

SB

46

<TARGET><BILL>SB 46</BILL><SUBJECT>SB
46</SUBJECT><COMM>HSTA30</COMM></TARGET>

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Interim:
Senate District D
600 E. Railroad Avenue
Wasilla AK 99654
Phone: 907-376-4866
Sen.David.Wilson@akleg.gov



Session:
State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau AK 99801-1182
Phone: 907-465-3878
Toll-Free: 800-862-3878
Sen.David.Wilson@akleg.gov

Senator David Wilson

Senate Bill 46

October 25th – African American Soldiers' Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day!

Senate Bill 46 recognizes the contributions of African American Soldiers in building the Alaska Highway and commemorates those extraordinary efforts by establishing October 25th as "African American Soldiers' Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day."

Why October 25th? On this day, African American Army troops of the 93rd and 95th regiments constructing the Alaska-Canadian (ALCAN) highway north from Dawson Creek, met the white troops constructing the ALCAN Highway heading south. The troops connected the two segments on October 25, 1942, at Contact Creek, near Mile Post 590 in the Yukon Territory.

Four regiments of African American Army Engineers from the 93rd, 95th, and the 97th Engineer General Services Regiments and the 388th Engineer Battalion were deployed to Alaska to assist in building the 1,500 miles of road (The highway cost \$138 million to build at that time). The 10,607 men, of which a third were African American, built the road in eight months and 12 days. This extraordinary accomplishment was compared to the construction of the Panama Canal.

Little recognition has been given to the African American soldiers for their contributions in building the ALCAN Highway. For example:

- The National Archives contains only a few dozen photos of the African American troops among the hundreds taken of the ALCAN Highway construction;
- African Americans were edited out of a 1991 National Geographic feature on the ALCAN highway, despite the fact that the magazine obtained interviews of seven men who served building the ALCAN;
- And, the official 759-page U.S. Army history of the Corps of Engineers covers African Americans' involvement with a one-sentence footnote.

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The road was built as an overland route across Alaska during World War II (WW II) for strategic purposes in our country's fight against Japanese aggression. A shortage of manpower early in WW II led to the U.S. Army's decision to send African American troops to Alaska to assist in the ALCAN Highway construction.

At the formal dedication of the road, Brig. Gen. James A. O'Connor singled out the African American troops for special recognition: "Someday the accomplishments of these African American soldiers – achievements accomplished far from their homes - will occupy a major place in the lore of the North country," he promised. Because of the African American troop's performance in contributing to the construction of the ALCAN Highway, military and civilian leaders decided to desegregate the armed services in 1948. The Federal Highway Administration has called the ALCAN Highway, "the road to civil rights."

This year, 2017, marks the 75th anniversary of the ALCAN Highway. It's fitting we recognize these men and celebrate their contributions in constructing the ALCAN Highway!

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Senator David Wilson

To: Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chairman
Senate Rules Committee

Date: March 8, 2017

From: Senator David Wilson

RE: SB 46 Bill Calendar Request

Please accept our request to schedule Senate Bill 46 – “October 25th – African American Soldiers’ Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day” at your earliest convenience for consideration in the House State Affairs Committee.

SB 46 was heard and passed the Senate Transportation, the State Affairs Committees, and the Senate floor without any amendments. Version A of the bill, the sponsor statement, a sectional analysis, and a zero fiscal note from the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs are attached for your reference.

The proposed legislation recognizes the contributions of African American Soldiers in building the Alaska Canadian Highway (ALCAN) and commemorates those extraordinary efforts by establishing October 25th as “African American Soldiers’ Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day.”

Why October 25th? On this day, African American Army troops of the 93rd and 95th regiments constructing the Alaska-Canadian (ALCAN) highway north from Dawson Creek, met the white troops constructing the ALCAN Highway heading south. The troops connected the two segments on October 25, 1942, at Contact Creek, near Mile Post 590 in the Yukon Territory.

If you have any questions or need any additional information regarding this hearing request, please feel free to contact Gary Zepp at 465-4711.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Wilson".

LEGAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF LEGAL AND RESEARCH SERVICES
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY
STATE OF ALASKA

(907) 465-3867 or 465-2450
FAX (907) 465-2029
Mail Stop 3101


State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
Deliveries to: 129 6th St., Rm. 329

MEMORANDUM

February 2, 2017

SUBJECT: Sectional Analysis (Work Order No. 30-LS0431\A)

TO: Senator David Wilson
Attn: Gary Zepp

FROM: Doug Gardner 
Director

You requested a sectional summary of the above-described bill. As a preliminary matter, note that a sectional summary of a bill should not be considered an authoritative interpretation of the bill -- the bill itself is the best statement of its contents.

