

**ADDRESS**

**BY**

**THE HONORABLE TED STEVENS**

**U.S. SENATOR**

**BEFORE A JOINT SESSION**

**OF THE**

**SECOND SESSION OF THE**

**EIGHTEENTH ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**

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**April 7, 1994**

**Juneau, Alaska**



ADDRESS  
by U.S. Senator Ted Stevensbefore the 18th Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska  
April 7, 1994

MADAM SPEAKER. MR. PRESIDENT. MEMBERS OF THE 18TH ALASKA LEGISLATURE. FELLOW ALASKANS...

THESE LAST FEW YEARS IN THE SENATE HAVE GIVEN ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH DEDICATED PEOPLE LIKE DON YOUNG, FRANK MURKOWSKI, MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY, AND YOUR STAFFS.

I READ SENATOR MURKOWSKI'S COMMENTS TO YOU AND WILL TRY NOT TO DUPLICATE THEM -- THE THREE OF US ARE BASICALLY IN AGREEMENT ON ANWR AND THE OTHER SUBJECTS HE DISCUSSED.

AS YOU KNOW, ONE OF MY ROLES IS IN APPROPRIATIONS. THE REALITY IS WITH LESS FEDERAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING IN THE NEXT CENTURY, ALASKA WILL BE TARGETED TO BE HIT HARDER THAN ANY OTHER STATE.

ALREADY, THIS YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION CUT THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE BUDGET 13 PERCENT, AND WILL TRANSFER 100 IHS EMPLOYEES FROM ALASKA. THE NEW KOTZEBUE MEDICAL CENTER IS UNDERSTAFFED AND THE NEW NATIVE MEDICAL CENTER IN ANCHORAGE HALTED.

AS THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS TRY TO ELIMINATE THE FEDERAL BUDGET DEFICIT, WASHINGTON PLACES GREATER EMPHASIS ON URBAN RATHER THAN RURAL COMMUNITIES. MAIL DELIVERY, HEALTH SERVICES AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL AND FRONTIER AREAS ARE EASY TARGETS FOR CUTS.

FEDERAL REGIONAL OFFICES IN ALASKA ARE BEING CONSOLIDATED INTO OFFICES IN DENVER OR WASHINGTON STATE. THE ALASKA OFFICE OF THE BUREAU OF MINES WILL CLOSE. ALASKA STAFFING FOR THE MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE HAS BEEN CUT BY 40 PERCENT, AND THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY ALMOST SHUT DOWN. THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND BLM PLANS HAVE NOT BEEN DISCLOSED.

THESE ACTIONS ACCOMPANY INCREASED OPPOSITION TO HARVESTING TIMBER RESOURCES ON FEDERAL LAND AND EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ANWR.

AS FEDERAL DOLLARS FOR ALASKA DECLINE, IF POSSIBLE, COMPOUNDING THOSE CUTS HERE SHOULD BE AVOIDED; WORKING TOGETHER WE COULD CUSHION THE IMPACT ON OUR PEOPLE. FOR INSTANCE, FEDERAL FUNDING FOR HEALTH CARE IN OUR VILLAGES HAS BEEN SLASHED; THOSE SERVICES OUGHT NOT RECEIVE A SECOND BLOW BY CUTTING STATE FUNDS FOR RURAL HEALTH SERVICES.

FRANK MURKOWSKI, DON YOUNG AND I SEEK TO REDUCE THE UNFUNDED FEDERAL MANDATES IMPOSED ON STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BY WASHINGTON. CO-ORDINATING THOSE EFFORTS WITH YOU MAY HELP BALANCE FEDERAL AND STATE SUPPORT FOR ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS.

ALASKA'S FISHERIES ARE DOING WELL, BUT THEY ARE AT A CROSSROADS. IN THE BERING SEA, UP TO 61 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL GROUND FISH CATCH IS DUMPED OVERBOARD. IN 1992, AS MUCH AS 20 MILLION CRABS, 100 THOUSAND SALMON AND ONE MILLION POUNDS OF HERRING WERE DISCARDED OFF ALASKA. THESE ACTIONS MUST BE STOPPED.

