

# **Defense, Homeland Security, Military Construction, and Veterans Affairs**

## ***Provisions Contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018***

### **Defense**

The 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act includes the following defense related investments requested by Senator Murkowski in her role as a member of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee.

**F-35 Acquisition:** \$2.674 billion for F-35 aircraft procurement, over and above what the administration requested. This will fund 10 additional F-35s for the Air Force, 4 additional F-35s for the Marine Corps and 10 additional F-35s for the Navy.

**Polar Icebreaker:** \$150 million through US Navy shipbuilding accounts to be transferred to the Coast Guard for construction of a new polar icebreaker. This matches the \$150 million Senator Murkowski acquired for icebreaker procurement in the 2017 Defense Appropriations Act. The administration has requested an additional \$750 million to fully fund construction in its Fiscal Year 2019 Department of Homeland Security budget submission.

**Israel Missile Defense Test:** \$105 million via the Missile Defense Agency to fully fund the flight test of an Israeli missile defense system. Pacific Spaceport Complex Alaska in Kodiak is providing support to the test which is expected to occur near Alaska.

**ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program** - \$10 million via the Defense Health Agency and Army Medicine. This is a \$2.5 million increase that Senator Murkowski has long sought, after years of \$7.5 million funding levels. Studies have long shown that the rate of ALS deaths among those with military service is far greater than those who have not served.

**Innovative Readiness Training:** \$10 million program increase over the administration's request to support this joint program which constructs public facilities in Alaska communities while providing valuable training for military reservists. The program also supports the Arctic Care exercise which helps military medical providers maintain their skills caring for people in Alaska's rural communities.

**Sustainment Funding for Private Spaceports:** \$10 million via Air Force Spacelift Range System budget lines. These funds support the sustainment of Pacific Spaceport Alaska in Kodiak and the Mid Atlantic Regional Spaceport in Virginia.

**Microgrid for Eielson Air Force Base:** \$3 million via Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Center for phase 1 studies into the feasibility of distributed generation at Eielson. The project description is "reliable distributed generation in austere environments".

**Threat Improvements for Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex:** \$6 million via Combat Training Ranges line in Air Force Research Development Test and Evaluation accounts.

**Arctic Sustainment Packages:** Report language accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act requires the Department of Defense to determine requirements for Arctic Sustainment Packages to support search and rescue needs of the Alaska National Guard's 176<sup>th</sup> Wing.

**Resourcing the Arctic:** Report language accompany the Consolidated Appropriations Act requires that Department of Defense budget submissions explain how proposed annual funding levels correspond with defense needs in the Arctic.

## **Homeland Security**

**New Polar Icebreaker:** \$19 million to fund the contracting process for acquisition of a new Polar icebreaker using funds transferred from the Navy and additional funds requested by the administration for Fiscal Year 2019.

**Housing and Shore-side Assets:** \$51.5 million to fund Coast Guard housing and shore-side infrastructure projects that will support current and future Coast Guard assets in Alaska.

**Maritime Safety in Western Alaska:** The Consolidated Appropriations Act directs the Coast Guard to report to Congress on a plan to provide communications throughout the entire Coastal Western Alaska Captain of the Port zone. The objective is to improve waterway safety and to mitigate close calls, collisions, and other dangerous interactions between large ships and subsistence hunter vessels. The report should also include: any shore infrastructure improvements necessary to fulfill such a plan; an explanation of the feasibility of establishing a vessel traffic service that covers the region using existing resources or public-private partnerships; and a timeline of when funding is needed to implement these improvements.

**Coast Guard in the Arctic:** The Coast Guard is directed by report language in the Consolidated Appropriations Act to appropriately budget to support the Arctic Program Office in order to adequately address the challenges inherent to the growing mission in that region.

**Service Life Extension for Polar Star:** The Consolidated Appropriations Act directs the Coast Guard to initiate a service life extension project to rehabilitate and restore the critical systems onboard the heavy icebreaker POLAR STAR

**National Security Cutter (NSC):** \$540 million to build the 10<sup>th</sup> NSC and \$540 million for an 11<sup>th</sup> NSC, a vessel that will facilitate the Coast Guard's ability to perform DHS missions in the far offshore regions, including the harsh operating environments of the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean.

**Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC):** \$500 million to build the first Offshore Patrol Cutter to replace the Coast Guard's aging medium endurance cutters which will conduct missions on the high seas and coastal approaches.

**Fast Response Cutters (FRC):** \$340 million to fund six Fast Response Cutters, which are in various phases of the construction process, to replace the aging 110- foot patrol boats. These FRCs will enhance the Coast Guard's coastal capability to perform search and rescue operations and enhance resiliency to disasters.

## **Military Construction**

**2018 Alaska Military Construction:** Senator Murkowski secured full funding of the \$168.9 million in Alaska military construction requested by the Department of Defense for Fiscal Year 2018. The funding covers 8 projects on Eielson AFB. \$41 million is allocated to Phase 4 of repairs to the Central Heat and Power Plant boiler while the remaining \$127.9 million funds seven new construction projects specifically required to the F-35 beddown.

**Local Hire for Military Construction Projects:** Report language included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act at Senator Murkowski's request encourages the Defense Department to consider adopting a local labor hiring pilot project for military construction projects. The model is a US Department of Transportation pilot project that allows recipients of federal highway and transit grants to give bidding preferences to contractors that use local labor, veteran labor, and provide opportunities to low income workers in their projects. That pilot project is currently set to expire in 2022.

## **Veterans Affairs**

**Hmong Burial Legislation:** The Hmong Veterans Service Recognition Act, introduced by Senator Murkowski, was included in the 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act and has been signed into law. The legislation authorizes Hmong people who supported US forces during the Vietnam War to be buried in national veterans' cemeteries. Hmong veterans who die on or after March 23, 2018 and who were naturalized under the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000, Public Law 106-207 are eligible for this honor. Senator Sullivan cosponsored the Hmong Veterans Service Recognition Act.

**Tribal and Community Health Center Partnerships:** Separate and apart from the Choice program, the Consolidated Appropriations Act authorizes the VA to continue its partnerships with Community Health Centers and components of the Alaska Native healthcare system to provide care for veterans in rural and lesser serviced communities in Alaska. Report language included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act requests that the VA resolve reimbursement differences with the Alaska Native healthcare system to ensure that this important partnership continues.

**Filling VA Provider Vacancies:** Report language included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act at Senator Murkowski's request mandates that the VA formulate a strategy for expeditiously filling healthcare provider vacancies in its Alaska clinics. The strategy should include making recruitment and retention bonuses available for hard to fill positions, actively recruiting

separating military medical personnel to join the VA in Alaska, and coordinating provider recruitment efforts with other Alaska healthcare providers.