Section 1: This bill amends AS 44.12 by adding a new section to article 2 that if enacted, would establish October 25 of every year beginning in 2017, as "African American Soldiers' Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day." This section provides that African American Soldiers' Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

DDG:dls
17-083.dls

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2017 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SB 46
Fiscal Note Number: _____
() Publish Date: _____

Identifier: SB046-MVA-COM-2-9-17
Title: OCT 25: AFR-AMER SOLDIERS AK HWY DAY
Sponsor: WILSON
Requester: (S) TRA

Department: Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs
Appropriation: Military and Veterans' Affairs
Allocation: Office of the Commissioner
OMB Component Number: 414

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2018	Included in	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
	Appropriation Requested	Governor's FY2018 Request	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2018	FY 2018					
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2017) cost: 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2018) cost: 0.0 (separate capital appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? N/A

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:

Not applicable, initial version.

Prepared By: <u>Brian P. Duffy</u>	Phone: <u>(907)428-7210</u>
Division: <u>Administrative Services</u>	Date: <u>02/09/2017 10:30 AM</u>
Approved By: <u>Laurel J. Hummel</u>	Date: <u>02/09/17</u>
Agency: <u>Office of the Commissioner</u>	

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SB 046

Analysis

Passage of SB46 would have no material effect on the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs or the products and services we deliver, as such, we are submitting a zero fiscal note.

SB 46 – October 25th – African American Soldiers’ Contributions to Building the Alaska Highway

List of Testifiers:

- Ms. Claudia Rollins and/or Katrina Gill, daughters of Mr. Reginald Beverly, Retired 95th Engineer Regiment (he is 102 years old);
- Ms. Lael Morgan, ex-University of Fairbanks Journalism Professor;
- Ms. Jean Pollard, Retired Anchorage Educator; and,
- Mr. Verdie A. Bowen, Sr., Director of the Office of Veterans Affairs, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans’ Affairs.

Gary Zepp
Legislative Staff
Office of Senator David Wilson
Alaska State Capitol, Room 115
(907) 465-4711

Gary Zepp

From: Shala Dobson <shalakay@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2017 3:56 PM
To: Gary Zepp
Subject: Alaska Highway Day SB46

I wholeheartedly support SB 46 which allows October 25 to always be celebrated at Alaska Highway Day. This will give honored recognition to the Black Army Engineers who built the Alaska section of the Alaska Highway and the meeting of the black troops with the white troops at Contact Creek on October 25. As a member of the Alaska Highway Project I feel this will help to bring this important story of our Alaska history to the forefront. This complete story of the building of the Alaska Highway needs to be publicized.

Thank you,
Shala Dobson

Sent from my iPhone

Gary Zepp

From: ejfw <ejfw@gci.net>
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2017 6:44 PM
To: Gary Zepp
Subject: letter of support and SB 46 supplemental material
Attachments: 20170210_182646-1.jpeg

Hello Gary

My name is Ed Wesley. I have been a resident of Alaska 42 years. I served 18 months of military service at Ft Greely, Alaska with an honorable discharge. My wife, Frances and I have raised four children in Alaska and all are productive citizens.

As a long term resident, I offer my support to Senate Bill 46 that recognizes the historical achievements of African Americans of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers that completed the US connection of the Alcan Highway during World War II. This historic event lead to the integration of the US Military. I salute the sponsors of this bill for their efforts to highlight for Alaskans a moment of Alaska History during Black History Month. See attachment I mentioned to you.

Ed Wesley

US Army Veteran

(907) 350-0419



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2016

No. 30

Senate

CONTRIBUTIONS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARMY ENGINEERS TO THE STATE OF ALASKA

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the immense contributions of the African-American community to my State of Alaska and to our great Nation.

I want to highlight in particular a contingent of troops, members of the African-American Army Engineers, who were stationed in Alaska during World War II, hundreds of men who served our Nation at a time when their basic human rights were being denied, some 6 years before the military was desegregated. In spite of that despicable injustice, they exhibited a great love for this country, even a willingness to die for this country.

These soldiers were stationed in Alaska among several regiments assigned to build the ALCAN—Alaska-Canada—Highway. For a State as big and diverse as Alaska, infrastructure is critically important to the well-being of our communities. And in the 1940s, infrastructure assets—roads, bridges, ports—were few and far between. In fact, there was no road linking the contiguous United States to Alaska through Canada. We were isolated.

We think of construction projects today, the many tools and machines our hard-working

crews have at their disposal. But back then, many of those technologies and advancements didn't exist, making this enormous undertaking all the more daunting. Worse still, the machinery that was available was often given to the all-White units, leaving the African-American servicemembers ill-equipped. Nonetheless, the men of the African-American Army Engineers labored on under extreme weather conditions, creating a roughly 1,700 mile cross-continental corridor in a mere 8 months.

The project, too, came at a time when our Nation was under imminent threat in the Pacific, just 2 months after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Our country needed to get supplies and soldiers to the furthest stretches of U.S. territory. Without the ALCAN, Alaska would not be the cornerstone of our national defense in the Pacific and the Arctic, nor the prosperous land of opportunity we see today.

For these enormous contributions and for their selfless service to our country, we thank the thousands of African-American servicemembers who for too long were dismissed and overlooked.