WHEN CONGRESS RECONVENES NEXT WEEK, I WILL INTRODUCE AN AMENDMENT TO THE MAGNUSON ACT ESTABLISHING ECONOMIC DISINCENTIVES FOR WASTEFUL FISHERIES, AND REQUIRING FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCILS TO ELIMINATE WASTEFUL FISHING PRACTICES.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, THIS BILL GIVES THE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL FLEXIBILITY TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS WITH THE DIRECT PARTICIPATION OF ALASKA FISHERMEN -- IT WOULD GIVE PRIORITY IN ALLOCATIONS TO THOSE VESSELS WITH CLEAN FISHING PRACTICES AND REQUIRE FULL UTILIZATION OF ALL FISH HARVESTED SUBJECT TO FINES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE. IF ENACTED, THIS LEGISLATION WILL PROVIDE OUR COUNCIL WITH NEW TOOLS TO MAKE SURE OUR FISHERIES ARE CONSERVED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

A NEW THREAT TO THE OCEANS AND OUR SHORES MAY COME FROM THE FORMER SOVIET UNION. RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR SYSTEMS ARE COMING APART AT THE SEAMS -- WITH SOME RIVERS POLLUTED WITH RADIOACTIVE WASTE AND CHEMICALS. SUBMARINE NUCLEAR REACTORS HAVE BEEN DISCARDED IN THE NORTH PACIFIC, AND NUCLEAR WASTE DUMPED IN THE SEA OF JAPAN.

FEDERAL FUNDS I EARMARKED ARE BEING USED TO TRACK AND MONITOR THIS WASTE. MORE IS BEING LEARNED ABOUT OCEAN CURRENTS AND THE MOVEMENT OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL. A REPORT RELEASED YESTERDAY BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INDICATES THERE HAS BEEN NO IMPACT ON ALASKA WATERS OR TO OUR FISHERIES, BUT FUTURE ALASKANS DON'T NEED ANY NUCLEAR SURPRISES.

JAY KERTTULA, YOUR DAUGHTER ANNA, WITH HER KNOWLEDGE OF RUSSIAN AND HER CONTACTS IN RUSSIA, HAS BEEN A GREAT HELP ON THIS ISSUE.

FOR 21 YEARS ALASKA HAS LIVED WITH A BAN ON THE EXPORT OF NORTH SLOPE CRUDE OIL. ONLY ALASKA HAS SUCH A PROHIBITION; I AM CONVINCED IT IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL. WHILE THE STATE CONTINUES TO FIGHT THE EXPORT BAN IN COURT, THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION HAS THE BI-PARTISAN SUPPORT OF MORE THAN 120 MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO OVERTURN THE BAN.

FRANK AND I HAVE AGAIN INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO LIFT THE EXPORT BAN AND DON WILL INTRODUCE A SIMILAR BILL. OUR LEGISLATION MEETS CONCERNS FROM THE MARITIME INDUSTRY BY REQUIRING AMERICAN-FLAGGED TANKERS WITH AMERICAN CREWS.

WE ALSO JOINED A BIPARTISAN COALITION SEEKING A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CLINTON TO DISCUSS IDEAS TO REVITALIZE DOMESTIC OIL EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION, INCLUDING LIFTING THE EXPORT BAN.

EXPORT OF NORTH SLOPE OIL COULD SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE \$50 BILLION DOLLAR TRADE DEFICIT WITH JAPAN, AS WELL AS DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANS-ALASKA GAS SYSTEM. MAJOR OIL PRODUCERS AT PRUDHOE NEED TO BE ENCOURAGED TO SELL OUR GAS TO PACIFIC RIM COUNTRIES. THE TRANS-ALASKA GAS SYSTEM IS ONE OF OUR BEST HOPES OF REPLACING THE DECLINING STATE REVENUE STREAM FROM PRUDHOE BAY.

AS YOU KNOW, I MET WITH INDEPENDENT PETROLEUM PRODUCERS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO EXPLORE IN ALASKA. YOUR EXPLORATION LICENSING BILL IS AN IMPORTANT STEP. WITH SOME LARGE OIL COMPANIES LEAVING ALASKA, INDEPENDENTS SHOULD BE GIVEN INCENTIVES TO FILL THE VOID.

ANOTHER ISSUE DEMANDING NEW IDEAS IS THE REFORM OF OUR HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM.

FEDERAL HEALTH CARE REFORM MUST BE FLEXIBLE TO WORK HERE. ACCESS TO HEALTH FACILITIES AND HEALTH PROVIDERS IS AN ALMOST UNIQUE ALASKA PROBLEM. HAVING HEALTH INSURANCE WON'T SOLVE MEDICAL PROBLEMS IF A PATIENT CAN'T PHYSICALLY GET TO TREATMENT FACILITIES.

