



# Senate Majority News

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## **Governor's Call on Vet Home Based on Politics Not Attainable Policy**

(JUNEAU) – As this state has seen all too many times in the past eight years, the Knowles/Ulmer administration has made promises to the people of Alaska which are not attainable in policy. This special session call on veteran's homes is just one more example of a lead by press release administration.

During the regular the session the Alaska Senate held numerous hearings and unanimously passed landmark legislation to offer greater assistance to our state's veterans. While the legislation did not initially make it to the floor of the House of Representatives it was revisited during the first special session and was passed.

The landmark legislation passed by the legislature this year will:

- Change the name of the "Alaska Pioneer's Home," to the "Alaska Pioneer's and Veteran's Home;"
- Add veterans voices and votes to the Alaska Pioneer's and Veteran's Home advisory board;
- Fund a \$250,000 study to better determine the needs of our state's veterans and how to better meet those needs;
- Dedicate a certain number of beds strictly for veterans use;
- Significantly reduce the residency requirements from 15 years to one year to qualify as an eligible applicant to the Alaska Pioneer's and Veteran's homes; finally
- Create a 3 year pilot program, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to pay a per diem to cover the costs of veterans that reside in the Alaska Pioneer's and Veteran's home.

"This legislature devoted considerable efforts to formulate and produce comprehensive legislation, which addressed and met the concerns of Alaska's aging veterans," said Sen. Ben Stevens (R-Anchorage).

The Knowles/Ulmer administrations request for an additional \$2.6 million in funding would be geared toward current Pioneer's Home structure and not directly used to benefit our states veteran's, as they claimed.

In fact, of the 100 beds the governor said his request would fund, only a maximum of 20 beds could potentially be used for veterans. For the funding to actually go to benefit Alaska's veterans current and future needs the Knowles/Ulmer plan would fall under the pilot program, which the Legislature developed and which is awaiting federal approval.

**(MORE)**

**Page 2**  
**Veterans**  
**June 27, 2002**

State lawmakers said that it did not make sense for the Knowles/Ulmer administration to call a special session to debate legislation, which has already been addressed at the state level and continues to be addressed in conjunction with state officials on the federal level.

“It is too bad that the Knowles/Ulmer administration found it necessary to spend state money to make a political statement on an issue, which has already been addressed and passed by all members of the Senate both Republican and Democrat, for the needs of our state’s veterans,” said Sen. Dave Donley (R-Anchorage).

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