

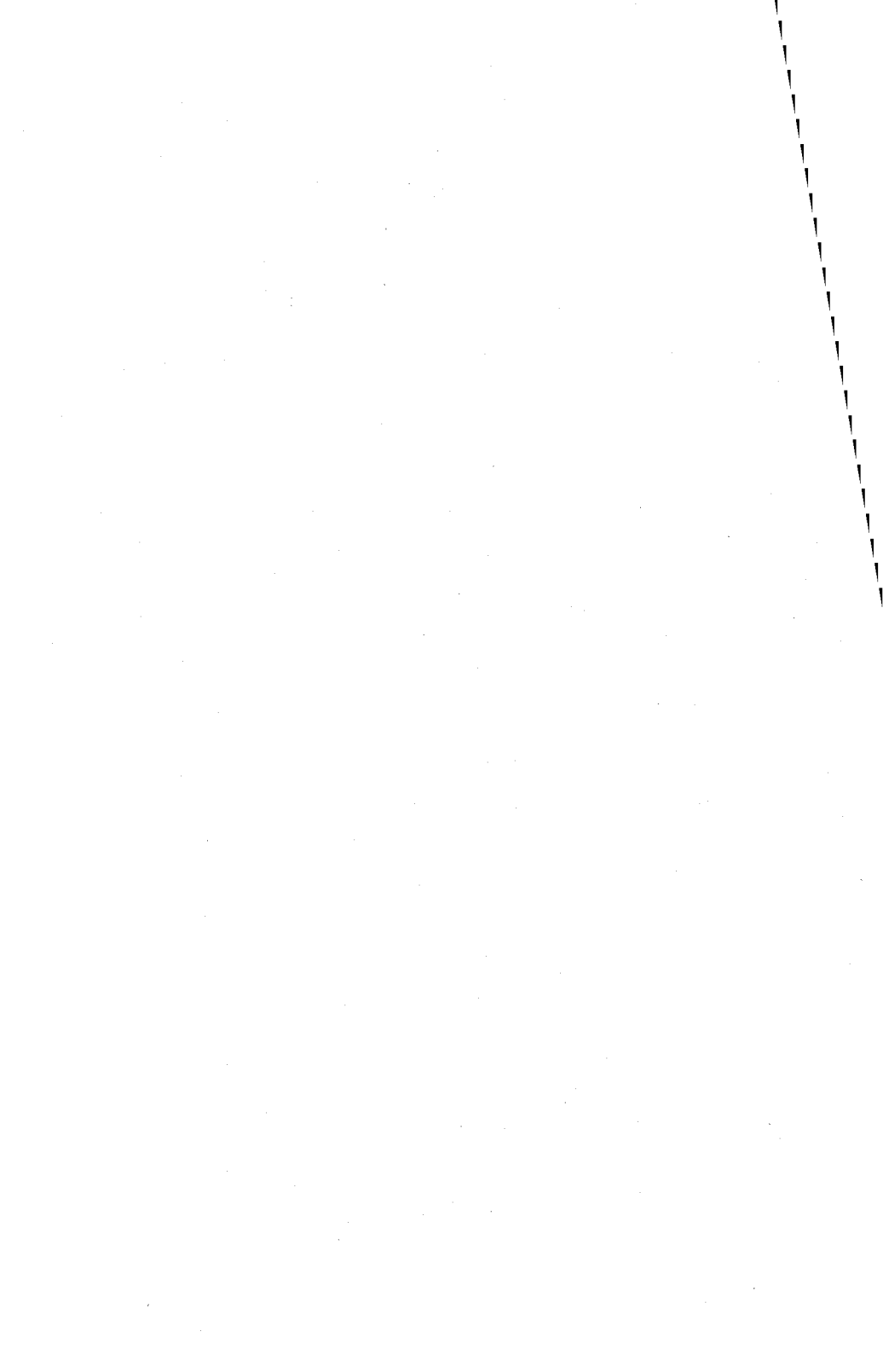
ADDRESS BY  
THE HONORABLE TED STEVENS  
U.S. SENATOR  
STATE OF ALASKA

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BEFORE A JOINT SESSION  
OF THE  
FIRST SESSION  
OF THE  
EIGHTEENTH LEGISLATURE

February 11, 1993

Juneau, Alaska



## ADDRESS TO THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

BY SENATOR TED STEVENS

No one has a crystal ball to predict what will happen across the spectrum of federal issues that impact Alaska. President Clinton has yet to name many of the key Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries who will have a role in our state. At the Department of Defense, only one new official has been confirmed, Secretary Les Aspin. Last month, I was among 8 Senators and House members briefed by Sec. Aspin on his initiative to reorganize the Pentagon, which may further delay the selection of high level defense officials. We may see similar reorganization plans from the Interior and Commerce Departments.