OUR CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS' GOAL IS FOR THE FINAL FEDERAL HEALTH PLAN TO RECOGNIZE THAT ALASKA IS DIFFERENT -- "ONE SIZE FITS ALL" JUST WON'T WORK FOR US.

SOME OF THE ITEMS I WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN A FEDERAL BILL ARE: FOREMOST, I BELIEVE ALASKANS WITH HEALTH INSURANCE SHOULD BE ABLE TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN DOCTOR; NEXT, HEALTH INSURANCE SHOULD BE PORTABLE. WITH NO PRE-EXISTING CONDITION EXCEPTION AND NO CANCELLATION FOR CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS.

THERE SHOULD BE NO EMPLOYER MANDATE TO PAY FOR HEALTH INSURANCE -- NOT HERE WHERE OUR SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYERS CANNOT PAY FOR IT UNLESS THEY CUT JOBS SUBSTANTIALLY!

THERE SHOULD BE NO UNFUNDED MANDATES TO THE STATE FOR SPECIFIC INSURANCE COVERAGE. RURAL AREAS, INCLUDING ALASKA, ALSO NEED FLEXIBILITY FOR CAFETERIA-STYLE HEALTH PLANS PROVIDING OPTIONS TO MEET INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY NEEDS. MALPRACTICE INSURANCE REFORM IS NECESSARY.

RECENTLY, A YOUNG ALASKAN DOCTOR TOLD ME THAT HER MALPRACTICE PREMIUMS ARE \$90 THOUSAND DOLLARS PER YEAR. NINETY THOUSAND DOLLARS PER YEAR! ON TOP OF A \$50 THOUSAND DOLLAR STUDENT LOAN. THAT'S REAL "NORTHERN EXPOSURE."

WHEN SHE PRACTICED OUTSIDE, HER MALPRACTICE PREMIUMS WERE \$18 THOUSAND DOLLARS ANNUALLY. THE MESSAGE IS ALASKAN PHYSICIANS ARE PENALIZED FOR PRACTICING IN RURAL AND UNDERSERVED AREAS. THE DOCTOR I SPOKE WITH BELIEVES HER PREMIUMS ARE HIGHER BECAUSE SHE FOLLOWS HER PROFESSIONAL HIPPOCRATIC OATH -- PROVIDING EMERGENCY SERVICES TO PERSONS SHE HAS NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

YOUR PASSAGE OF TORT REFORM COULD ALLEVIATE THIS PROBLEM.

REAL HEALTH CARE REFORM REQUIRES CHANGING OUR APPROACH TO HEALTH CARE. EARLY DETECTION, WITH GREATER EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION AND SCREENING, IS A KEY. TOWARD THIS GOAL, A BILL I HAVE CIRCULATED FOR COSPONSORSHIP WILL CREATE FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO FACILITATE BREAST, CERVICAL AND PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES. ALASKA NATIVE WOMEN HAVE FOUR TIMES THE NATIONAL AVERAGE DEATH RATE FOR CERVICAL CANCER. MY BILL, FOR INSTANCE, WILL ENCOURAGE NON-PROFITS, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, TO PURCHASE MOBILE VANS FOR SUCH SCREENING; THOSE VANS COULD BE TRANSPORTED BY AIR OR BY OUR FERRIES TO INACCESSIBLE AREAS.

LACK OF ADEQUATE VILLAGE SEWER SYSTEMS IN ALASKAN VILLAGES INCREASES HEALTH CARE PROBLEMS. LAST YEAR FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS PROVIDED MORE THAN \$18 MILLION DOLLARS IN NEW FUNDING FOR SEWER AND WATER FACILITIES IN ALASKA. THIS YEAR, AT THE REQUEST OF COMMISSIONER JOHN SANDOR, THE DELEGATION HOPES TO ESTABLISH A FEDERAL-STATE MATCHING PROGRAM, FOR WHICH YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS MOST IMPORTANT.

GENERAL BILLY MITCHELL, PIONEER OF MODERN AMERICAN AIR POWER, TOLD A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE 60 YEARS AGO: "ALASKA IS THE MOST CENTRAL PLACE IN THE WORLD FOR AIRCRAFT. THAT IS TRUE EITHER OF EUROPE, ASIA OR NORTH AMERICA... I BELIEVE, IN THE FUTURE, HE WHO HOLDS ALASKA WILL HOLD THE WORLD."

