



Alaska Independent Democratic Coalition

Alaska Senate Democrats

June 3, 2016

Ms. Laura H. Eskenazi
Vice Chairman and Executive in Charge
Board of Veterans Appeals
US Department of Veterans Affairs
425 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms Eskenazi,

We have been contacted by several Alaska Veterans organizations with a serious concern. We have learned that the Board of Veterans Appeals has not conducted in-person proceedings in Alaska since 2012. The Board traveling panel was scheduled to come to Alaska in 2015, but cancelled that visit.

Alaskans have a right to have their cases heard in person. This failure of the Board to provide in-person hearings for Alaskan Veterans discriminates against Alaskan Veterans by treating them differently from service members in other states who are afforded the opportunity to have in-person hearings.

As you know, the Veterans Administration's responsiveness to Veterans' concerns over benefits has been at the center of national spotlight in recent years. Alaska has one of the highest percentages of Veterans per capita in the nation, with 1 in 10 citizens of our state having served. This issue is of critical importance to our constituents. There are a number of communities across Alaska that would appreciate the opportunity to host the Board so we can better serve our veterans.

This problem has been building for some time now and we are respectfully requesting on behalf of those who have given much to serve this country, that the Board take immediate and decisive steps to conduct in-person proceedings during this calendar year, and at least once a year regularly thereafter.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Best,

Handwritten signature of Chris Tuck in black ink.

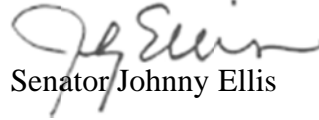
Representative Chris Tuck
Alaska Independent Democratic Coalition Leader

Handwritten signature of Berta Gardner in black ink.

Senator Berta Gardner
Senate Democratic Minority Leader



Senator Bill Wielechowski



Senator Johnny Ellis



Senator Dennis Egan



Representative Sam Kito III
House Minority Whip




Representative Matt Claman



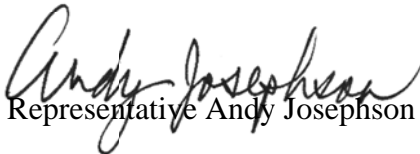
Representative Harriet Drummond



Representative Les Gara



Representative David Guttenberg



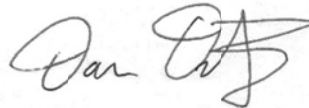
Representative Andy Josephson



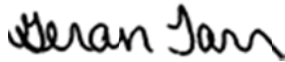
Representative Scott Kawasaki



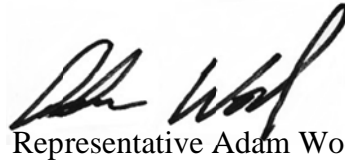
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins



Representative Dan Ortiz



Representative Geran Tarr



Representative Adam Wool



Representative Ivy Spohnholz