

December 16, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Thune,

We write to stress the importance of passing S. 785/H.R.410, the Alaska Native Vietnam Veteran Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025, introduced by Senators Dan Sullivan and Lisa Murkowski and Representative Begich. This legislation would further extend a program to fulfill Congress's long promise to Alaska Native Vietnam-era veterans who served their country honorably, but were denied their rightful opportunity to obtain land allotments under federal law.

The Alaska Native Allotment Act of 1906 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to convey up to 160 acres of land to Alaska Natives. Over 65 years, more than 10,000 applications were filed, but thousands of eligible Alaska Natives were left behind, due to the communication and infrastructure challenges of life in rural Alaska.

When Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971, new allotment applications were no longer accepted. For many Alaska Natives serving in the military during the Vietnam War, the repeal of the Allotment Act meant they lost their only chance to apply for land they had used or intended to claim. Recognizing this injustice, Congress enacted the Alaska Native Vietnam Veterans Allotment Act of 1998, which reopened the application window for 18 months; however, the short timeframe and numerous barriers proved formidable. In 2019, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act dramatically improved the program and authorized applications for five years.

Today, approximately 2,000 eligible Alaska Native veterans are still waiting to receive their land entitlements. Over the past five years, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has processed only 44 claims, with hundreds more still under review or awaiting submission. It is clear that the program has not yet fulfilled its purpose and requires additional time to realize its congressional intent.

For these reasons, we urge the Senate to pass the Alaska Native Vietnam Veteran Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025. This legislation is essential to grant additional time for Alaska Native veterans and their heirs to complete the process and for federal agencies to complete outstanding applications. Passage of S.785 is not merely a procedural fix—it is a meaningful act of justice and respect for those who served their country in uniform and for the Alaska Native communities to which they belong.

We thank you for your leadership and respectfully ask for your support in bringing this important legislation to the Senate floor for swift passage.

Sincerely,

Ben Mallot, *President*, Alaska Federation of Natives
Nicole Borromeo, *President*, ANCSA Regional Association
Benno Cleveland, *President*, Alaska Native Veterans Council
Darrell Frank, *President*, Alaska Native Veterans Association
Gloria O'Neill, *President and CEO*, Cook Inlet Tribal Council
Brian Ridley, *Chief/Chairman*, Tanana Chiefs Conference
Curtis McQueen, *Executive Director*, Alaska Native Village Corporation Association
William Smith, *Chairman*, Alaska Native Health Board
Military Order of Purple Hearts, Chapter #675