GENERAL MITCHELL'S VISIONARY PREDICTION IS NOW ACCEPTED MILITARY DOCTRINE. ALASKA IS CLOSER TO BOSNIA THAN BASES IN NORTH CAROLINA, AND CLOSER TO KOREA THAN CALIFORNIA. ALASKA'S STRATEGIC LOCATION, VAST TRAINING AREAS AND DUAL DEPLOYMENT CAPABILITIES OF ALASKA TROOPS CONTINUE TO MAKE ALASKA ESSENTIAL TO MILITARY COMMANDS.

EACH YEAR, THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SPENDS CLOSE TO \$1.5 BILLION DOLLARS HERE.

PENTAGON AND PACIFIC COMMAND OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD ME TRAINING AREAS HERE SHOULD BE A KEY FACTOR IN THE NEXT ROUND OF BASE CLOSURES. FT. WAINWRIGHT'S EXTENSIVE ARMY MANUEVER AREAS, COMBINED WITH ALASKA'S NEW AIR FORCE INSTRUMENTED RANGES PROVIDE UNIQUE JOINT TRAINING CAPABILITIES.

ALASKA IS NOT IMMUNE FROM FURTHER CUTS. BY THE END OF FISCAL YEAR 1995, THE UNITED STATES WILL SPEND LESS ON DEFENSE AS A PERCENTAGE OF OUR GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT THAN IN 1941. THE BASE CLOSURE COMMISSION IN 1995 MAY BE FORCED TO CLOSE UP TO HALF OF OUR BASES IN THE U.S.

ONE OF MY GOALS IS TO KEEP ALASKA'S UNIQUE STRATEGIC POSITION FOREFRONT IN THE MINDS OF THOSE ON THE NEW BASE CLOSURE COMMISSION.

ONE RISK IS THE LACK OF HOUSING FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL IN ALASKA. I WAS PLEASED THAT VECO, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE ALASKA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION, STEPPED FORWARD TO ASSURE THE CONSTRUCTION OF 366 NEW HOUSING UNITS ON EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE. THE CONTINUATION OF THAT PROJECT ENHANCES THE IMPORTANCE OF EIELSON AND MADE POSSIBLE THE TRANSFER OF 6 OA-10 AIRCRAFT AND 70 ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL TO THAT BASE THIS YEAR. SAVING THAT PROJECT IS A REAL TRIBUTE TO THE ELEVENTH AIR FORCE COMMANDER, JOE RALSTON. HE AND THE SIXTH LIGHT DIVISION COMMANDER, DAVE BRAMLETT, HAVE MADE A GOOD TEAM.

I GREATLY REGRET THAT GENERAL RALSTON WILL SOON LEAVE ALASKA FOR NEW RESPONSIBILITIES IN WASHINGTON, D.C. I'VE MET WITH HIS SUCCESSOR GENERAL LARRY BOESE, AND I'M HOPEFUL THAT THE GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE IN ALASKA WILL CONTINUE.

HERE IN SOUTHEAST, PROponents OF NO LOGGING IN THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST ARE PUTTING A FULL-COURT PRESS ON THE FOREST SERVICE TO CANCEL THE LONG-TERM TIMBER CONTRACTS THAT HAVE SUSTAINED HUNDREDS OF JOBS.

OUR DELEGATION MET WITH ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS AND URGED APPROVAL OF CREATING A NEW MEDIUM-DENSITY FIBERBOARD PLANT IN SITKA. YOU'VE DONE YOUR PART TO SUPPORT THAT, TOO, BY YOUR LETTERS AND PHONE CALLS. AND I CONGRATULATE THE CITY OF JUNEAU FOR JOINING IN THIS EFFORT. WE'LL KNOW THE DECISION SOON -- AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS SAID IT WOULD BE MADE BY APRIL 15.

THE FOREST SERVICE STILL WANTS TO IMPOSE THE LOWER 48 PACFISH POLICY ON ALASKA, EVEN THOUGH THE TONGASS IS THE ONLY NATIONAL FOREST WITH 100 FOOT MINIMUM BUFFER STRIPS ALREADY MANDATED BY LAW. PACFISH IS GOOD POLICY FOR THE LARGE RIVERS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST WHERE SALMON STOCKS HAVE SERIOUSLY DECLINED. BUT LAST YEAR IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA, SALMON RUNS HIT RECORD LEVELS.

