

# 65 Years of Non-Partisan Policy Research for Alaska and Beyond



*NON-PARTISAN POLICY RESEARCH  
FOR ALASKA SINCE 1961*



UAA Institute of Social  
and Economic Research  
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

# Founded in 1961



## CHAPTER 80

### AN ACT

Relating to the establishment of a business, economics and public administration research program by the University of Alaska; and providing for an effective date.

(H.B. 161)

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Alaska:

Section 1. The University of Alaska is authorized to establish a business, economics and public administration research program for the purpose of developing

and publishing statistics and other information regarding the economy, government and resources of the state.

Sec. 2. This Act takes effect on the day after its passage and approval or on the day it becomes law without such approval.

Approved April 13, 1961





## Science Meet 7/18 Slated for UA

COLLEGE (AP) — The 20th Alaska State Science conference will be held August 24-27 at the University of Alaska.

The theme of this year's conference is "Change in the North: People, Resources and Environment."

Topics to be covered include development and conservation; the economic and political basis for decisions about resource development; settlement of native land claims and the integration of Alaska natives into the socio-economic structure of the state. Victor Fischer at the University is the conference chairman.

NEWS-MINER  
7/18/69



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## Tussing predicts oil revenues to decline

ANCHORAGE (AP)—Alaska is facing 25 years of reduced oil revenues which will force a cutback in large expenditures, says a report published recently by the University of Alaska Institute of Social and Economic Research.

The prediction came from Dr. Arlon Tussing, an adjunct professor at the institute and president of a Seattle-based consulting firm. It was published in the December issue of the institute's "Review of Social and Economic Conditions."

"The era of OPEC's opportunistic price-gouging is over," he said. "There is no other entity in sight with the power to move oil prices in consistent direction or stabilize it at any given level."

His study contends a price range of \$10 to \$18 a barrel is "high enough to cover the cost of mining and transporting coal, and burning it in environmentally acceptable fashion almost but not quite everywhere in the world."

And the prices would be

### The fallout from fewer dollars

Less cash coming into Alaska would mean less spending in every corner of the state. That will hurt:

- Jobs
- Payroll
- Businesses
- Funding for schools and roads
- Property values
- The availability and variety of goods and services
- Tax rates
- And much more.

Alaska has been fortunate to be partially insulated from the current national recession.

**But long-time residents remember the economic crash of 1986-1988, caused by a steep drop in oil prices that dramatically cut the flow of dollars into the state.**

No Alaska community or household was insulated from the effects of that crash. And no one is eager to see a return to those days.

### Take control of the future

The next generation of Alaskans will not automatically share in the economic prosperity enjoyed by their parents, if current trends persist. It will take work to make all three legs of the stool as strong and stable as possible.

For more information on Alaska's economy, visit these Web sites:

[www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu](http://www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu)

- "What Drives Alaska's Economy — New Summary and Full Report"
- "Investing for Alaska's Future"

[www.AlaskasEconomy.org](http://www.AlaskasEconomy.org)

This is part 3 of a 4-part series explaining how Alaska's economy works. Scott Goldsmith, a professor of economics at the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage, did the analysis. This message is brought to you by Alaskan-owned and operated businesses concerned about the future of the Alaska economy.

**Part 4 of this series will describe how Alaskans can take control of their economic future.**



## ALASKA'S ECONOMY

Understand it.  
Support it.



Falling oil production could put our economy on shaky legs.



## THE STATUS OF ALASKA NATIVES REPORT 2004 VOLUME I

PREPARED BY  
SCOTT GOLDSMITH  
JANE ANGVIK  
LANCE HOWE  
ALEXANDRA HILL  
LINDA LEASK

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM  
BRIAN SAYLOR AND DAVID MARSHALL  
INSTITUTE OF CIRCUMPOLAR HEALTH STUDIES

### Prepared For Alaska Federation of Natives

With funding from the Alaska Native Sobriety and Alcohol Control Program and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

