



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Feb. 2, 2016**

Release: 16-008

### **Legislation aims to increase rural Guard participation, eliminate cost-prohibitive factors**

**ANCHORAGE, Alaska** — Alaska Congressman Don Young has introduced legislation to eliminate barriers facing members of the National Guard and Reserves living in rural areas.

The Rural Guard and Reserve Act of 2016, introduced Feb. 1 and sponsored by Young and Representative Mark Takai of Hawaii, seeks to increase rural participation and remove cost-prohibitive factors in the National Guard and Reserves by reforming an arbitrary \$300 reimbursement cap for members traveling to training exercises and activities.

“When I first moved to Fort Yukon, the National Guard played a huge role in the community. Unfortunately, since then, rural participation has dramatically decreased,” Young said. “While the current reimbursement system may seem equitable, it fails to recognize the unique geography and distances people in my state and across the country face. As a strong advocate of the National Guard, I hope to increase participation by leveling the playing field for rural Americans looking to serve their nation in the Guard or Reserves.”

Specifically, the Rural Guard Act of 2016 modifies existing law by removing a \$300 reimbursement cap, on a case by case basis, if the National Guard or Reserve member 1) lives in the state in which the training occurs, 2) lives in a rural area, and 3) travels to Guard or Reserve training using a boat or aircraft because of limited or nonexistent vehicular routes, or from a permanent residence located more than 75 miles from the training location.

For example, a junior enlisted Guard member holding the grade of E-4 (specialist or senior airman) will earn approximately \$300 for training during one drill weekend and is eligible to receive up to \$300 in travel reimbursement. However, if that Guard member lives in Point Hope and drills in Anchorage, the flight alone costs more than \$900. For that Guard member to serve, he or she could potentially lose more than \$300 per training period or more than \$3,600 annually.

“Being able to reimburse rural Alaskans for their travel expenses would be a huge step forward in encouraging greater participation in the Guard,” said Brig. Gen. (Alaska) Laurie Hummel, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard and commissioner of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs. “We appreciate Representative Young introducing this measure and wish him speedy success in convincing his Congressional colleagues to approve it.”

###