February 24, 2017

Senator David Wilson

REF: SB 46

Making October 25th African American Soldiers' contribution to building the Alaska Highway Day

Please include this statement in any bill hearings on SB 46 and if possible, I will attempt to testify during any hearings provided I have adequate notice and am not on travel.

Although, as an Alaskan since 1972, I have been aware of the contributions of American Black's serving in the U.S. Army for the construction of a large portion of the Alaska Highway, I did not know that America per se was not aware nor celebratory of this extraordinary achievement by black Americans at a time and place few would have expected given the racial segregation within the services still at that time.

My review of the history of this challenging work by the 93rd, 95th, and 97th Engineer Regiments in the critically strategic effort to build a road from the lower 48 states to the Alaskan Territory as an important component of our effort to defend America during and after the Second World War – and the absolute silence across our media and in our schools, reminds this soldier of coming home from Viet Nam in 1966.

The soul of the congressionally chartered Viet Nam Veterans of America national veterans service organization is, "Never again . . ." "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.

The Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. was founded by Chapter 904/Anchorage of Viet Nam Veterans of America and the Alaska State Council of VVA. So, "Never again . . ." is a constant heart beat in who we are and why we exist and what we are committed to.

Therefore, it is with strong feelings that the Foundation speaks out in support of SB 46 and that Oct 25th be remembered for the extraordinary achievement of these men, otherwise not allowed to express their liberty because of the color of their skin, but still absolutely committed to the basic notions of this republic. The Foundation will also plan to participate as it is allowed in the celebrations and memorial events later this year.

We will also be reaching out to each of the 50 State Council Presidents of VVA and asking them to join this effort by Alaska to notice, honor, and celebrate the commitment and success of these extraordinary men. Our hope will be to engage national media so that more Americans become aware of this story and that we remind all Americans of this every October 25th for years to come.

This action is consistent with our 501c3 status as it is an extension of our mission to educate Americans and their representatives on the value and commitment of our service members, veterans and their families to our most basic freedoms and responsibilities.

It is an honor,

Ric Davidge, MPA
Chairman

3705 Arctic Blvd #415, Anchorage, AK 99503
907 229 5328 rdavidge@cylaska.com

200 W 34th Avenue, #825
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
February 26, 2017

Testimony
SB 46-Senator David Wilson
Senate State Affairs
February 28, 2017

In researching a story for the 50th anniversary of the ALCAN Highway in the early 1990s, I learned that the Alaska section had been built by black members of the Corps of Engineers who were thought to be incapable of performing on a war front by many of their Army high command. Their task—which required punching through virgin wilderness on a route blocked by the Rocky Mountains and sub-Arctic permafrost, during the roughest winter on record—was initially predicted to require 12 years and likened to construction of the Panama Canal. Yet the black troops performed so well, in such short order, that the road was operational in less than two years and many of the black builders subsequently went on to acquit themselves equally well fighting in war zones around the globe during World War II.

As a result, the U.S. Army became the first government agency to integrate, yet my investigation showed the black builders of the ALCAN had been written out of history. Moving to rectify this, the Department of Journalism, University of Alaska Fairbanks, where I taught, sponsored two reunions for black veterans to document their story, and created a museum exhibit on their feat that toured Alaska, Northwestern Canada, the Black Archives at Tallahassee A & M, and finally—at the insistence of the late Sen. Ted Stevens, and General Colin Powell—the Pentagon.

This show garnered the attention of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and major media networks. In addition, it prompted the making of an impressive documentary by Public Broadcasting and publication of books by major houses. Yet as the 75th anniversary of the highway building approaches, few remain aware of the origin of Alaska's only land link to the outside world, or the extraordinary ramifications of its building.

Please help fill this gap, and honor our highway builders. It's still a mighty fine road.

Lael Morgan, Alaska writer
Currently professor via Distance Education, University of Texas at Arlington
Professor Emeritus University of Alaska Fairbanks
Voted Alaska Historian of the Year, 1998
Alaska Woman's Hall of Fame 2014
Winner of the Evangeline Atwood Award, Alaska Historical Society, 2015

laelmorgan@cs.com
907-248-6356

Alaska Highway Testimony
February 28, 2017

To: Gary and other Legislators
Re: The Passing of Senate Bill 46

My name is Katrina Beverly Gill and I am the daughter of Mr. Reginald Beverly who lives in Ruther Glen, Virginia. My dad is one of over 4,000 black soldiers who built the Alaska Highway in 1942. He is now 102 years old. Throughout my lifetime, he has shared many of his experiences with my sisters and me.

When he went to build the Alaska Highway, he was a rarity because he was a black recruit with a university degree. He said, "I was drafted December 5, 1941, two days before Pearl Harbor. I was a high school math teacher. Once drafted, I only had time to report to school the next morning, call the class roll and bid my students and administration goodbye. From there, I traveled two miles to Bowling Green to catch the bus to go to Fort Meade, Maryland. I was twenty-six years old."

