



March 8, 2018

To: Senator Pete Kelly, Senator John Coghill, and the Senate Finance Committee

**RE: Special Assistant to the Commissioner for the Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs**

Dear Honorable Senators,

The Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce supports the continued funding of the Special Assistant to the Commissioner for the Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs assigned to Alaska's Washington, D.C. office. Alaska has a strong relationship with the U.S. Department of Defense that has considerable value to Alaska and its armed forces. This relationship requires continuous maintenance at the federal level, so it is alarming to see that this liaison is at risk of being eliminated due to state budget decisions. This assignment's core purpose is to maintain the state to federal relationship and promote Alaska's strategic military position and capabilities.

The uncertainty that results from federal-level decisions demands a dedicated, fully funded role in Washington, D.C., who can understand and appropriately respond to policy decisions with vigilance, agility, and proper representation of Alaska's interests. Alaska is fortunate with the investments in the Fort Greely Ground-based Missile Defense fields, the Long Range Discrimination Radar at Clear Air Force Station, and the selection of Eielson AFB for two squadrons of F-35 fighters. However, Ft Greely and Eielson AFB were targeted by Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) committees. Eielson AFB lost the A-10 squadron and almost lost the Aggressor Squadron of F-16s. Ft Richardson's 4-25 Infantry Brigade (Airborne) was targeted for reduction, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade headquarters at Ft Wainwright was moved to Joint Base Lewis McCord.

If this critical liaison role is prioritized in the state budget, it will have a positive return on investment by means of continued military funding here in Alaska, and will strengthen the economy, now and in the future.

The Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce represents over 700 business members throughout Interior Alaska. We work to advocate for the best business environment, promote economic strength and growth for Interior Alaska, and to develop the resources and networks enterprising people use to share knowledge.

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Key Bank  
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Spirit of Alaska Federal Credit Union  
TDL Staffing  
Tower Hill Mines-Livengood Gold Project  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Verizon Wireless  
Yukon Title Company



Sincerely,

*Marisa Sharrah*

Marisa Sharrah  
President & CEO  
Fairbanks Chamber

*Tiffany Van Horn*

Tiffany Van Horn  
Chair  
Fairbanks Chamber

Cc: Senate Military & Veterans' Affairs (Fin Sub) and House Finance Committee