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ADDRESS

BY

THE HONORABLE FRANK MURKOWSKI

U.S. SENATOR

STATE OF ALASKA

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BEFORE A JOINT SESSION

OF THE

SECOND SESSION

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH LEGISLATURE

February 15, 1994

Juneau, Alaska

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**Speech of Alaska Sen. Frank Murkowski to the Alaska State  
Legislature, Tuesday, Feb. 15, 1994 in Juneau**

Mr. President, Madam Speaker, Senators and Representatives of the Eighteenth  
Alaska Legislature...

This is a good day for Alaska...

Alaska's Olympians are competing in Norway...

Hilary Lindh, Tommy Moe, Megan Gerety, Nina Kempel and Adam  
Verrier are in our thoughts and prayers as they represent Alaska and the  
USA in Lillehammer...

And it's Elmer Rasmuson's Birthday...

He's 85 years young, and we join in celebrating with this great Alaskan  
who has spent his life working to build Alaska.

We wish them all the very best.

This morning I want to talk about CHANGE.

When I first addressed this body in 1981:

Berlin had a wall...

AIDS was an unknown disease...

You couldn't fly to Russia from Anchorage...

Oil was \$24 a barrel...

And I was not a Grandfather...

It doesn't seem that long ago.

Change is our constant companion.

We can resist it, we can adapt to it, or we can exploit it.

But we must always deal with it.

Alaska has changed.

Since Statehood...

We've endured natural disasters, earthquakes, floods...

We've waged battles over Native Claims, the Pipeline, Alaska Lands...

We've ensured a future by completing land selections and creating a  
permanent fund...

Today, Alaska stands at the threshold of a new century...

...older and more mature, but young enough to believe that our best days are  
ahead of us.

We are independent enough to chafe at the yoke of outside control...

...but savvy enough to know that there will always be Outsiders who will try and dictate our destiny.

This is nothing new.

In the past, we've reacted to Outside control in a variety of different ways.

We've resisted, we've adapted, we've yielded...

...we've even sued.

We all know about the State of Alaska's suit against the Feds...

But there is another suit that also illustrates our struggle with Outside interests.

Paul Shultz of Fairbanks has spent \$250,000 for legal fees in a suit to gain access to his own land.

He has already won twice, but the case may yet wind up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Here is a private citizen with the conviction to put hard earned dollars at risk for a cause he believes in.

In contrast, Outside activists who sue the Federal Government don't necessarily have to risk their money filing lawsuits.

Last year the Clinton Administration gave up on a suit filed by preservationists aimed at creating more wild and scenic rivers.

The Government settled out of court, agreeing to the preservationists' demands...

...and then gave them \$50,000 for their legal bills.

Can Paul Schultz get the Government to pay his legal bills if he wins?

Not under current law!

You see, we have created a system that encourages the professional Outside preservationists to meddle in every permit or policy of consequence in Alaska...

...to challenge individual rights and State prerogatives...

...a system that encourages lawsuits, and stacks the deck against the little guy.

We have to change that.

And until we do, we need to stand behind Paul Shultz and other Alaskans who make a stand.

Because we live in a State that is a magnet for Outside interference.

ANWR...  
The Wolf program...  
Wetlands...  
Forest Management...  
endangered species...

Alaska is always in the spotlight.

...a spotlight powered by the guilt of America's environmental conscience...

...pointed by those who feel a need to overcompensate for past environmental mistakes in their own back yards...

It's not fair. But it's what we Alaskans face.

As if the rest of the nation didn't have problems of its own,

Let me turn the spotlight on some of them.

**Crime**—an area where we've seen a change for the worse. Even Alaska. Guns in schools. Gangs. Drugs. Repeat offenders in and out of jail.

It's time to get tough. Three strikes and you're in (jail). If you do the crime, you must do the time.

That means more police, more prisons, mandatory minimum sentences, and less parole... solutions that are neither cheap nor satisfying, but necessary.

I congratulate you for approving a tough new conspiracy bill... a new tool to fight crime.

We must also attack **the roots of crime—the aimlessness and insecurity that has resulted from the disintegration of the traditional family.**

Changes for the worse we've seen over the past three decades include:

a 400% increase in illegitimate births...