My Dad, Mr. Beverly had received a Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia State University, the first fully state-supported four-year institution of higher learning for blacks in America. He was assigned to the 95th Regiment.

While serving in Alaska as a regimental surveyor building the Alcan Highway, Mr. Beverly had to endure the treacherous weather while living in substandard conditions such as living in tents with ice approximately one inch thick on the inside while white soldiers lived in buildings.

While instructing other army surveyors using sophisticated surveying skills and instruments, he had no stripes while his white trainees wore strips. When an army superior observed this situation, he immediately asked, "Where are this soldiers' stripes?" Seeing that this soldier had no stripes, the army superior demanded that this he be given appropriate strips immediately. Mr. Beverly said stripes were delivered to him early on the very next morning!

I do approve the Senate Bill 46. I fully support the passing of this Bill to recognize the Black Soldiers who worked extremely hard on the Alkan Highway and to have a holiday on October 25th of each year. This day is befitting since this was the day that a Black Soldier and a white soldier shook hand upon completion of such a tremendous project!

Thank you very much and I do hope that Senate Bill 46 is passed.

Katrina Beverly Gill

Testimony
SB 46-Senator David Wilson
Senate State Affairs
March 5, 2017

In the spring of 1942 America's leaders watched, helpless, as the Empire of Japan drove American forces in headlong retreat across the Pacific. The terrifying vulnerability of remote Alaska, critical to defending American interests in the Pacific, brought an old issue to the top of their agenda. Men interested in Alaska and the Canadian territories, concerned to defend them or interested in economically developing them, had kept the idea of a land route from the United States to its Alaska Territory on the agenda for years, but had never succeeded in bringing it to the top. The Japanese brought it to the top in just one day—December 7, 1941.

FDR's order to get the road built galvanized the Corps of Engineers, and the Corps dispatched seven regiments to British Columbia, Yukon Territory and Alaska—creating some of them, literally, as they boarded trains heading north, organizing them on the fly. To the consternation of its generals, the Corps didn't have enough white soldiers for seven regiments; black men would have to do for three of them. Young white officers led the segregated black soldiers of the 93rd, 95th and 97th through the bitter cold, endless rain, and sucking muskeg of the isolated northern wilderness.

Six regiments, including the black 93rd and the black 95th, worked in Canada. The seventh regiment, the black 97th, worked in Alaska.

The 97th came up from Florida, and winter still gripped Valdez when they landed in late April. General Simon Bolivar Buckner, commander of American forces in Alaska, had reluctantly accepted the black regiment, but he wouldn't allow them near Alaska's citizens. The 97th would march through Valdez as quickly as possible to bivouac in the cold 13 miles north of town. In the end, they wouldn't even be allowed to unload equipment and supplies at Valdez. A small detachment of white troops and civilians would unload and truck the supplies out to them.

The young black men of the 97th shivered in frost coated tents while their commander, Colonel Stephen Whipple, tried to figure out how to get men and equipment hundreds of miles inland to the proposed route of the Highway. The first leg of their journey would follow the Richardson Highway over Thompson Pass, but an avalanche plugged the pass in 1942 so the 97th worked through May to help the Alaska Road Commission unplug it. From Thompson Pass they would make their way to Gulkana and then to Slana and finally through the dreaded Mentasta Pass to Tok, where they could begin building the Alcan south toward Canada.

There were some white men involved with the project in Alaska. First, the three regiments who worked in Yukon Territory, two of them white, got themselves and their equipment into Canada through the port at Skagway, Alaska, but they were just passing through. Second, a very few white men manned the small port detachment at Valdez to bring supplies out to the 97th. Third, the white men of the Alaska Road Commission worked with the 97th at Thompson Pass.

The original plan called for a white regiment, the 18th to work north from Whitehorse. The black 97th would work south and the two regiments would meet in Alaska. In the end, though, it didn't happen that way. The 97th crossed the border and their climactic meeting with the 18th occurred at Beaver Creek in Canada.

The white men who made the greatest contribution to actual road construction in Alaska were the experienced, well paid and well equipped civilian contractors supplied by the Public Roads Administration (PRA) to work with the 97th. They deserve a great deal of credit. And, thanks to Army public relations, they got a lot of credit. Photographers, newsreel cameras and reporters flooded to record the epic of the Alcan.

But the young black men of the 97th, totally inexperienced, fresh from the semi-tropical Deep South, forced to survive an Alaska winter in tents so they wouldn't contaminate the local population, enduring the torment of mindless prejudice, deserve even more credit. Photographers, newsreel cameras and reporters came to the white regiments and the PRA civilians. For 74 years the black men have been ghosts in the historical record—vague in the background. In 2015 a trained and educated black archivist at the National Archives in College Park, MD informed one of us that “there were no black soldiers working on the highway.”

We can't change history, but we can fix the historical record. We can bring the accomplishments, sacrifice and patriotism of these black men out of the shadows and give them the credit they so richly deserve.

We suggest that passing SB-46 is, simply, the right thing to do.