I'VE ASKED THE NEW CHIEF OF THE FOREST SERVICE, JACK WARD THOMAS, TO WORK WITH THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION AND THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA TO FIND COMMON GROUND ON PACFISH.

THE SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE HAS REPORTED A CLEAN WATER ACT BILL WHICH REFORMS WETLANDS POLICY -- IT MAY REACH THE FLOOR BY EARLY MAY.

AS YOU KNOW, THE SOLUTION PRESIDENT BUSH APPROVED TO GIVE ALASKANS RELIEF FROM OFF-SITE MITIGATION UNTIL ALASKA USES AT LEAST ONE PERCENT OF OUR WETLANDS WAS SPECIFICALLY WITHDRAWN BY THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.

OVER 60 MILLION ACRES OF ALASKA WETLANDS ARE PRESERVED IN FEDERAL AND STATE CONSERVATION SYSTEM UNITS -- THAT ALASKA WETLANDS PROTECTION SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED IN THE NEW WETLANDS DOCTRINE WHEN THE SENATE DEBATES REAUTHORIZATION OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT. BUT GAINING THAT RECOGNITION WILL BE HARD TO ACHIEVE WITH THE ADMINISTRATION'S OPPOSITION.

IN THE CRIME BILL WHICH PASSED THE SENATE LAST YEAR, I SPONSORED A PROVISION WHICH REESTABLISHES CONSTITUTIONAL PROCEDURES TO CARRY OUT THE DEATH PENALTY FOR MOST FEDERAL CRIMES, INCLUDING MAIL BOMBING.

I OPPOSED THE BRADY BILL, WHICH DOES NOT FIGHT CRIME.

RATHER THAN LIMITING LAW ABIDING CITIZENS' ACCESS TO GUNS, FEDERAL LAWS SHOULD PUNISH THOSE WHO COMMIT GUN CRIMES.

LOOKING TO ALASKA'S FUTURE, ONE SUBJECT THAT MAY DETERMINE OUR ROLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY IS TELECOMMUNICATIONS. THAT INDUSTRY REPRESENTS ONE-SEVENTH OF OUR NATION'S ECONOMY AND IT IS EXPERIENCING PROFOUND CHANGES. AN INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY MAY BE ESTABLISHED TO BRING ENHANCED VOICE, VIDEO AND DATA SYSTEMS INTO HOMES AND OFFICES. OUR JOB -- YOURS AND MINE -- IS TO ENSURE THAT ALASKA IS PART OF THAT NETWORK.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING PROVIDES A VITAL SERVICE AND IS AN IMPORTANT PLAYER IN THE INFORMATION EXPLOSION. AS FEDERAL TAXPAYER SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING DECLINES, LISTENER SUPPORT -- AND YOUR SUPPORT IS IMPORTANT. MANY ALASKANS STILL RELY ON RADIO AND RATNET AS THEIR ONLY SOURCE OF NEWS.

FROM OUR ORIGINAL MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM, TO RATNET AND THE SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY ALASKANS ENJOY TODAY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS HAS BROUGHT ALASKA CLOSER TO THE REST OF THE WORLD, AND ALASKA CONTINUES TO BENEFIT FROM NEW TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY.

FOR INSTANCE, AVAILABLE TELEMEDICINE TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS PHYSICIANS IN ALASKA CITIES THROUGH LIVE VIDEO LINKS TO EXAMINE, DIAGNOSE AND DIRECT TREATMENT OF RURAL ALASKA PATIENTS.

COMPUTER LITERACY IS PREPARING OUR CHILDREN FOR THE FUTURE. ALASKA'S YOUTH NEEDS COMPUTERS AND NEW COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES. FULLY TRAINED TO USE THOSE TOOLS, OUR PEOPLE COULD HAVE GOOD JOBS, YET LIVE IN THE VILLAGES AND RURAL AREAS.

THE INVESTMENT YOU MAKE IN EDUCATION IS THE BEST INVESTMENT FOR ALASKA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE.

THE PEOPLE OF ALASKA WANT TO FULFILL THE GREAT PROMISE STATEHOOD MADE FOR THIS GREAT LAND. I STILL BELIEVE THAT IS POSSIBLE -- BUT IT WILL REQUIRE GREATER EFFORT FROM YOU AND ME, AND ALL ALASKANS.

IT'S GOOD TO BE WITH YOU -- THANK YOU FOR YOUR COURTESY.