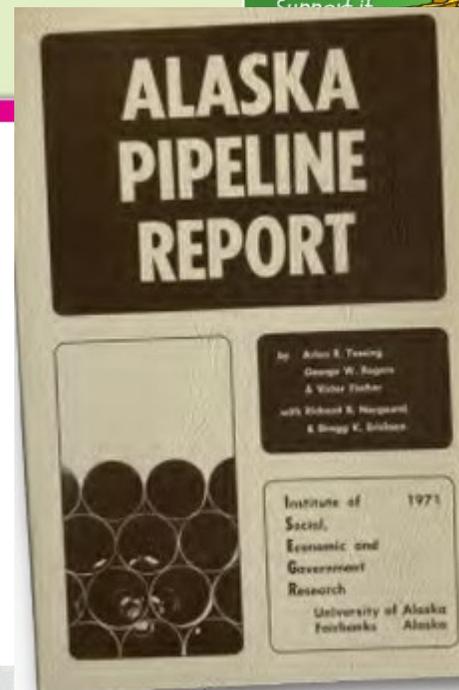
### Additional Support Provided by Understanding Alaska

A special series of ISEGR research studies, funded by the University of Alaska Foundation, examining Alaska economic development issues

MAY 2004



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH  
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## ISEGR reports on school figures

A one and one-quarter inch thick tome which breaks down school enrollment figures in Alaska during the decade between fall 1968 and spring 1969 has been published by the University of Alaska's Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research.

The text, entitled "Alaska School Enrollments," examines school enrollments by race and location in elementary and secondary schools as well as in colleges and universities.

Two ISEGR staff members, James Sullivan and William Rose, compiled the volume from State Department of Education statistics using geographical boundaries established by the Alaska Department of Labor.

The authors caution that some statistics in the report were "questionable in many instances." They cite figures on elementary and secondary school-aged children and a change, during a 10-year period, in the state's reporting procedures.

The first section of the book

offers total enrollment figures, year by year, for students in elementary and secondary grades while noting the number of students from three racial categories: Native, white and the ever-present "other."

In the school year of 1968-1969 a total of 46,007 Alaskan students attended schools. The report lists those students attending out-of-state schools whose parents reside in Alaska among the figures in the report. The 1968-1969 figure consists of 38,479 elementary school students and 7,528 high school students.

In the last year covered by "Alaska School Enrollments," 57,502 elementary school students and 17,997 high school students made a total of 75,499 elementary and high school students in the state for the year of 1968-1969, a rise of 29,492 over the 10-year period.

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner  
Oct 13, 1970

# About ISER

- **ISER's research is non-partisan, independent, and available to the public.**
  - **Most of ISER's 1,800+ publications are available online at no cost through ScholarWorks@UA**
- **ISER's research is primarily funded through competitive grants and contracts with state and federal agencies, as well as private foundations, and through philanthropic support.**
- **Faculty and research professionals (RPs) come from a wide range of disciplines.**
  - **ISER researchers have expertise in many fields, including economics and fiscal policy, education policy, applied anthropology, behavioral health and psychology, natural resources management, and Arctic sustainable development**



# Two centers within ISER



**UAA Center for Alaska  
Education Policy Research**  
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

**CAEPR researchers focus on education policy issues, evaluate education policies and programs, act as a clearinghouse for education-related research at ISER, and provide analyses on education topics to policymakers.**



**UAA Center for Behavioral  
Health Research & Services**  
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

**CBHRS' multi-disciplinary team of faculty, research professionals, and students engage in collaborative research and evaluation that addresses applied and behavioral health issues within and outside Alaska.**



**UAA Institute of Social  
and Economic Research**  
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# ISER does more than just research

- ISER faculty teach UAA classes in economics, public policy, resource management, and other areas
- They testify to the legislature and answer queries from local and national policymakers Alaska
- Researchers give public lectures and talks across Alaska
- They are featured regularly in the media





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# Supply Chain Challenges & Food Security

## Alaska aviation weather infrastructure: outage patterns and strategic prioritization

By: Michael S. Jones<sup>\*1</sup> and Gregory Dyer<sup>2</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup> Contact: [msjones6@alaska.edu](mailto:msjones6@alaska.edu); Research Assistant Professor of Economics, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), University of Alaska Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska, USA