Christine and Dennis McClure

Daughter and Son-in-Law of a white officer who served in 1942 with the segregated 93rd Engineers

Authors of [We Fought the Road](#), a new book about the black soldiers who worked on the Alaska Highway, to be published in 2017 by Epicenter Press.

Christine and Dennis McClure

christinemcclureak@gmail.com

828-713-3168

Dennismcclure111@gmail.com

Alaska Highway Testimony
March 20, 2017

To: Gary Zepp and other Legislators

Re: Senate Bill 46 (Refers to African America Soldiers' Contributions to Building the Alcan Highway)

My name is Claudia Beverly Rollins and I am the daughter of Mr. Reginald Beverly who lives in Ruther Glen, Virginia. My dad is one of over 4,000 black soldiers who built the Alaska Highway in 1942. He is now 102 years old. Throughout my lifetime, he has shared many of his experiences with my sisters and me.

When he went to build the Alaska Highway, he was a rarity because he was a black recruit with a university degree. He said, "I was drafted December 5, 1941, two days before Pearl Harbor. I was a high school math teacher. Once drafted, I only had time to report to school the next morning, call the class roll and bid my students and administration goodbye. From there, I traveled two miles to Bowling Green, Virginia to catch the bus to go to Fort Meade, Maryland. I was twenty-six years old."

My Dad, Mr. Beverly had received a Bachelor of Science Degree from Virginia State University, one of the first fully state-supported four-year institutions of higher learning for blacks in America. He was assigned to the 95th Regiment.

While serving in Alaska as a regimental surveyor building the Alcan Highway, Mr. Beverly had to endure the treacherous weather while living in substandard conditions such as living in tents with ice approximately one inch thick on the inside while white soldiers lived in actual buildings.

During this time, while instructing other soldiers using his surveying skills and sophisticated instruments, Mr. Beverly had no stripes while white soldiers that he was instructing wore strips. When a Colonel Thompson saw Sargent Beverly and observed that he no stripes, he said, "Give that man some stripes!" Mr. Beverly said stripes were delivered to him on the very next morning!

I do approve Senate Bill 46. I support this Bill to recognize the contributions of African American Soldiers who worked extremely hard on the Alcan Highway and completed this task in record time! I also support making October 25th of each year the official "Alaska African American History Soldier Contribution Day." This day is befitting since this was the day that a Black Soldier and white soldier shook hands upon completion of such a tremendous project!

Thank you Gary Zepp and Legislators for giving me this opportunity to communicate with you in support of Senate Bill 46.

Claudia Beverly Rollins

Hello Mr. Zepp, my name is Ceylon Mitchell. I am a retired veteran of the United States Air Force and with my family we have lived in Anchorage since September 1992. I am calling in as a proud Alaskan because my Father was one of the 4,000 Patriot Black Soldiers that helped build the Alaska Highway. My Father was Tec 5 James A. Mitchell. He was from Suffolk, Virginia and arrived and worked on the Canadian sector of the Highway in 1942. He was assigned to the 93rd General Services Reg. which worked from the Canadian sector going North to the Regiments that connected the Alaska Sector. After the 93rd completed their work on the Highway they were assigned to the Aleutian Islands to help remove the Japanese that had taken over part of the islands.

I am proud of SB 46 because it is one way that the Soldiers may be honored for their work that they performed in the War affords. There is very little written in the history books about their work in Alaska because the military was segregated, they were not allowed in the villages and they were not wanted here, but their labor was needed. Because of their work they are apart America History, Black History and Alaska History. The building of the Highway was not only a major contribution to the war affords, but also a major factor in the defense of Alaska and its future. This is a new day and there is enough positive history of Alaska to share. Just think if it were not for the Highway we all maybe speaking Japanese at this time. Have a good day and God Bless your work.

Dear Legislators,

I support SB 46! Let's make October 25th the official "Alaska Highway Day" forever. By doing this it will honor and recognize the 4,000 black soldiers who built the Historic Alaska Highway and, give them the credit they rightfully deserve.

Thank you,

Paula Perry-Edwards

March 21, 2017

Dear Representative Tarr and Senator Wilson:

We would like to thank you for your work and the work of your staff members on HB 94/SB46. We also thank the numerous co-sponsors of these two bills and the members of the House State Affairs Committee for passing SB 46 out of committee as the bill that will go forward. Listening to the hearing today, we were amazed to hear about the African-American soldiers who worked so bravely and expertly in the building of the Alaska Highway. We know the story of the Highway itself, and we, as many Alaskans did, traveled that highway on our move to Alaska fifty years ago . But we have never heard the specific story of the men who helped in the building effort who were at the time segregated members of the Army.