Before turning to military issues, I want to recognize the sacrifice of seven members of the Army National Guard here, near Juneau, just three months ago--Sergeant Michael Schmidt, Sergeant First Class Richard Brink, Chief Warrant Officer John Pospisil, Colonel Thomas Clark, Colonel Wilfried Wood, Command Sergeant Major Archie Kahklen, and the Commander of the Alaska Army National Guard, Brigadier General Tom Carrol. Having worked closely with our Alaska Guard, we know the critical contribution the Guard makes to Alaska, and we all feel the loss of these dedicated men. Our prayers must continue to go out to their families. They were all testaments to the professionalism and dedication of the Alaska Guard. The Guard is out there, every day, doing it's mission, supporting our state, and the nation. I know that's how those who died would have wanted it--that's their legacy to all of us.

And as I look over at that seat next to the Majority Leader of the House, I think of my friend Kenny Brady. He sat there--and was typical of Alaskans who have said: "This state has been good to me and my family. I want some in the State Legislature to try to help Alaska programs for the future. Kenny was a good marine. I had a good feeling when he was by my side.

Few people realize the military impact in Alaska's economy. This year the Defense Department will spend about \$1.5 billion in Alaska--about \$900 million in payroll and service and supply contracts. Almost 36,000 Alaskans are directly employed by the military, not including the Coast Guard, which is our Naval component.

Since the inauguration of the new Administration, I have met with Secretary Aspin, Army Chief of Staff General Gordon Sullivan, Air Force Chief of Staff Tony McPeak and this past few days, senior commanders in Seoul Korea and at Pacific Command Headquarters in Hawaii. I undertook these meetings because of the great pressure in the Congress for even deeper defense cuts than proposed by President Clinton or Secretary Aspin.

The significance of these defense cuts is plain. Our nation

will reduce our Armed Forces by several hundred thousand personnel over the next few years. Such cuts will eliminate units both overseas and in the United States. These cuts will hit Alaska.

This is a period of uncertainty and change in the military, which makes even more significant our efforts to work with and meet the needs of the military. Military leaders have expressed great interest and support for the efforts of the Anchorage and Fairbanks communities, and our state agencies, to meet the severe shortage of adequate family housing for military personnel in Alaska. I particularly thank Eldon Muldor and Tim Kelly for the leadership in presenting their Joint Resolution. This support and commitment by the legislature will make a real impression on the new civilian leaders at DoD, and the Base Closure Commission.

As you have heard, Congress mandated three base closure reviews--one in 1991, one in 1993 and another in 1995. The next listing of recommendations to close bases will be made by Secretary Aspin on March 15 of this year.

I can not overemphasize the Alaska military family housing shortage. Senior Pacific Command leaders only this week stated clearly that family housing limits the future of military forces here in Alaska. We have already lost units which came back from overseas due to the housing shortage. Over the next few years, Alaska is a logical home for units returning from overseas bases. Our geographic position affords the military the unique opportunity to achieve dual deployment goals. Troops based here can be deployed to the Far East or to Northern Europe as rapidly as troops in the South 48 can be deployed to one or the other--put another way, because our troops are dual deployed, each base here is the equivalent of two in the south 48. But this concept is not effective unless the right mix of forces can be stationed here.

For 1993 and 1994, be prepared to see a reduction in Army and Air Force personnel at the primary and remote Alaska bases. I have not heard anything to indicate that DoD will propose any of the major Alaska bases for closure in the 1993 review. But, despite the military support for Alaska, all bases will be reviewed by the new Base Closure Commission. Every state, and every base, faces the same scrutiny.

General Gordon Sullivan, the Chief of Staff of the Army, arrives in Alaska tomorrow. Gen. Sullivan chose Alaska to meet his Russian counterpart, Gen. Semenov. I am joining Gen. Sullivan at Ft. Richardson to discuss with General Dave Bramlett and General Joe Ralston the Army's role in Alaska and the Pacific. Gen. Semenov has also asked to discuss the relationship of military personnel and planning to our elected, civilian government. I intend to raise our concerns in Alaska about risks posed by Russian nuclear disposal in the Arctic with Gen. Semenov when we meet Saturday.

Senator Murkowski's term on the Senate Select Intelligence

Committee ended in December. I joined that panel, and will continue and expand our efforts to learn about Soviet nuclear dumping and disposal in the Arctic. It is imperative that we understand and address any potential risk to the Arctic region. Last year, I earmarked \$10 million in the Defense Appropriations bill to investigate and monitor nuclear waste disposal in the Russian Arctic, and I raised this issue with the new CIA Director, Jim Woolsey, prior to his confirmation hearing in the Senate.

The Russian nuclear disposal and accident record is disturbing. My staff has told me that several "Chernyobol" type nuclear power reactors are located in Siberia. Substantial nuclear waste deposits are also located at the Cherlyabinsk and Krasnoyarsk sites, some of them dating back almost 30 years. These sites merit special attention.

I am continuing to monitor the joint DoD and Department of Energy investigation of nuclear waste at Point Hope. \$3 million has been made available to act this year. The Departments of Defense and Energy must report the results of their investigation no later than March 31 of this year.

