans
27 Affairs; the Honorable Pete Geren, United States Secretary of the Army; and the Honorable
28 Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don
29 Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.