

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

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February 23, 2009

The Honorable Carl Gatto
House Military and Veterans' Affairs
Alaska State Capitol, Room 108
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Subject: Support for HJR 10

Dear Chair Gatto:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) encourages support for HJR 10 sponsored by Representative Guttenberg, Representative Kawasaki, Representative Salmon, Representative Kerttula, Representative Gruenberg, and Representative Cissna that encourages the United States Congress to improve health care and access for veterans. ACoA supports this resolution and its intent for Congress to provide sufficient, timely, and stable funding for veterans' health programs and to improve service delivery.

Health care is a key benefit of the services provided to persons who served in the armed forces. The number of veterans returning from military duty, in addition to veterans who are aging, is increasing along with the associated health care expenses. Although Alaska has the highest per capita population of veterans in the nation, our state remains as one of three states in the nation without a veterans' hospital that provides acute care inpatient services.

Moreover, Alaskan veterans come from all areas of the state. Veteran clinic facilities are located only in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Kenai. If a veteran lives outside of these areas and his/her medical condition is not 51% or more service-related, that individual is responsible for paying their own travel expenses. The Commission on Aging supports the Resolution's recommendation of a special "Heroes Health Card" to provide veterans access to health care in communities where they live, including those without veteran clinic facilities, by coordinating care provided by local medical providers and community health care facilities with care provided by military doctors and medical facilities.

ACoA supports HJR 10 and believes that veterans who served our country deserve decent health care. It is our responsibility and obligation to provide quality and accessible health care for veterans who joined the armed forces to serve and protect our nation. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879), should you have any questions regarding our position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello,
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Representative Harris
Representative Olson
Representative Buch

Representative Lynn
Representative Ramras
Representative Kawasaki