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Senator Lisa Murkowski on Alaska's Military

Summary

Alaska's destiny as a strategic location for military basing was predicted by legendary General Billy Mitchell, who in 1935 observed, "I believe that, in the future, whoever holds Alaska will hold the world...I think it is the most important strategic place in the world." The military has played a significant role in Alaska's growth and development ever since. Today Alaska is home to more than 15,000 active duty service members and more than 5,000 National Guard and Reserve troops. The military is a vital part of Alaska's economy, military and civilian federal government spending accounting for one-third of all jobs in the state.

Champion for the Military

Ensuring **America's armed forces have the resources they need** not only to accomplish their missions, but also to improve the quality of life for their families is a key priority for Lisa Murkowski as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Military Construction Subcommittee. During just her first year on the committee she was able to steer an additional **\$46.8 million in funding to Alaska bases** for projects on priority lists formulated by the various services, but not funded by the administration.

Lisa Murkowski is committed to ensuring that Alaska service members have top notch facilities including training ranges, gyms, hospitals, and family housing. She, along with Senator Ted Stevens, was **instrumental in funding construction of the new hospitals on Elmendorf AFB and Fort Wainwright and the new VA hospital in Anchorage.**

Support for Alaska Territorial Guard Members

Lisa Murkowski led a successful effort **reversing an unfortunate decision by the Defense Department that denied members of the Alaska Territorial Guard who served during World War II a military pension** credit for time served defending Alaska from the risk of Japanese invasion. Lisa Murkowski understands that, for our Nation's service members, **no member of the military should be left behind.**



Base Facility Improvements in Alaska

The Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex in Interior Alaska is one of the best places on the North American continent to conduct joint training exercises. America's most advanced fighter, the F-22, provides top cover for America from Elmendorf AFB, winner of the 2010 Commander in Chief Award for best Air Force Base. The Air National Guard's KC-135 refueling aircraft, based at Eielson AFB, play a key role in refueling military aircraft throughout the Pacific. Fort Greely is home to America's Ground Based Missile Defense interceptor system. Lisa Murkowski continually champions funding for Alaska's military, their families and support systems.

Army 1st Stryker Brigade Tour Extension

The Army's 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team (formerly the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team) and 4th Airborne Brigade Combat Team based at Fort Wainwright have undertaken multiple deployments in the global war on terror. The Alaska Army National Guard has served with distinction in Kuwait, Iraq, Kosovo and Mongolia, and Afghanistan.

Lisa Murkowski, in June 2006, **went to work to help the families of the Stryker Combat Team when the Army abruptly decided to extend the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team's tour in Iraq for 120 days with no advance notice to the families** eagerly awaiting the return of their soldiers. She worked with senior Army officials to **ensure that family support services were expanded at Fort Wainwright** and pressed Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld for a commitment that the troops would return home by Christmas. Lisa Murkowski worked with many Fort Wainwright families to ensure that their individual needs were met. When the troops returned, Lisa Murkowski welcomed them home. She has also worked closely with Fort Richardson families during challenging deployments of the 4th Airborne Brigade Combat Team to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Standing Up for Services for Military and Their Families

Lisa Murkowski **continues to support military families who serve our Nation alongside those in uniform**. Part of the debt owed to our service men and women is to provide for their health care. She has worked tirelessly to **ensure that Alaska troops returning from the battlefield have access to behavioral health services** with no adverse effect on their careers. In 2009, she joined with Sen. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin to **sponsor the Wounded Warrior Transition Act**. This important legislation, which was included in the fiscal year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, ensures that **members of the Reserve Component who suffer wounds and injuries on the battlefield are not discharged from active duty until their conditions are fully evaluated**.

Supporting Fort Greeley and Missile Defense

A steadfast supporter of America's missile defenses, Lisa Murkowski pushed back against the Obama administration's efforts to cancel a planned expansion of the Ground Based Missile Defense facility at Fort Greeley. She also took exception to the administration's proposals to cancel further production of the F-22 fighter and the C-17 transport aircraft. She is currently working to increase utilization of the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex, bring the new generation of air tankers to Eielson AFB, and ensure that the Army and National Guard provide Alaska with sufficient helicopter assets to meet their missions.

Lisa Murkowski Delivers for Alaska's Military and Their Families

Fort Richardson (2009) - Anchorage

- Warrior in Transition Complex - \$43.0 Million
- Airborne Sustainment Training Complex - \$ 6.1 Million
- Combat Pistol Range - \$ 4.9 Million
- Health Clinic - \$3.5 Million
- Training Aids Center - \$ 2.0 Million

Elmendorf Air Force Base (2009) - Anchorage

- Aeromedical Services/Mental Health Clinic - \$25.0 Million
- F-22 Weapons Load Training Facility - \$12.6 Million
- Red Flag Alaska Operations Center - \$ 3.1 Million
- Power Plant Facility - \$24.3 Million
- Alaskan Command, Elmendorf AFB -- \$1.56 million for improvements to the command and control capabilities of the Alaska Command. This will allow for better communication and alignment with the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and enable the Alaskan Command to more effectively protect the sovereignty of U.S. airspace (2009, FY10 DOD Appropriations Bill).