Quadrupling divorce rates...

Tripling of children in single parent homes...

200% increase in teenage suicide...

75 point drop in S.A.T. scores...

Should it surprise us that we've also seen a 560% increase in violent crime?

**We must also change a welfare system** that provides all the wrong incentives... that encourages family breakup... that promotes welfare dependency in succeeding generations.

We must revitalize **education** without new bureaucracies and new mandates from Washington.

I supported the original goals in the Education 2000 initiative.

Most of us can agree on core education goals to make America more

competitive in the 21st century.

But I had to oppose the Education 2000 bill in the Senate after amendments were added to:

Create at least 3 new bureaucracies...

Grant a federal veto over State education reform plans...

And use education dollars for a host of new activities that have very little to do with education.

In another area—**health care reform**...

We must reform health care in a manner that provides access, efficiency, compassion and quality ...

...without new taxes, federal mandates and bureaucracy.

We have exotic, expensive technologies that can prolong life almost indefinitely...

...while in many Alaska villages, we lack basic water and sanitation facilities that are the foundation of good health.

It's been said that we spend virtually all of our lifetime medical expenses during the week of our birth and the week of our death...

...while we spend very little to keep fit and avoid illness in between.

These are not problems that government can solve with a health card and a new bureaucracy.

Someone recently said: "If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it's free."

And when I think of compassion, cost-containment, and efficiency...

... the Federal government doesn't spring to mind.

We can't simply spend our way out of this problem.

We frankly don't have the money...

Our **federal debt** continues to pile up.

Even after the largest tax increase in history, our national debt will continue to rise from \$4.5 trillion today to \$6.2 trillion in 1999.

And the Congressional Budget Office last week confirmed what many of us had suspected all along...

The Clinton Health Care Reform plan will not reduce the deficit as claimed. Instead, it creates another \$1.4 trillion in mandatory entitlement programs.

So it is important that Congress exercise some restraint of its own.

And restraint isn't exactly Congress' strong suit. Columnist George Will wrote that: "Election to Congress is [the same as] being dispatched to Washington on a looting raid for the enrichment of your State... and no other ethic need inhibit the feeding frenzy."

We have to change that.

We are going to have to make some difficult choices.

You are in the same situation here in Juneau.

There will be instances when we will have to exercise some leadership and restraint by saying "no," as awkward and uncomfortable as that might be.

That's not to say that the Federal Government should do little for a state that supplies a substantial portion of our national wealth. But Uncle Sam no longer a rich relative.

You know, I would hardly mind the Feds doing less for us... if they'd only promise to do less to us.

**The President's new budget** was made public last week.

A reading of that budget makes Washington's plan for Alaska crystal clear.

Bureaus and agencies with a role in resource development—U.S. Geological Survey, the Minerals Management Service—suffer the axe.

Meanwhile, the budgets of federal agencies that police or prohibit development in Alaska are secure.

EPA spending will go up.

There will even be a new agency—a National Biological Survey—and we are still uncertain about their impact.

Under the President's plan, we would have more looking over our shoulder, but fewer lending a hand.

**Turning to issues here at home.**

Our state has changed.

This is not the Alaska of 1948, when commercial and Federal interests took much but left little.

Nor is this the Alaska of 1958, when we were brimming with optimism, assured that the covenants of Statehood would deliver the promised benefits.

This is not the Alaska of 1978, when the land freeze, the oil export ban, and the Alaska Lands bill tempered that optimism...

...and showed that the Federal Government does not always keep its promises.

Still, we built toward our prosperity by selecting the lands of our Statehood entitlement. We just finished those selections this year.

And Alaska's Natives have selected land entitlements arising from their claims.

This is a momentous change that has received very little attention:

**We have 150 million acres of Alaska lands in Alaskan hands.**

This truly marks Alaska's passage into maturity.

We begin this new chapter in Alaska's history... a chapter to be written with this 150 million acres of land...

...many with resources that can create jobs and sustain growth.

This has been my ambition in private and public life:

to help make Alaska a place where people are proud to live...

where their children remain or return to build families...

seek prosperity...

and pursue the Alaskan lifestyle amid clean air, clean water and open spaces.

This can happen if we can tell our story.

