



UNITED STATES SENATOR

**LISA MURKOWSKI**  
*for THE STATE of* **ALASKA**

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

11/11 Chugiak Town Hall Meetir  
on Health Care - 5:30-  
7:00 pm

Mirror Lake Middle Schoo

22901 Lake Hill Dr  
Chugiak, AK 99567-5584

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 6, 2009

## Another Great AFN Convention

I had the pleasure of attending the 2009 Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention in Anchorage. The theme, 'Northern Dreams - Our Historic Journey Continues,' captured the energy of those attending from all across Alaska. At this year's AFN, I was greeted by so many Alaskans who brought news from their remote communities. I enjoyed the opportunity to address the attendees and provide an update on issues and legislation affecting Alaska's Native population.



Sen. Murkowski visited with convention goers at the Dena'ina Center on both Friday and Saturday. With Sen. Murkowski are Sarah Tickett, Minnie Gray, Emma Norton.



Sen. Murkowski and keynote speaker Willie Hensley share a laugh during the AFN Convention. Willie is chairman of the First Alaskans Institute's Board of Trustees.

I enjoyed spending Friday night celebrating Alaska's native cultures at Quyana Night. I saw Alutiiq, Yupik, Inupiaq, and Tlingit and Haida performances. These beautiful dances were a highlight of AFN and clearly, Quyana Night provides a unique opportunity for all Alaskans to celebrate the Native cultures of Alaska.



Sen. Murkowski follows Kuugmiut dancer Iqaluk Nayakik during an invitational at Quyana.

If you'd like to see more of my photos from the 2009 AFN Convention, [view my photo album here](#).

## **President Signs Defense Authorization Bill that affects Alaska Military Personnel, Veterans and Federal Employees**

President Obama has signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 that contains a number of provisions that will affect many Alaskans.

First, the bill contains legislation that I cosponsored to replace the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) paid to Alaska federal employees on the General Schedule with Locality Pay. Alaska federal employees have long sought to end the COLA payments -- which are not counted as part of an employee's "high three" for calculation of retirement pay -- with Locality Pay. The legislation provides for a three year phase-in of Locality Pay, ending an inequity which forced some of Alaska's federal employees to transfer to high-cost areas of the Lower 48 in order to maximize their retirement payments. Congress came close to ending the COLA in 2008. The Senate passed the bill but the House of Representatives did not follow suit. I have invited senior officials from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to visit my office and discuss how the legislation will be implemented. Throughout this process I have insisted that OPM consult with Alaska's federal employees in formulating changes to their pay. Now that the pay system will change it is even more important that OPM provide timely information about how these changes will occur. The COLA Defense Committee of Alaska, working alongside Alaska's federal employee unions have been working toward this change for a long time. Now it is incumbent upon OPM to implement the changes transparently and efficiently.

The bill includes parts of the Wounded Warrior Transition Act, which I cosponsored with Sen. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin. The Wounded Warrior Transition Act requires returning members of the National Guard and Reserves with service connected injuries be offered the option of remaining on active duty for treatment and disability evaluation. The legislation was proposed in response to concerns that injured members of the Guard and Reserves were released from active duty immediately upon the end of their deployment without adequate treatment and evaluation of injuries.

The defense bill also contained a proposal cosponsored by the entire Alaska congressional delegation requiring the Army to reinstate retirement payments to about two dozen members of the Alaska Territorial Guard which were reduced in January after the Defense Department concluded that ATG service during World War II was not active duty service in the Armed Forces.



Sen. Murkowski recently spoke from the Senate floor to protest the Obama administration's position that counting the ATG's WWII service as 'active duty' would create a bad precedent.

National Guard Youth Challenge Programs could see increased funding under an amendment that I cosponsored with Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas. The Alaska Military Youth Academy offers one of the nation's most successful National Guard Youth Challenge programs.

The legislation authorizes a 3.4 percent pay raise for active duty, Guard and Reserve members - half a point more than the President proposed; prohibits TRICARE inpatient care copay increases for FY2010; authorizes an extra 30,000 troops for the Army (15,000 above the budget request), and an additional 30,000 in FY2011 and FY2012; authorizes premium-based TRICARE coverage for "gray area" reserve retirees who haven't yet attained age 60, and authorizes special compensation to caregivers of severely wounded warriors while on active duty.

## **Murkowski joins Librarian of Congress for a Tour of Alaska Artifacts on the Alaska Report**

As you may have read in the [Anchorage Daily News](#), I had an opportunity recently to view some of the Alaskan artifacts that are part of the permanent collection at the Library of Congress.



Librarian of Congress Dr. James Billington and his curators show Sen.

Murkowski the original drawings of St. Michael's Cathedral in Sitka.

We taped an edition of the Alaska Report at the library, where the Librarian of Congress, Dr. James Billington, guided me through a portion of the Library's expansive collection of Alaska maps, letters, photos and even some video and audio files. One of the items on display was an old fire insurance map of my hometown, Ketchikan, from 1914. Despite the age of the map, I could see the location of the school where my grandmother taught.

The Alaska Report will be airing on a number of Alaska stations during November, but you can watch the show now on my official [YouTube page](#).

And while I'm talking about my YouTube page, I invite you to take a video tour of my Washington, D.C., office, where I highlight some of the wonderful Alaska art on loan as well as some personal mementos that remind me of home. You can find the [video tour](#) also on my official YouTube page.



On her video tour, Sen. Murkowski introduces Walter - a 63 pound king salmon she caught while fishing on the Kenai in July 2006.

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