<sup>2</sup> Aviation Services Program Manager, Woolpert, Denver, Colorado, USA

### Abstract:

Alaska is the most aviation dependent state in the United States of America, with almost a quarter of the population and the majority of named communities lying off of the limited road system. The importance of reliable aviation transportation, and the infrastructure underlying these networks, is paramount for these communities. However, the vast distances, remoteness, and rugged environments that make aviation so critical also make maintaining aviation infrastructure particularly challenging. The goal of this report is to serve as a reference document for mapping outages in a subset of core aviation infrastructure – aviation weather stations. We have gathered what we believe is a complete outage history of the 151 “Automated





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# Public Pension Plans & the Education Workforce

## Policy Brief

December 2025



UAA Institute of Social  
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UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

### Recruitment, Retention, and Retirement Plan Structure: Evidence from Teachers

Noah Burke and Brock M. Wilson, University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research

*In 2006, the State of Alaska closed its defined benefit retirement plan and required all newly hired public education employees—mostly teachers—to join a defined contribution plan. This paper examines whether that change in pension structure affected recruitment or retention in Alaska's public education workforce.*

#### Motivation

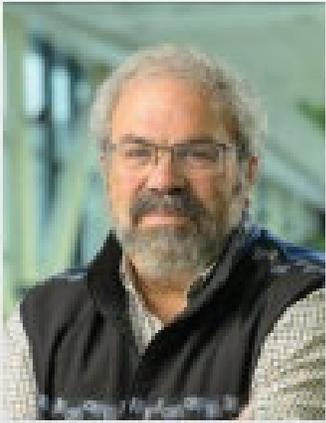
Retirement benefits represent a large share of teacher compensation in the United States. Defined benefit plans—which promise lifetime annuities based on salary and years of service—have provided insurance for longer life expectancies but exposed governments to funding risk. Defined contribution plans, similar to 401(k)s, offer portability and predictable costs for employers but provide uncertain benefits for workers. Because Alaska teachers are not covered by Social Security, the change from defined benefit to defined contribution was

#### Data and Methodology

In this study, we used administrative records from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development covering all public education employees from 1999–2019. The data include information on hire date, experience, age, salary, and retention by cohort. Employees hired before July 1, 2006 entered the defined benefit system (TRS Tiers I and II), while those hired after joined the defined contribution system (TRS Tier III). To estimate the effect of the policy, we used a regression-discontinuity-in-time framework comparing cohorts immediately



# Mining Policy Issues: Critical Minerals, Permitting, and Environmental Standards



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## Alaska's Critical Mineral Frontier *Challenges and Opportunities*



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A summary of Minerals, Critical Minerals, and Strategic Minerals in Alaska

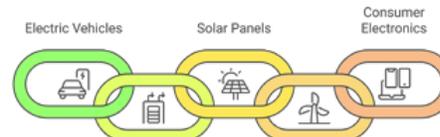
March 2026

**Project overview:** This report examined Alaska's role in the critical mineral economy: what minerals the state produces, where Alaska fits in global supply chains, and what policies could increase economic benefits for Alaskans.

**Bottom line:** Alaska matters to the critical mineral supply, but the strongest case is to strengthen existing mining in Alaska, not to build a full in-state chain of smelting and manufacturing. The near-term opportunity is to increase benefits from mines through jobs, income, taxes, innovation, and in-state business participation.

### 1. Why Critical Minerals Matter

Critical minerals are essential inputs for products tied to economic and national security, including electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels, wind turbines, and connected consumer devices.



### 3. Economic Impact

**\$122,500**  
AVERAGE ANNUAL MINING WAGE

Significantly exceeding average rural Alaska wages.

Alaska's benefits from critical minerals are the same benefits it gets from mining more generally:

- jobs
- labor income
- taxes and government revenue





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# Wildfires and Snow



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## PROJECT USMARTT: BUSINESS SURVEYS

**Urban Snow Modeling to Advance Resilience for Today and  
Tomorrow (USMARTT)**

### Mission Statement

University of Alaska researchers want to understand how previous years of heavy snow affected your business.

### Survey Goals

Objectives of the research project's business surveys include:

- Assess risk perceptions.
- Understand actions taken and not taken.
- Document any obstacles businesses may face.
- Identify potential ways to help in the future.

### Background

In Anchorage, Alaska, the urban area has faced the top three snowiest years in the last decade. Specifically, from 2022 to 2024, heavy snow loads caused 24 buildings to collapse, resulting in one fatality.



