

# MARK BEGICH ALASKA

U.S. Senator for the State of

Official Website: <http://begich.senate.gov>

111 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - WASHINGTON DC 20510 :: (202) 224-3004  
510 L ST, STE 750 - ANCHORAGE AK 99501 :: (907) 271-5915 :: (877) 501-6275

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Contact: Julie Hasquet, Press Secretary

(907) 258-9304 office

(907) 350-4846 cell

## **Begich Applauds Historic Agreement to Bring Health Care** *Closer to home for Alaska veterans in rural areas*

U.S. Sen. Mark Begich today praised the historic signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between 14 Alaska Native tribal health programs and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This agreement will allow Alaska Native veterans to receive health care services in tribal clinics in various parts of Alaska and not have to travel to Anchorage or Seattle to receive services. Under the agreement, the VA will reimburse the participating health care entities for the services.

The historic agreement, signed by the Alaska VA Healthcare System and the Alaska Tribal Health Programs, is the first step in an effort led by Begich to allow Alaska's veterans living in rural communities to save time and money by receiving care close to home whenever possible.

"Alaska Native veterans tell me all the time they'd rather receive health care at the clinic across the street in their village than spend money and time traveling hundreds or thousands of miles to a VA clinic," Begich said. "This is truly a great step toward ensuring all of Alaska's veterans can receive the care they need, when they need it, and in the most cost effective and timely way."

Under the agreement, participating tribal health programs will have a billing arrangement with the VA to ensure they receive payment for the services provided. The new agreement will also allow non-Native veterans to get care at the participating tribal health facility.

Additionally, the Alaska VA is coordinating training sessions for Alaska Tribal Health Programs' staff on VA benefits and eligibility and enrollment processes to encourage and facilitate enrollment of eligible veterans into the VA system. The Alaska VA has a fulltime Rural Health Program Coordinator who facilitates outreach and cultivates tribal government relationships to enhance care for Alaska Native/American Indian veterans living in Alaska

Begich, a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, has been working with the Department of Veterans Affairs for an agreement with the tribes in Alaska and VA for the last three years. His idea of an "Alaska Heroes Card" is one step closer with this historic reimbursement agreement announced today. Begich's vision is to have a special card for veterans to use at any health care facility and have the VA reimburse the facility.

The following tribes and tribal organizations have entered into sharing and reimbursement agreements with the VA:

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
Arctic Slope Native Association, Ltd.  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council  
Chugachmiut  
Copper River Native Association  
Eastern Aleutian Tribes, Inc.  
Ketchikan Indian Community  
Kenaitze Indian Tribe  
Kodiak Area Native Association  
Native Village of Eklutna  
SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium  
Southcentral Foundation  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation

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