I say it again. Alaska has changed. And Alaskans have changed.

But some things haven't changed.

We labor under the heavy hand of the federal bureaucracy...

Management of our fish and game has once again fallen into federal hands...

...and our wolf control is under attack by Outside special interests and threats of boycotts.

**Court decisions and new legal arguments may complicate the subsistence problem further...**

**...but one thing seems clear to me:**

**On March 18th, the Department of Interior will announce its intention to seize control of fisheries management for subsistence purposes.**

**That's likely to impact next year's fishing season.**

**We could try to amend ANILCA, but that opens us up to the agendas of the special interests...**

**...or we can put a constitutional amendment before the people of Alaska.**

**The latter keeps the process in the control of Alaskans.**

**Experience shows that once the Feds are entrenched and in control, they'll be harder to move out than the ice in the Nenana. And I don't know about you, but I'm not going to wager on when the feds will leave.**

You know, Alaskans are still misunderstood.... and often maligned.

We are slandered in the fund-raising letters of Outside special interests...

...portrayed as a population concerned only with the next drop of oil or the next dividend check.

The truth: Nowhere else will you find people with a greater reverence for the environment than you will find in Alaska.

An example: We could teach the Pacific Northwest a thing or two about salmon habitat protection.

We have employed buffer strips around salmon streams for years, while they continue to grind up future generations of salmon in the turbines of their hydroelectric dams.

As new proposals are advanced to protect fish habitat in the Pacific Northwest—known as PACFISH—we need to stand up and tell our story:

Alaskans are writing the book on the sustainable use of forest lands. We have been writing it for years.

Of the 2,500 streams in Southeast Alaska, only 26 are “declining” salmon streams...

Of those 26, 10 are in protected wilderness... and 4 are in areas still open to logging.

That’s proof that we know what we’re doing.

In the past many Alaskans have exclaimed: “We don’t give a damn how they do it Outside!”

I say it’s time to change that credo to: “They need to do it Outside they way we do it here in Alaska!”

I repeat: Alaska has changed.

Alaska is the new frontier of sustainable, environmentally balanced development.

Here are a few more examples:

Alaskans are working to end the **destructive waste of fishery resources** in the Bering Sea and North Pacific.

We will expose the shortsightedness of throwing potentially valuable protein resources over the side.

Also, I have proposed using a part of **Prince William Sound settlement funds to permanently endow long-term fisheries research** in areas where it’s needed most—the Yukon/Kuskokwim.

Finally, Alaskans led the world in calling attention to the problems of **Arctic contamination**, and potential radioactive contamination from the Former Soviet Union.

In working to make the Russians our new partners in the effort to protect the Arctic...

It's become clear just how difficult it will be to get them to practice environmental protection and balanced development.

That's another reason I find the attitude of Outside preservationists so perplexing: Nowhere on earth will resources be developed more responsibly than they are here in Alaska.

By working to halt environmentally sound resource development here in Alaska, even well meaning environmentalists unwittingly promote the unsound development of resources elsewhere.

Keeping ANWR closed, for instance, means increasing the amount of oil bound for our shores in foreign tankers.

On the subject of ANWR, we have fought any movement of a wilderness bill.

**Meanwhile, there are some novel ideas bandied about, such as allowing some drilling in ANWR for exploration only...**

**...or using new directional drilling technology to access the oil without disturbing the surface.**

On another old battlefield, we will again challenge the **oil export ban** this year.

I've personally raised this issue with the President...

...and we expect to have hearings in March as we debate renewal of the Export Administration Act.

Moreover, the National Energy Strategy is somewhat sympathetic to the idea of Alaska Oil Export...

...and the "free trade" momentum of NAFTA may be of use.

But there are also some ominous changes that we need to be attuned to. Over the **past 18 months, as many as 8 oil companies have left (or announced plans to leave) Alaska.**

(AMOCO, Conoco, Penzoil, Murphy, Oryx, Maxus, Elf, Dyon)

We must halt this premature exodus of the industry from our State by providing key incentives and a stable economic environment.

These include large block licensing...

A clear tax policy that provides certainty...

Exploration incentives...

...and development incentives for marginal fields.

Another important industry for Alaska's future is **mining**.