Fort Wainwright (2009) - Fairbanks

- Aviation Task Force Complex, Phase I - \$95 Million
- Warrior in Transition Complex - \$ 28 Million
- Railhead Complex - \$ 26 Million
- Aviation Unit Operations Complex - \$ 19 Million

Military

- Successfully worked to bring home the 172 Stryker Brigade by Christmas after a series of lengthy deployments in 2006

Eielson AFB - Fairbanks

- Hand in hand with Fairbanks - fought to keep Eielson alive through the BRAC process
- Alaska Air National Guard, Eielson AFB -- \$1.3 million for the renovation and retrofit of 168th Air Refueling Wing hangar and support facilities to enhance its critical mission of providing the air bridge to the Pacific for U.S. Military Forces (2009, FY10 DOD Appropriations Bill)

Fort Greely

- Missile defense. Pushed back against the Obama administration's efforts to cancel a planned expansion of the Ground Based Missile Defense facility at Fort Greely
- Fort Greely Post enhancements -- \$1.1 million for Security and Information Technology enhancements. These enhancements would help Fort Greely to better carry out its mission of protecting the nation from foreign missile threats through the operation of the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System (2009, FY10 DOD Appropriations Bill)
- Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex - \$19.58 million for enhancements (2009, FY10 DOD Appropriations Bill)
- Worked to make the VA Mat-Su Community Based Outpatient Clinic a reality (2008)
- \$2.4 million for Homer-based Kachemak Research Development which develops and fields security systems that scan the under carriage of vehicles as they enter secure areas/facilities; and \$2.0 million for Anchorage-based Venture Ad Astra for its development of a system/network to enhance precision location, guidance and navigational capabilities of U.S. weapons (2009, FY10 DOD Appropriations Bill)
- In the Homeland Security Appropriation bill, Senator Murkowski obtained an appropriation of \$32.5 million to enhance United States' polar icebreaker capability (Polar Star).
- Sponsored National Airborne Day resolution to honor the members of Airborne brigades across the Armed Forces with specific reference to the 4/25 Airborne Brigade Combat Team at Fort Richardson.
- Led the fight for a roadmap forward in the Arctic as we increase our strategic role in the Arctic
- Sponsored the Wounded Warrior Transition Act. Included in the fiscal year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act (2009). Ensures members of the Reserve Component who suffer wounds and injuries on the battlefield are not discharged from active duty until their conditions are fully evaluated; they continue to be paid, receive health care through the military system, and have access to JAG lawyers who can explain their rights to see disability retirement from the military.

Military

- Expanded the Qualified Veteran Mortgage Bond program to allow veterans of the 1st Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan to be eligible for low-rate home loans. Alaska is one of five states in the country that is eligible to participate in the QVMB program.
- Secured wrongly denied funding for the Alaska Territorial Guard to rightly reinstate the retirement benefits of these valiant Alaskans.
- Introduced the Arctic Deep Water Port Act to direct the Secretary of Defense to determine the feasibility of building a deep water port in the Arctic.
- Convened a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security field hearing, which included as a witness Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Allen, on the strategic importance of the Arctic and U.S. Arctic Policy and to highlight the infrastructure needs in the Arctic.
- Introduced the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment Implementation Act to direct the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to work with the International Maritime Organization to establish agreements among the US, Russia, Canada, and other Arctic nations to coordinate shipping infrastructure such as navigation aids, icebreaking escort, tug and salvage, oil spill prevention and response, maritime domain awareness, vessel tracking and search and rescue. (enacted 2010)
- Obtained a one-year delay, through 2011, in TRICARE's proposed policy to curtail access to base hospitals by military retirees living more than 60 minutes or 100 miles from a military base (2010).
- Sponsored, fought vigorously for, and won a provision in the Higher Education Act reauthorization that will make it easier for lower rank/lower income members of the military, their spouses, and their children to qualify for federal Pell Grants.
- Negotiated and supported provisions in the Higher Education Act to make college and job training more affordable for military service members, veterans, and their families:
 - Requires States to provide in-state tuition rates to members of the military, their spouses, or their dependent children.
 - Permits students to receive the maximum Pell Grant if one of their parents died while performing military service in Iraq or Afghanistan.
 - Automatic zero expected family contribution to low-income student whose service member parent died in action since 9/11.
 - Prevents interest from accruing on Direct Loans made to members of the military who are serving on activity duty in an area of hostility.
 - Prohibits a college from denying re-admission to the member of the military who went on active duty if such student wishes to re-enroll within 5 year.
 - Requires institutions to readmit, without reapplication, students who were called up to serve in the military upon their return from military service, unless the student's service is terminated upon the occurrence of a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge, being court martialed, or being dismissed due to being AWOL.

Military

- Permits a Javits Fellow to interrupt their program of study without penalty for exceptional circumstances, such as active duty military status or illness.
- Requires the creation of a website that contains information on financial aid and other benefits and services for military members and veterans.
- Caps the interest rate on a federal student loan at 6 percent for a service member while the service member is called to active duty. Currently federal student loans are the only loans that are not captured by the requirements under the Service members Civil Relief Act.
- Authorized a new program to provide grants to institutions to develop programs to support veteran student success in college.