



## A Personal Message from George Canelos, Federal Co-Chair

March 21, 2007

*A visit to Washington DC*

I travel to Washington DC several times a year on Denali Commission business, and each time I try to spend at least an evening with my wife's first cousin, David Nanney. He has devoted his entire career to serving our country with distinction in the Pentagon. David takes the war on terror personally, since he was close to the kill zone, and helped the Pentagon recover from the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

David & I have perfected a nighttime tour of the monuments when other family or friends are in town. This time we escorted three good friends from Anchorage and Fairbanks. An Arctic front had turned Washington DC into a deep freeze, so we chose our destinations carefully. The FDR Monument was first. This is the most intimate monument in the capital. Even in the frigid night with the water features turned off, President Franklin Roosevelt's heartfelt words to reawaken a nation devastated by the Great Depression are valid today:

*No Country, however rich, can afford the waste of its human resources. Demoralization caused by vast unemployment is our greatest extravagance. Morally, it is the greatest menace to our social order.*

During the New Deal, he created many organizations that in many ways blazed the trails for independent agencies like the Denali Commission. When he proposed the Tennessee Valley Authority, he said:

*It is time to extend planning to a wider field, in this instance comprehending in one great project many states directly concerned with the basin of one of our greatest rivers.*

He led from the heart and we owe him a great debt.

We then climbed the steps to pay respects to President Lincoln. Lincoln was a giant who worked to heal our country at the end of the Civil

War. His Secretary of State, William H. Seward, was of course the visionary who insisted we purchase Alaska from Russia in 1867. The marble pillars framed the white lights of the Washington monument and capitol dome in the distance.

We then approached the Korean War monument in the dark. This is Major General (retired) Jake Lestenkof's war. The platoon loomed in the darkness, ever vigilant, ever on patrol. To see these larger-than-life soldiers emerge from the fog at sunrise is absolutely eerie.

And then the wall – the war of my generation; we save the Vietnam Memorial for last. To us, nothing else in Washington DC matches it for the poignancy and terrible tragic loss of war. I have three friends on this wall. Many Alaskans names are here, as well, and many more survived into leadership roles today. Finally we approached the Women's Memorial, a very moving tribute to the role of women in the Vietnam War.

There is no monument to honor our servicemen and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, not yet anyway. Once again we find ourselves in a complex struggle with no easy answers. I urge you to give voices to your sense of what course our country should take by supporting our soldiers and their families, by asking hard questions of our leaders and candidates, and by carefully voting. We owe that to everyone these monuments honor.

I saw many Alaskan groups this week in Washington DC on business, and I hope they also took the time to meet patriots like David Nanney, and to pay respects to our leaders and common soldiers whom we honor in these monuments.

With Respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George J. Canelos".

George J. Canelos, Federal Co-Chair