

SB

46

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

To: Senator Mike Dunleavy, Chair
Senate State Affairs Committee

Date: February 16, 2017

From: Senator David Wilson

RE: SB 46 Bill Hearing Request

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

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.

Included with this request for Senate Bill 46 is our Sponsor Statement, Sectional Analysis, and the current version of the bill. If you would like any additional information or have any questions regarding this hearing request, please feel free to contact Gary Zepp at 465-4711.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Wilson".

Senator 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

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.

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

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!

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2017 Legislative Session

Bill Version:	SB 46
Fiscal Note Number:	1
(S) Publish Date:	2/17/2017

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 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2018 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
OPERATING EXPENDITURES								
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	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None								
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time								
Part-time								
Temporary								

Change in Revenues

Total	0.0	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:	Brian P. Duffy	Phone:	(907)428-7210
Division:	Administrative Services	Date:	02/09/2017 10:30 AM
Approved By:	Laurel J. Hummel	Date:	02/09/17
Agency:	Office of the Commissioner		

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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.

Christa McDonald

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.

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

From: [Shala Dobson](#)
To: [Gary Zepp](#)
Subject: Alaska Highway Day SB46
Date: Sunday, February 26, 2017 3:56:22 PM

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



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@cyalaska.com

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

Senate Bill 46 - October 25th – African American Soldiers' Contribution to Building the Alaska Highway Day



October 25, 1942

In October, two crews, one moving north and one moving south, 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, was driving south with a bulldozer when he saw trees starting to topple over on him," the account said. "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."

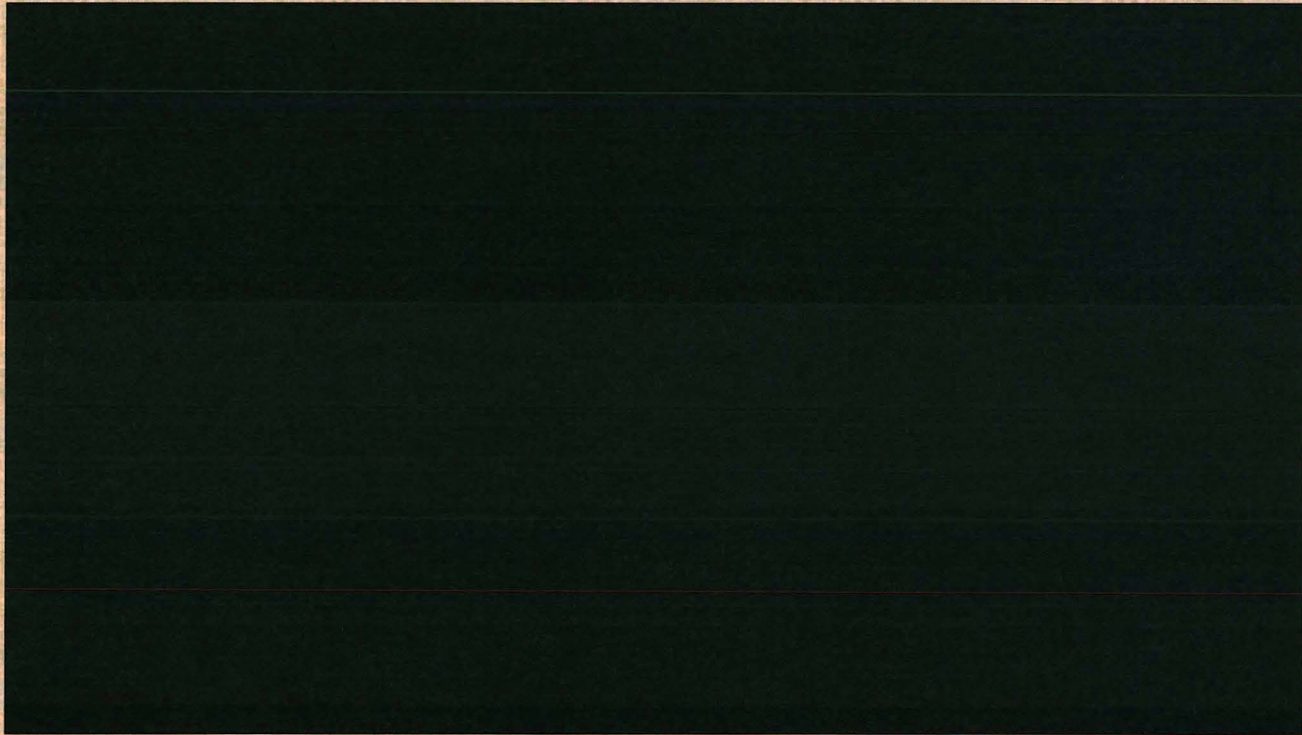


1942 Cpl. Refines Sims Jr., left, and Pvt. Alfred Jalufka in the middle. Army Corps of Engineers

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 consistently 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.



Black engineers build a trestle bridge during the construction of the Alaska Canada Military Highway. Black G.I.s made up roughly forty percent of the estimated 11,500 Army troops who in just nine months completed a wilderness highway linking Alaska with the contiguous United States.

Anchorage Museum of History and Art

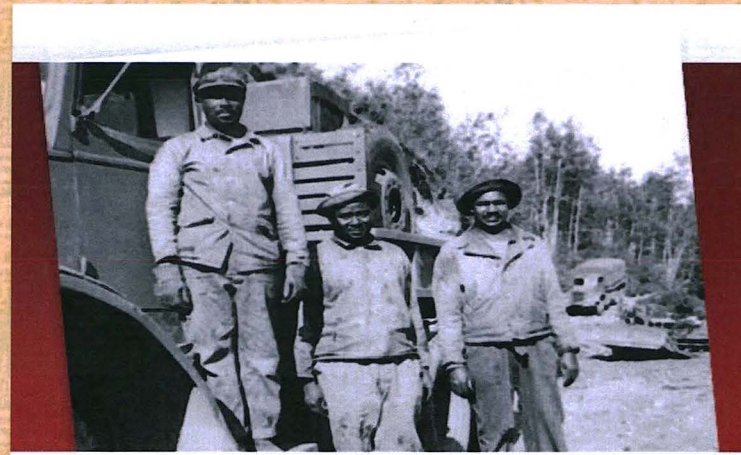


Portrait of a soldier working on the Alaska Highway in 1942. The Army engineers assigned to the project had withstood severe cold while working with poor equipment and supplies. The role of black troops in the highway's construction – underplayed until recently – contributed to the full integration of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

Why the recognition of the African American soldiers' contributions to building the Alaska Highway?

It's about the historical context. Race relations in America were very different in 1942. Opportunities for African Americans were rare and expectations were low. Racial segregation was common; 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, Japanese bombing of Dutch Harbor, struggle to recapture the Aleutians Islands, and the construction of the highway. "Not one African American soldier was shown in the movie," as stated by 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' contributions to building the Alaska Highway?

Consider the following:

- Congress passed the Reconstruction Act of 1867, the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1870 providing the right to vote, and the Civil Rights Act of 1875 forbidding 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, in particularly in the South. By 1910, segregation was firmly established across the South and most of the border region.
- In 1954, legal segregation 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, 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' contributions to building the Alaska Highway?

Little publicity or notoriety has been given to the African American soldiers for these efforts. 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 who served building the Alaska Highway; and,
- The official 759-page U.S. Army history of the Corps covers African American troop involvement with a one-sentence footnote.

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. In 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 has done anything like this." "They are deserving of recognition."

Douglas Brinley stated, "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 formal 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!!

Acknowledgment and Thanks!



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

Health 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 (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."