

Alaska State Legislature



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Representative Pete Kott

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Rep. Kott Helps Establish Veterans Museum **Veterans Day Signing Set in Eagle River For Memorial Facility**

(EAGLE RIVER) - Rep. Pete Kott (R-Eagle River) will join with other veterans and advocates as they sign articles of incorporation on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, to establish a museum here to preserve the memories of America's veterans and their service to the country.

"I am proud to stand with these men and women as they take this important step in maintaining and honoring the memory of Alaska's veterans and the sacrifices they have made, and continue to make, on behalf of our nation," said Kott, a retired U.S. Air Force captain.

Kott said he was inspired to support the Alaska Veterans Memorial Museum after Forest Brooks, a director of the Veterans Memorial Museum in Centralia, Washington, told him of the facility while they two attended a picnic at the Eagle River Lion's Club last summer.

Opening on Veterans Day in 1997, the Centralia museum includes a print and video library, plus displays of uniforms, pictures, artifacts and other materials representing the contributions of servicemen and -women from World War I to the Balkans Conflict. It also conducts about 10 special ceremonies each year to honor veterans of different eras, and is finding an ever-expanding membership and attendance.

Kott embraced the idea of creating a similar museum in Alaska, but one that would have special emphasis on uniquely Alaskan memories such as the Army and Air National Guard and the Alaska Scouts. At Kott's urging, the Eagle River Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9785 took on the museum as a project, and many post members now serve on the museum's steering committee. They include Post Commander Lloyd Dunham and members Roger Wortman, Al Romaszewski, Scot Prinz and Jim Pound, plus Anchorage Assemblyperson Anna Fairclough, Bob Nelson of the Anchorage Veterans Center, Tom Morgan of the Armed Forces YMCA, and Brooks.

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Acting as initial board of directors, the museum's steering committee will seek non-profit status as a state corporation, apply to become a federal 501(c)(3) corporation able to accept tax-deductible donations, and will begin a community-wide membership drive. Membership will not be restricted to veterans, but will be open to all individuals and businesses.

"Every year on Nov. 11, there are ceremonies across the country and throughout Alaska to honor the sacrifices veterans have endured to preserve our freedom," Dunham said. "As we sign these papers, we begin creating a museum in Alaska that will operate year-round to ensure that the Alaskans who served their country so well will not be forgotten. As President Calvin Coolidge once said, 'A nation which forgets its defenders, will itself be forgotten.'"

Those interested in making the Alaska Veterans Memorial Museum a reality by volunteering their efforts, donating artifacts and display items, or becoming paid members may contact Steering Committee Chairman Wortman at VFW Post No. 9785, telephone (907) 694-2739. More information on the Centralia museum is available at www.veteransmuseum.org

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