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# Economic Impacts of Alaska Fiscal Options 2026

By Brett Watson, Noah Burke, Mike Jones, Spencer  
Perry, Brock Wilson



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# Nathan (Nate) West, PhD



- Research Assistant Professor
  - University of Alaska Anchorage
  - Center for Behavioral Health Research and Services
- Research Area: Community-Based Participatory Research; Chronic Disease Prevention; Health Promotion



# Mission Statement

- **Mission:** Reduce the burden of chronic disease in Alaskan communities.
- **Why:** Alaskans experience a high prevalence of obesity, certain chronic conditions (e.g., high blood pressure/cholesterol, diabetes), and social health-related needs.
- **How:** Partner with faith-based organizations (FBOs) and barbershop-based settings in Alaska with the intent of identifying and addressing pressing community health-related needs to produce meaningful, contextual, and culturally appropriate growth.



# Faith-Based Health Promotion

- FBOs are important settings for community-engaged health promotion research and serve as worksites for clergy.
- FBOs have the capability to reach and positively impact the health of diverse populations as a public health capacity-building strategy.
- In Alaska, effective methods for identifying changes within churches and other FBOs (e.g., policy, environmental), and engaging clergy and church members in their implementation, are limited.



# Barbershop-Based Health Promotion

- Barbershops serve as important social settings for men.
  - Increasingly have adopted the role of healthcare settings for community-engaged health promotion research.
- Barbershops extend the reach of healthcare providers into underserved communities.
  - Allowing healthcare services to be provided in accessible and trusting environments.
- Alaskan men are especially in need of non-traditional, convenient, and community-based preventive care services.



# Public Health Impact

- Little to no multidisciplinary partnerships exist with churches and barbershop settings (e.g., healthcare, academic, public health, social work).
- Collaborating with trusted community leaders has potential to expand access to public health messages and community supports.
- FBOs and barbershops are an important part of community-based health strategies.
  - Critical to addressing health disparities and reducing the burden of chronic disease.



# Spencer Perry, PhD

## Assistant Professor of Economics & Public Policy

- **Research areas:**
  - Health economics, labor economics, policy evaluation
- **Current project topics**
  - Benefits of Medicaid expansion
  - Gig economy work and college attendance
  - Smoking behavior and Alzheimer's Disease
- **Teaching**
  - Methods in Public Policy Evaluation
  - Introductory Economics for MBA students
- **Outside work**
  - New to Alaska!
  - Climbing (rock and ice), skiing, biking
  - Ice skating at Westchester Lagoon



# Types of Questions My Research

## Answers

- How does the generosity of Medicaid today affect health and healthcare use in the future?
- How does time-of-use electricity pricing affect electricity price plan choice and follow-on usage?
- Does gig economy work and online education ease barriers to college attendance and graduation?
- Do smoking and drinking behaviors throughout life affect one's likelihood of developing Alzheimer's Disease or other related dementias (ADRD)?



# Current Alaska-Focused Projects



- RHTP proposals (pending):
  - Evaluation infrastructure for rural health investments
  - Health care spending, payer mix, and access analysis
- ADRD prevalence across Alaska:
  - Predict dementia prevalence across Alaska regions
- Goal: Provide decision-ready evidence for policy and investment



# CAEPR research team



UAA Center for Alaska  
Education Policy Research  
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

## Dayna Jean DeFeo, PhD

- CAEPR Director & Associate Professor of Education Policy
- 15+ years at UAA & ISER
- Dog lover, long-distance runner, fiber & metal crafter

