

STATEMENT OF NELSON N. ANGAPAK, SR
VICE PRESIDENT EMERITUS
ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
ON HR 410, ALASKA NATIVE VIETNAM ERA VETERANS
LAND ALLOTMENT EXTENSION ACT OF 2025
FEBRUARY 5, 2025, 10:15AM

My name is Nelson N. Angapak, Sr, Vice President Emeritus, Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). I officially retired from active duty at AFN on June 30, 2013, but have remained active on some issues, including the Alaska Native Veterans issues.

I am an Alaska Native veteran of the Vietnam War Era; and I served in active duty in the United States Army from 1969 to June 10, 1971. I was discharged honorably.

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska. Its membership includes 177 federally recognized tribes, 154 village corporations, 9 regional corporations, and 9 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. AFN is governed by a 38-member board, which is elected by its membership at the annual convention held each October.¹

For the record, AFN is in favor of the proposed amendment to extend the Native Allotment application period by five years to December 31, 2030, if Congress passes this bill. The Native Allotment application period will expire on December 31, 2025, if this bill is not passed.

Our Alaska Native Vietnam War Era population is dwindling; it seems very rapidly. Because of this, there is some urgency in resolving this issue by Congress sooner than later. Many of us are in our seventies and some of us are even octogenarian.

Here are some things that should be noted when Congress considers HR 410.

- It is well recognized that, historically, Native Americans (including Alaska Natives), have the highest record of service on a per capita when compared to other ethnic groups. The reasons behind this disproportionate

¹ AFN Website

contribution are complex and deeply rooted in traditional American Indian culture. In many respects, Native Americans are no different from others who volunteer for military service. They do, however, have distinctive cultural values which drive them to serve their country. One such value is their proud warrior tradition.²

- The Native American's strong sense of patriotism and courage emerged once again during the Vietnam War era. More than 42,000 Native Americans, more than 90 percent of them volunteers, fought in Vietnam. Native American contributions in United States military combat continued in the 1980s and 1990s as they served in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and the Persian Gulf and other areas where they were needed.³
- The Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG), more commonly known as the Eskimo Scouts, was a military reserve force component of the US Army, organized in 1942 in response to attacks on United States soil in Hawaii and occupation of parts of Alaska by Japan during World War II."⁴ ATG members demonstrated their patriotism to the U. S. beyond question at that time. The members served in active duty in the U. S. Armed Forces, some as long as five years, 24/7, without compensation, to wit, U. S. Department of Defense never paid ATG members any kind of compensation for their service during World War II. They were initially denied being issued DD-214, discharge papers. AFN lobbied at least two Congresses to finally get a Congressional law for ATG members to receive their DD-214s.

Please note that the first two points were excerpted from a website of the Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center; 805 Kidder Breese SE-- Washington Navy Yard; Washington DC 20374-5060. This is public information that is readily available for the people of the United States of America.

Land

PL 116-9 is a good statute as it stands presently other than its expiring date and land issue.

² <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq61-1.htm>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.bing.com/search?q=alaska+territorial+guard&form=WSHBSH&gs=SC&cvid=950a57884a734ddea462f2f7aaeef077&pg=&cc=US&setlang=en>

Denial of Native Allotment Applications

One of the primary reasons for the denial of many applications for Native allotments is because lands that were applied for are outside of lands set for allotments by the Department of Interior.

Here are two Examples impacted by land issue:

- The late Col. Robert Beans of Mt. Village initial Native Allotment application was close to his home but was outside of lands set aside for allotments. His application was denied because the closest lands set aside Native allotments for him and others are in the Good News Bay area, about 150 miles from his home. He had no knowledge of those lands.⁵ He eventually complied with the Native Allotment application rules and amended his application for lands located in Good News Bay area.
- The late Jacob Kagak of Barrow served in active duty in the United States Air Force; and he was deployed to Vietnam. He passed several years ago. The closest lands for his heir, to apply for as Native Allotment, are about 750 miles away. This discouraged the heir from applying for Native Allotment so far from home thus far.

Alaska Native Vietnam War Era veterans living along the Aleutian Chain, Kodiak, Southcentral and Southeast Alaska are faced with the same land issue. Lands set aside for allotments for them may be as far as a thousand miles away for them. Congress must authorize the Alaska Native living in these areas to apply for Native allotments in their areas.