We have three new mines on the horizon—A.J., Kensington and Ft. Knox.

It's absolutely critical that we get A.J. reopened. Most of it is on Alaskan land, so the ability to get it going is largely in our hands.

If we fail, then I fear for the future of mining in our State.

In Washington, we are trying to hold the line against mining law changes aimed at ending mining on federal lands.

Whatever the outcome of that debate, we must still prove that we can develop prospects on our own lands.

Here in Southeast, **timber jobs are again in jeopardy**.

As I mentioned earlier, Alaskans are pioneering the sustainable forest management techniques that could be a model for the Northwest.

Only 10% of the Tongass is available for logging over the next 100 years—all on a sustainable yield basis.

But the word hasn't gotten out. Or perhaps it's just being suppressed.

The movement to cancel the long term timber contracts is fueled by outlandish rhetoric and falsehoods.

Who are these California Congressmen and Washington bureaucrats who would force the end of our contracts...

close mills...

throw honest people out of work...

and expose the taxpayers to staggering legal exposure...

... some say an exposure approaching \$1.4 billion.

We need to tell our story of change. We need to let the world know how we develop Alaska's bounty on a sustainable basis.

We deserve a chance to develop a fiberboard plant in Sitka...

...a plant that produces a higher value product using less timber while producing less air and water pollution than the pulp mill it replaces.

Yes, Alaskans do drill, mine, and harvest.

But we do so as a gardener would tend his garden—with care and concern for the future. And with sound science and advanced technology.

We have not soiled our own nest, as evidenced by the many thousands of tourists who come to Alaska each year.

**And tourism** remains an exciting area of growth...

And we are working to make it even better by improving access to some of Alaska's most special areas.

At Denali Park, only 200,000 of the 600,000 who visit each year make it into the park. New ways to ease that logjam are being sought.

In Glacier Bay, we are opening the door to increased cruise ship visits.

We should also look to the development of new destinations like the Kennicott mine near McCarthy... and new destinations in the Tongass.

There is another new Alaska industry that I find exciting...

The industry of **Science and Technology**... further proof of the ways our state has changed.

Some of the very same technologies that have been used to better understand the natural process of our planet...

Remote instruments in orbiting satellites...

Imagery in the form of multi-spectral photographs or synthetic aperture radar images...

These are the tools of the New Alaska.

Alaskans are working to open the nation's first commercial launch facility in our State.

Alaskans will participate in NASA's "Mission to Planet Earth," tapping into vast new data about the Arctic and the Pacific.

With these new tools and data, we will learn...

Why the chum salmon sometimes fail to return to the Yukon drainage...

Or how to track radioactive and other contaminants from the former Soviet Union.

Alaskans aren't the only ones seeking information from orbiting satellites.

It will become a business. Perhaps a very lucrative one. And Alaskans are on the ground floor.

So it's easy to see why I am excited by the new Alaska.

The question is whether we, as Alaska's leaders, are willing to engage in the kind of creative new thinking that will wisely guide our new state into the 21st century.

We have land... 150 million acres belonging to Alaskans.

We have brains... one of the nation's most highly educated populations.

We have know-how and experience.

People like Elmer Rasmuson, who I mentioned earlier...

and Ted Stevens, with his 25 years in the U.S. Senate...

Ted is a ever-present reminder that Alaskans don't fear a fight.

And that's a good thing. Alaskans will always have to stand up to the inconsistencies and unfairness of the federal government.

We will fight their unfunded mandates...

We will defend our way of life against the "no use" land policy in vogue with the current administration...

We will build on the free trade momentum of NAFTA to remove the oil export ban...

We will oppose their wetlands policy and all regulations where the costs are out of step with the benefits or risks...

We will assert control over our fish and game.

In the face of constant change, I can't assure the future.

But I can be sure that our future will be brighter if we, at every opportunity, tell the story of Alaska's exciting change.

We will provide for our children and grandchildren by taking hold of our

Statehood entitlement, and making it work for us.

We will overcome the rhetoric of the nay-sayers by shining the light on our successes.

And the day will come... I am sure of it... that the way we do things here will become the model for sustainable development in the 21st Century.

That is the story of the new Alaska, and I thank you for allowing me to share it with you today.