A cloud hangs over Alaska's miners. Legislation has already been introduced in the Senate would radically amend the 1872 Mining law, seriously jeopardizing the mining industry on Alaska's Federal lands. Whether the new Secretary of Interior, Bruce Babbitt, will endorse that legislation is still unclear. Last year when Western Senators opposed hostile amendments to the mining law, we won by only one vote.

President Clinton's past support for designating ANWR as a wilderness may mean that, short of cataclysmic world events, Congress will not approve development of that promising field. Legislation pending in both the House and the Senate would designate the coastal plain as wilderness. Our challenge now will be to convince President Clinton and the Congress not to close down ANWR forever.

I ask you to continue efforts to convince new members of Congress that economic development and wildlife protection can go hand-in-hand. Those members of Congress listen to their folks back home. So, you can help by reaching out to other state legislatures to seek resolutions supporting development, or least, build coalitions to head off resolutions calling for a permanent lock-up of the Arctic coastal plain. Continued funding of an Alaska grass-roots educational campaign is most important. As we did in our battle for statehood, establishing a broad base of support for ANWR development across the nation can counteract misinformation being supplied by extreme opponents. I have pledged to work with Arctic Power--it is what we need: a non-governmental entity to coordinate our efforts.

Recent discoveries in Cook Inlet and the Beaufort Sea underscore that our vast oil potential has not been fully tapped.

While major oil companies are exploring markets overseas, independent oil producers could fill the void developing here at home. The national energy bill that became law last year includes alternative minimum tax relief for those independents. That law frees up more than one billion dollars of capital over five years--some of which could be used for exploration and development in Alaska. Last month I cosponsored legislation to impose an oil import fee on foreign oil. That measure would stabilize the price of domestic crude and make it economically feasible for independents to develop smaller fields.

I've spoken to the Independents' Association and have encouraged them to work with you and the governor to see if further incentives under Alaska's state laws could make exploration within Alaska more attractive.

The proposed Alaska wetlands regulation, exempting Alaska from costly compensatory mitigation requirements, was not finalized in the closing days of the last Administration. We do not know where the new EPA Chief, Carol Browner stands on the issue. As soon as possible, we will try to meet with her to find out.

On the fishing scene, three big issues will break soon. The Magnuson 200 mile limit law is up for reauthorization this year which could mean another fight over control of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act runs out about the same time, and with it, the incidental take exemption for Alaska's fishermen.

Finally, the Endangered Species Act comes up for review. While we do not have problems like the Spotted Owl, if a balance is not maintained between endangered fish and wildlife stocks and wise use of Alaska's natural resources, several Alaskan industries will suffer.

Waste, which to me includes bycatch or discard, is increasing in our fisheries. Every year, millions of pounds of fish waste are tossed overboard. By limiting wasteful fishing practices and utilizing bycatch and discard, a substantial number of new jobs should come to our coastal communities.

Alaskans brought down the driftnets. Now we should tackle waste, and I will concentrate on that when we review the Magnuson Act. It is my hope that our state agencies and the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council will give our Congressional Delegation support and help develop new concepts to deal with waste.

I am working closely with the Governor to proceed with the acquisition of a new ferry for the Alaska Marine Highway System. There are a range of state and federal needs that could be served by a new vessel, and I hope for progress this year in meeting our state's marine transportation needs.

The blight of alcoholism and drugs continues to threaten each generation of young Alaskans. Some gains have been made against Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect, particularly at the FAS center in Anchorage, which provides residential treatment for young mothers, counseling, and child care. We must build on that success to battle alcoholism and drug abuse among our teenagers and young adults.

According to AFN's report, "A Call for Action," the suicide rate for Alaska Native males between 20 and 24 years of age is 14 times the national average--14 times! Drugs, alcohol and a lack of employment opportunities are key factors in that statistic. Alaskans must work together--in a coordinated fashion--to deal with the root causes of alcoholism and drug abuse. When the Joint Commission on Alaska Natives makes its recommendations, I know you will carefully study its proposals, and join with me in taking steps to address the tragedy of failed lives in our cities and villages.

There is some hope. President Clinton and his new Energy Secretary, Hazel O'Leary, are advocates of natural gas. As you know, the Trans-Alaska Gas Line Project already has a federal right-of-way permit and a federal export license. Frank Murkowski, Don Young and I are working with the Governor to enlist the support of the new Administration in persuading Japan and other Pacific nations to purchase our gas.

I want to introduce the members of my staff: first, Gen Dickey and Lucy Hudson who work with me here. From Washington, Lisa Sutherland, my Chief of Staff; Mitch Rose, my Press Secretary, and Anna Kerdtula, my Special Assistant on Russian affairs, working on the Russian nuclear hazard issue, are all Alaskans. I have been accompanied to the Pacific by Steve Cortese of the Appropriations Committee Staff, and Col. Charles Feldmeyer, Director of Budget Liaison for the Army. They and Anna Kerdtula will also join me for meetings with Generals Sullivan and Semenov.