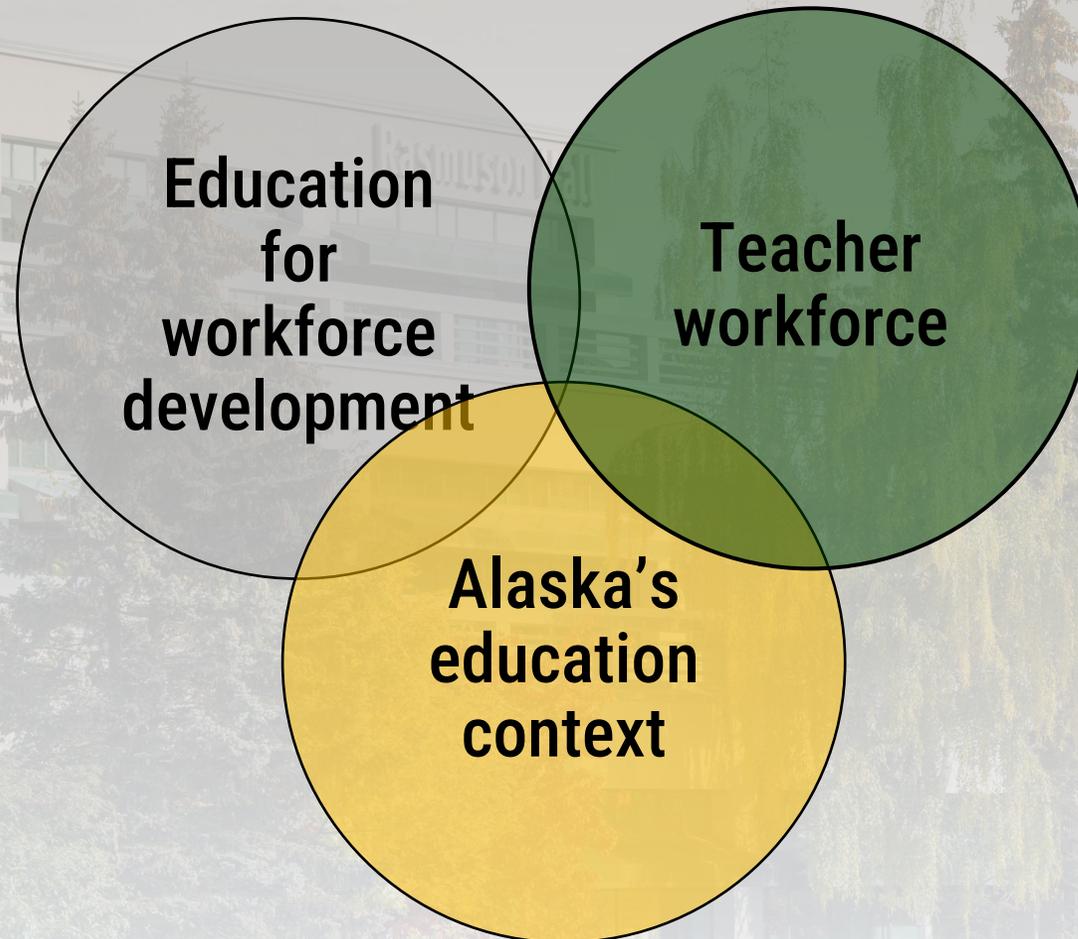
## Trang Tran, PhD

- Assistant Research Professor in Education Policy
- Learning Sciences and Human Development
- Been at ISER since 2016
- Also dog lover



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# Education policy research at CAEPR



# Education for workforce development

- College and career readiness
  - Dual enrollment
  - High school graduation
- College & postsecondary transitions (e.g., life skills, acclimate to new environments)
- Preparing students for high demand jobs (e.g., CTE, STEM)
- CAEPR faculty support Interdisciplinary and cross sector collaborations



# Teacher workforce

## Our expertise

- Educator turnover & retention
  - Rates, trends, costs
- Educator recruitment
- Teacher compensation
- School resources that affect working conditions

## Current Projects

- How federal programs affect teacher retention
  - School Lunch Program & Title I
- The role of communities & community organizations in supporting teacher retention
- Statewide teacher survey exploring
  - Working conditions in schools
  - Community characteristics
  - Teacher characteristics
  - Retention
- Update statewide educator turnover rates



# Alaska education context

## Engaging Alaska shareholders in education research

- Collaborations
- Communication
- Partnerships
- Outreach
- Listening

## Bringing Alaska to national policy & research discussions

- Conferences
- Nationally competitive grants
- Policy discussions
- Cross-institutional & cross-state collaborations



# How ISER works with policymakers



- Quick consultative calls
- Sharing existing research
- Expert testimony
- Literature reviews and policy scans
- Policy briefs
- Contract research studies



# Coming up!

Friday May 27



**ACEP**  
Alaska Center for Energy and Power

Lunch and Learn about the Alaska  
Energy Data Gateway with ACEP

ISER's 65<sup>th</sup> Celebration

May 19 at the Anchorage Museum



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Thank you!



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