Their story is long past due in the telling. The testimony today of a New Orleans son, whose father had served, eloquently provided the most compelling reason to make October 25 a day of recognition for the contributions of African-American soldiers in the building of the Alaska Highway. He explained how he had tried to research the stories the his father told about the building of the Highway, but he could find no information on the role of the African-Americans in this effort. These soldiers were an important part of that time period, but their story had barely been recorded. This will now change when SB 46 becomes law. And it is important that Alaskan children be introduced to this history, so we were glad to hear that curriculum materials are being prepared. Thank you again for your efforts to bring this story to its rightful place in the history of Alaska and World War II.

Sincerely,

Bob and Judy Andree, Juneau

Received 3.8.17

I am writing in regards to SB 46 and the state recognizing only the black soldiers who worked to build the highway and the message it sends to not just Alaska, but America. I don't understand the need to bring attention to the work specifically done by black soldiers when in all of the years I've lived here I have not seen much in the way of news on *any* of the men that worked on the highway.

Per Sen. Wilson's own statement:

"SB 46 provides the recognition that is due **the men** who helped contribute to the construction of the ALCAN Highway"

Why, then, is the state considering recognizing only one race? If the Legislature wants to publicize the story of the crews, publicize the ENTIRE crew. Use photos and tell the story of how ALL of the men building the Alaska Highway worked equally as hard. Why demean the work of the white soldiers by not recognizing them?

Please don't make yet another headline about race. As a 40+ year resident of Alaska, I am asking this: If the Alaska Legislature is considering a holiday with SB46, make it about ALL of men that worked to build the great Alaska Highway.

Thank you for your time,

--

Lisa Duntley
Anchorage, Alaska

Senate Bill 46 – “October 25th – African American Soldiers’ Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day”



93rd Engineer Regiment



95th Engineer Regiment



97th Engineer Regiment

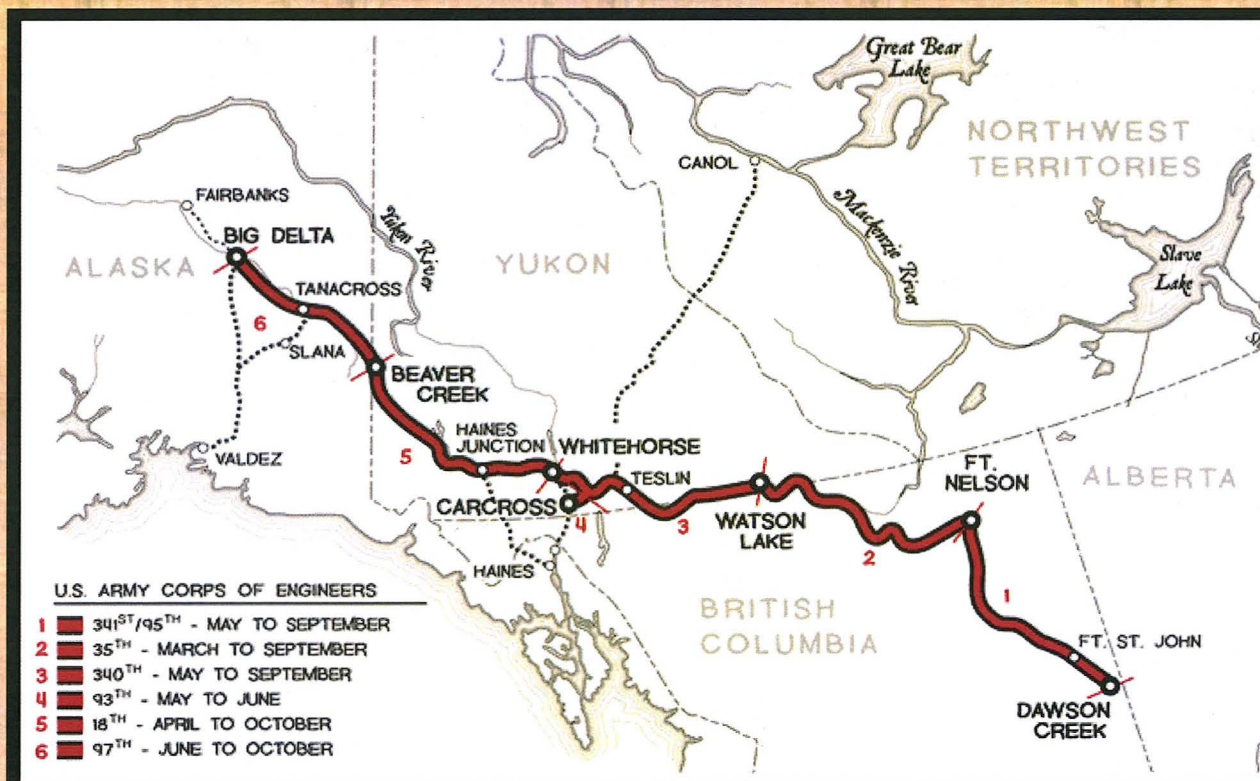
Why October 25th?

On October 25, 1942, the 97th Engineer Regiment heading south met the white troops from the 18th Engineer Regiment heading north and completed the road's last link. Later, the New York Times reported what happened when they "met head-on in the spruce forests of the Yukon Territory."

