

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

March 10, 2011

1:34 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Dan Saddler, Co-Chair  
Representative Steve Thompson, Co-Chair  
Representative Carl Gatto, Vice Chair  
Representative Bob Miller

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Alan Austerman  
Representative Bob Lynn  
Representative Sharon Cissna

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 7  
Relating to awarding the Alaska Decoration of Honor to certain members of the military.

- MOVED HCR 7 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HCR 7  
SHORT TITLE: DECORATION OF HONOR  
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) SADDLER

02/23/11	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/23/11	(H)	MLV
03/10/11	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 120

**WITNESS REGISTER**

No witnesses to record

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:34:11 PM](#)

**CO-CHAIR STEVE THOMPSON** called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

Representatives Thompson, Gatto, Miller, and Saddler were present at the call to order.

**HCR 7-DECORATION OF HONOR**

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CO-CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 7, Relating to awarding the Alaska Decoration of Honor to certain members of the military.

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CO-CHAIR SADDLER, sponsor, presented HCR 7, paraphrasing from the following written sponsor statement [original punctuation provided]:

This resolution awards the Alaska Decoration of Honor to thirty individuals who were killed in the line of duty while honorably serving our state and country, between January 1, 2009 and February 15, 2011.

Established in 2007 in House Bill 244, the Alaska Decoration of Honor is awarded to military service members from Alaska, or those service members deployed while stationed in Alaska, who were killed in action or in support of combat action.

The Legislature must authorize the award by resolution, so the decoration can be presented to the recipients' survivors. In 2008, the Legislature awarded the medal to 171 individuals dating back to statehood. In 2009, it authorized the award for another six individuals.

Passage of HCR 7 will allow the families of these thirty individuals to receive the decoration in honor of their loved ones' sacrifice. While it is our fervent hope that all those in uniform will return home from their service safely, the reality is that a few will not. It is our obligation, and our privilege, to authorize this decoration in their honor.

I respectfully request favorable support of House Concurrent Resolution 7.

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REPRESENTATIVE MILLER asked whether there is a strict definition of the language "killed in action."

CO-CHAIR SADDLER advised the language also applies to those killed while in service - not in combat per se - such as those killed during training or maintenance accidents.

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REPRESENTATIVE GATTO questioned the need for the language "or in support of combat," and asked whether anyone serving is not in support of combat.

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER explained that there are a number of former military troops who are now civilians employed by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), and who are deployed with military contingents in harm's way.

CO-CHAIR THOMPSON stated the civilians are called Alaska's Expeditionary Forces.

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REPRESENTATIVE GATTO pointed out the Merchant Marines in World War II were civilians.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER relayed that House Bill 244, which originally authorized the Alaska Decoration of Honor, includes "individuals who have been killed in action, who are engaged in action against an enemy, engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force, serving with friendly forces, friendly foreign forces engaging in armed conflict, serving in or deployed to or from a combat zone designated by presidential order."

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER clarified that he did not want a strict definition requiring death occurring in a firefight, but that a recipient may have been in support or behind the lines. He said he was satisfied.

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REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if the language should be "killed in the line of duty."

CO-CHAIR SADDLER said "I don't think so."

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO observed it is members' responsibility to challenge the language and ensure it reflects the legislature's intent.

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CO-CHAIR THOMPSON asked for assurance that the zero fiscal note is accurate.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER advised there is a zero fiscal note because the Joint Armed Services Committee has already appropriately expended funds for an inventory of 200 medals, which is sufficient to meet the present need.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER, in response to Representative Gatto, said the medal is approximately 2-3 inches in diameter. The medal was designed by Alaskan artist Jon Van Zyle, who is a Vietnam era veteran.

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CO-CHAIR THOMPSON, upon determining no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony.

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CO-CHAIR SADDLER moved to report HCR 7 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being no objection, HCR 7 was reported out of the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 1:42 p.m.