Potential Solutions on Land

PL 116-9 is permissive insofar as lands located in wildlife refuges are concerned. That is, the word “may” is used when this statute addressed these lands as lands that may be made available for Native Allotments. Wildlife refuges are located across the State of Alaska. Congress should consider amending the land issue such that it mandates making these lands available as Native Allotments.

⁵ Personal stories

Pursuant to Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), 25 townships, including the core township, where the village corporation is located, were set aside by Section 11; and mandated them to select the core township plus other lands to fulfill their land entitlements. Congress must consider making the former ANCSA Section 11 lands that were not selected to be made available for Native Allotment selections. This would include all former Section 11 lands in Alaska.

Attached herewith, please find a copy of AFN Convention Resolution 23-15 entitled AMENDING PL LAW 116-09 ON LAND FOR NATIVE ALLOTMENTS OF THE VIETNAM WAR VETERANS AND QUALIFIED HEIRS OF THE VIETNAM WAR VETERAN. This AFN Resolution was passed unanimously by the delegates of the 2023 AFN Convention. This demonstrates that there is Alaska statewide support for Native Allotments for the Alaska Native Veterans of the Vietnam War Era.

I ask that my written and spoken comments be incorporated in the record of this public hearing on HR 410. AFN asks the committee to consider keeping the record of this public hearing on HR 410 remain open for at least 2 weeks.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify in front of you. If you have any questions regarding this written statement or my comments, I can try to answer them.



ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
2023 ANNUAL CONVENTION
RESOLUTION 23-15

- TITLE:** AMENDING PL LAW 116-09 ON LAND FOR NATIVE ALLOTMENTS OF THE VIETNAM WAR VETERANS AND QUALIFIED HEIRS OF THE VIETNAM WAR VETERAN
- WHEREAS:** The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska, and its membership includes 179 federally recognized tribes, 154 village corporations, 9 regional corporations, and 10 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs; and
- WHEREAS:** The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic, and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community; and
- WHEREAS:** The United States Congress overwhelmingly passed S. 47 in February of 2019; and
- WHEREAS:** John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation Management and Recreation Act was enacted into law on March 12, 2019; and
- WHEREAS:** PL 116-09 authorized the qualified Alaska Native Veterans/heirs of the Vietnam War to apply for Native Allotments; and
- WHEREAS:** PL 116-09 states that certain conservation system lands such as Wildlife Refuge lands and other lands may be made available as lands for the Alaska Native Veterans of the Vietnam War or their heirs; and
- WHEREAS:** Some Alaska Native Veterans of the Vietnam War and some heirs of the veterans met with the Honorable Interior Secretary Deb Haaland at her request on November 2, 2021, and the main objective of the meeting with the Secretary was to get a very strong commitment of support from the Secretary of the Interior on the Native Allotment land issue for the Alaska Native veterans of the Vietnam/Vietnam War Era and the heirs of the fallen warriors; and
- WHEREAS:** Some Alaska Native veterans met with the Honorable Denis McDonough, Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs and Alaska's Congressional Delegation members, the Honorable U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, the Honorable U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan, and the Honorable U.S. Representative Mary Peltola, on February 24, 2023, at the VA Clinic, and sought their support in expanding the land base for Native Allotments; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2023 Alaska Federation of Natives Convention request Alaska's Congressional Delegation consider affirmatively amending PL 116-09 as follows:

1. Incorporate the Congressionally recognized dates of the Vietnam War, as "The period beginning on February 28, 1971, and ending on May 7, 1975; and
2. Extend the application period by at least ten years; and
3. To avoid claim denials that state that veterans' selected lands that have already been taken, it is important to expand the land base by mandating certain lands such as wildlife refuge lands and national forest lands that were Sections 17(d)(1) and 17(d)(2) of the National Interest Lands Provision of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of December 18, 1971, and unselected ANCSA land withdrawals under Section 11 to be made available as Native Allotment selections.
4. Authorize the Alaska Natives of the Vietnam War with Service-Connected Disabilities by a Congressional mandate to be allowed to apply for Allotments close to their homes; and
5. Amend the present law such that the veterans/heirs who applied for Native Allotments exchange their Allotments for lands close to their homes; and
6. If land is not available, other forms developed in consultation with Alaska Native tribes or corporations, including monetary equivalent, be authorized by Congress.

SUBMITTED BY: ALASKA NATIVE VETERANS COUNCIL AND ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES VETERANS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ACTION: DO PASS

CONVENTION ACTION: AMENDED AND ADOPTED ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2023