"Corporal Refines Sims Jr., an African American from Philadelphia, who was driving south with a bulldozer when he saw trees starting to topple over on him, slamming his big vehicle into reverse, he backed out just as another bulldozer, driven by Private Alfred Jalufka of Kennedy, Texas, broke through the underbrush."



The Alaska Highway is considered one of the biggest and most difficult construction projects ever completed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. It stretches 1,422 miles from Dawson Creek, British Columbia, to Delta Junction, Alaska, at a cost of \$138 million dollars (\$2.1 billion in today's dollars).

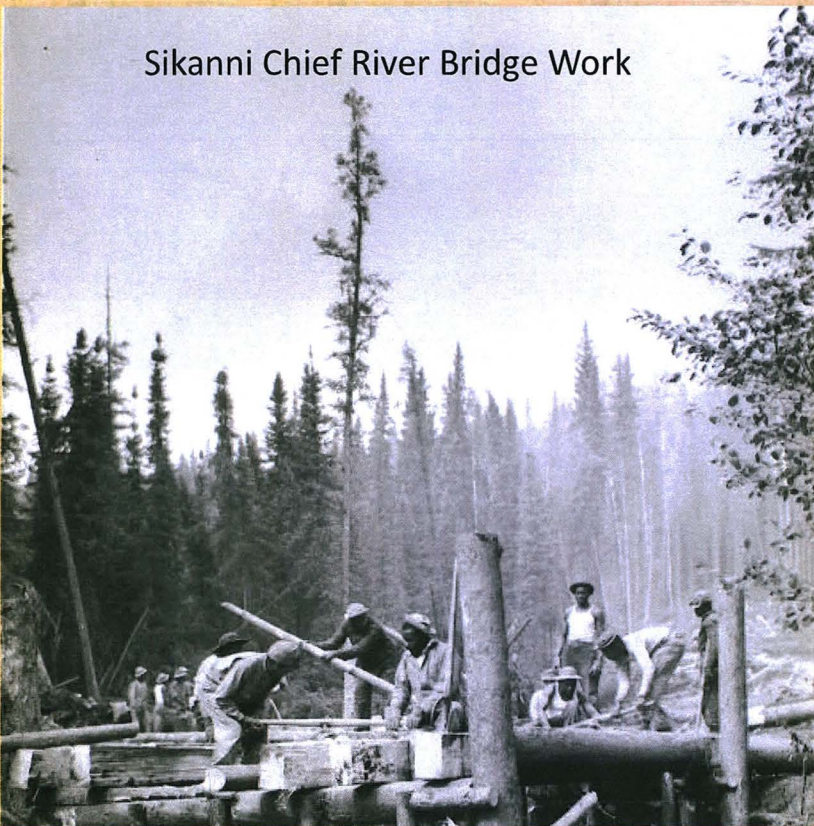


Alaska Highway – “The Road to Civil Rights”



The African American Army regiments that built the Alaska Highway established a reputation for excellence, especially in the field of bridge building. However their accomplishments were ignored by mainstream media and press. It took decades for them to receive proper recognition for their achievements. Some say they were as “legendary” as the Tuskegee Airmen and the Buffalo Soldiers.

Sikanni Chief River Bridge Work

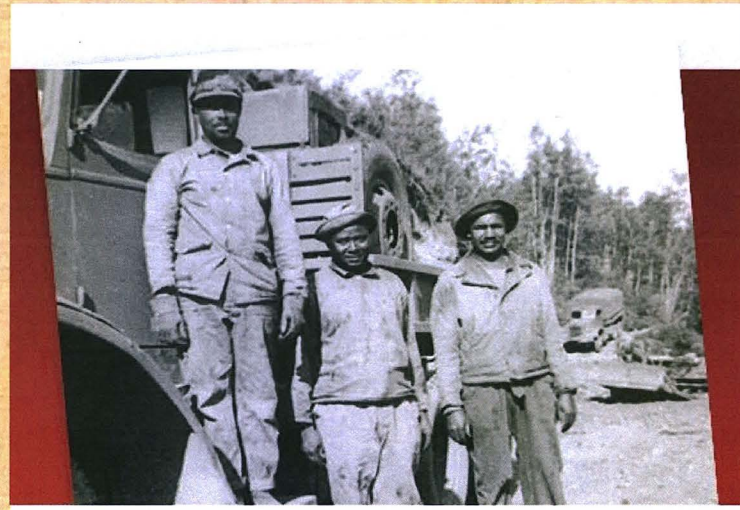


Portrait of a soldier working on the Alaska Highway in 1942. The Army engineers assigned to the project had withstand severe cold while working with poor equipment and supplies. The role of black troops in the highway's construction – underplayed until recently – contributed to the full integration of American armed forces after the war. (Courtesy Alaska State Library, Fred B. Dodge Photograph Collection)

Why the recognition of the African American Soldiers?

It's about the historical context. Race relations in America were very different in 1942 and opportunities for African Americans were rare and expectations were low. Racial segregation included: housing, medical care, education, employment, transportation, and social segregation (restaurants, drinking fountains, bathrooms, etc.).

The movie "Alaska at War" was a documentary on Alaska's role in World War II, such as the opening of oil fields, the Japanese bombing of Dutch Harbor, the struggle to recapture the Aleutian Islands, and the construction of the highway. "Not one African American soldier was shown in the movie," stated Eugene Long, who was enlisted in the 95th Engineer Regiment deployed to Alaska to assist in building the Alaska Highway.



Why the recognition of the African American Soldiers?

Consider the timeline for the Safeguards of Civil Rights:

1865 = 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude.

1868 = 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted U.S. citizenship to former slaves.

1870 = 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provided African American men the right to vote.

1875 = The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was passed which forbid racial segregation in accommodations.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court sustained the constitutionality of Louisiana's requirement that railroad companies provide "separate but equal" accommodations for white and black passengers.

Over the next 25-35 years, equality in racial relations progress was lost, particularly in the South. By 1910, segregation was firmly established across the South and most of the border region.

In 1954, legal segregation in schools was banned in the U.S after a series of rulings in the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1964, all legally enforced public segregation was abolished by the Civil Rights Act.

The U.S. War Department's tradition and policy mandated the segregation of African Americans into separate units, led by white officers. During the construction of the Alaska Highway, African American troops were ordered to not leave camp and mingle with the locals, while the whites were allowed to mingle. They were treated unequally and yet defied expectations in many situations, with even fewer resources.

Why the recognition of the African American Soldiers?

Little press or mainstream media has been given to the African American soldiers, examples of the lack of press coverage of the African American troops include:

- National Archives contains only a few dozen photos among the hundreds taken of the Alaska Highway construction.
- African Americans were edited out of a 1991 National Geographic feature on the highway, despite the fact that the magazine obtained interviews of seven men who served building the Alaska Highway.
- A souvenir booklet ("Alaska Highway", Army Service Forces) published in 1944 includes 100 photos but only one of an African American soldier.
- The official 759-page U.S. Army history of the Corps covers African American troop involvement with a one-sentence footnote.



Why the recognition of the African American Soldiers?

This event and others that followed during World War II influenced our American leaders and some believe that it was a turning point in race relations in America. By 1948, President Truman signed into law a desegregation plan for the armed forces.

In 1992, Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after seeing Ms. Lael Morgan's exhibit in Fairbanks stated, "I had no idea black men had done anything like this." "They are deserving of recognition."

Douglas Brinley (Rice University Historian), "the Alaska Highway was not only the greatest feat of the World War II; it is a triumph over racism."

Gen. James O'Connor, during the Alaska Highway dedication stated, "Some day the accomplishments of the African American troops-achievements accomplished far from their home-will occupy a major place in the lore of the North country."

This happened in Alaska!!

- Mr. Reginald Beverly
95th Engineer Regiment
102 years young!



Acknowledgment and Thanks!



The legacy of the African American Army soldiers wouldn't be known today nor officially recognized by the military if not for the works of many. Just to name a few:

The U.S. Park Service; U.S. Army Corp of Engineers; Heath Twitchell Jr. (Historian); James Eaton (Curator of the Black History Archive at Florida A&M University); Ted Stevens (U.S. Senator); Andrew Molloy (Head of Pentagon's Affirmative Action Office); Colin Powell (Retired Four Star General); Stan Cohen (Author); John Virtue (Author); Mike Dunham (Anchorage Daily News); Cornelia Dean (New York Times); Tim Ellis (KUAC News); Rickie Longfellow (News Writer); Bill Gifford (Washington City Paper); Kani Saburi Ayubu (Black Art Depot Today); Douglas Brinley (Rice University-Historian); Jean Pollard (Educator) and **most importantly**, University of Alaska Journalism Professor Lael Morgan.

Thank you all for your contributions in revealing this remarkable story and your support of Senate Bill 46's efforts to establish October 25th as "African American Soldiers' Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day." ¹⁰

I am writing in regards to SB 46 and the state recognizing only the black soldiers who worked to build the highway and the message it sends to not just Alaska, but America. I don't understand the need to bring attention to the work specifically done by black soldiers when in all of the years I've lived here I have not seen much in the way of news on *any* of the men that worked on the highway.

Per Sen. Wilson's own statement:

"SB 46 provides the recognition that is due **the men** who helped contribute to the construction of the ALCAN Highway"

Why, then, is the state considering recognizing only one race? If the Legislature wants to publicize the story of the crews, publicize the ENTIRE crew. Use photos and tell the story of how ALL of the men building the Alaska Highway worked equally as hard. Why demean the work of the white soldiers by not recognizing them?

Please don't make yet another headline about race. As a 40+ year resident of Alaska, I am asking this: If the Alaska Legislature is considering a holiday with SB46, make it about ALL of men that worked to build the great Alaska Highway.

Thank you for your time,

--

Lisa Duntley
Anchorage, Alaska