

**SENATE AND HOUSE  
JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

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**February 29, 2016**

**Monday**

**No. 14**

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**Address by**

**The Honorable Dan Sullivan**

**United States Senator**

**Before a Joint Session**

**of the**

**Second Session of the**

**Twenty-Ninth Alaska State Legislature**

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**February 29, 2016**

**Juneau, Alaska**



**The following was submitted for publication:**

President Meyer, Speaker Chenault, members of the House and Senate from the Great State of Alaska, thank you for allowing me to appear before you. Thanks to each of you and your staff for your service to our state.

It's great to be back in Alaska.

Much has happened since I addressed you last year. Some of us, particularly me, have more gray in our hair. We have more wrinkles around our eyes and our joints are a little creakier.

We've logged in more air miles and met more people, made more friends, learned more about our state, our country and the world.

A year later, we're a little wiser, hopefully. And we're hopefully stronger, more generous, and a kinder people. If experience doesn't do that to us, then there's no use in having those experiences.

Some of us have had milestones in our lives. Some, like my wife Julie and me, have sent one of our children off into the world. In fact, I just got back from California, where my oldest daughter is in her freshman year of college. It was parents' day on campus. There is nothing like visiting a college campus to make you feel the passage of time...And to feel optimistic.

We're raising amazing kids in our state and in our country. I know for many of us, they're the reason we got into elected office.

A year later we've also lost people. Family. Parents. Colleagues. People who have left an indelible mark on our lives.

I didn't know him as well as many of you in this room, but I worked very well with Max Gruenberg when I was the state's AG and our DNR Commissioner. He was a good man, a Vietnam Veteran. He had a servant's heart. A moral compass always set to true north. His seat is empty, but his spirit fills the room.

## **SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

**No. 14**

**February 29, 2016**

What else has changed? The price of oil, for one.

I don't need to remind you of that.

And I don't need to remind you that you are wrestling with very significant issues that will dramatically impact our future. And I, for one, thank you for all the very hard work you're doing here.

We in D.C. should be taking more cues from you. We have our own fiscal crisis, approaching a national debt of \$20 trillion. But we're not doing nearly enough to address it.

Last December, I voted against the 2,200 page \$1.8 trillion federal spending bill that was dropped on Congress with 72 hours to vet. When I did so, I said that the way in which we fund our federal government is broken and not worthy of our great nation nor the people we represent.

I gave a shout-out to all of you, mentioning how you all are debating—through an open and transparent process, and yes contentious process—how to address the state's very significant fiscal challenges. We in the federal government should be doing the same. But we're not. So again, thank you.

I'm confident that whatever will be crafted here will reflect the will of Alaska. It might not always be expressed gently. It might be loud. It might be messy. It might be angry. But democracy was never intended to be genteel. And add the independent spirit of Alaskans to the mix, and well, you have a pretty lively brew.

Speaking of a lively brew: This might be a good time to introduce my staff here with me today. Many of you know Joe Balash, my chief of staff, who cut his teeth in politics and policy in this building. Mike Anderson, my press secretary, is here, towering over us and keeping us all in line. Amanda Coyne is here. Many are probably happy that she's still with me and not reporting on you. Everyone knows Connie McKenzie who does a great job representing me in Juneau. And my wife Julie: The love of my life. The best thing that's ever happened to me. No doubt.

We all know that our state is facing challenging times. But Alaska has often faced challenges—I’ve been reading past speeches to this body by some of Alaska’s great leaders. There’s wisdom to be gained by looking through the past. What’s clear is that we’ve always come out of these challenges having created a better state. And working together, we will again.

In 1988, during what many refer to as the “crash” in our state, Senator Ted Stevens spoke to this joint session of the Legislature. He said, and I quote, “Our federal government does not have the ability to reverse the decline in world oil prices. Nor does it have the resources to restore the losses experienced by our state’s economy.”

But Senator Stevens said, the federal government does have the ability to help the state in many other ways: It has the ability—and the responsibility—to invest in infrastructure, to make sure that Alaska is getting full value for its fisheries, to allow us to develop our resources, and to recognize our national security potential, and the importance of the U.S. military here.

And of course, Uncle Ted was right.

During those years, Alaska enjoyed the benefits of having one of the strongest federal delegations of any state in the country, with Ted Stevens, Frank Murkowski, and Don Young.

Today, Lisa Murkowski, Don Young and I are working towards restoring that strength. And already—as a united federal delegation—we can point to some significant successes that were highlighted by Ted Stevens almost 30 years ago.

First, infrastructure is crucial to our economic development. And it always has been: from the ALCAN, to the Trans-Alaska pipeline, from the roads that buckle and heave every season, to the mines, dams, and bridges across our state, we have engineering marvels in Alaska.

## **SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

**No. 14**

**February 29, 2016**

Last year, we passed the first long-term highway bill in over a decade. With my seats on the Environment and Public Works and Commerce Committees; Senator Murkowski on the Conference Committee for this important bill; and the immense experience of Congressman Young—we were able to deliver for Alaska, defending a federal formula for infrastructure dollars that significantly benefits our state.

We'll be getting \$2.6 billion in federal transportation funds over the next five years. This will provide certainty to infrastructure investments, while unlocking private sector opportunities.

Alaska is the super-power of seafood. Close to 60% of all seafood harvested in the United States comes from Alaska waters. The seafood from our waters contributes roughly 80,000 direct and indirect jobs to our economy. Its value is roughly \$6 billion.

We're working hard to increase demand domestically and internationally for the world-class Alaska products that our fishermen harvest.

Our fisheries are made up of the ultimate small businessmen and women. They work hard. They produce a great product. They take risks, and are often family-run businesses.

I chair two key spots to help our fishing communities—and I'm going to make sure that we continue to support our fishermen and vibrant coastal communities throughout the state.

An important part of the work of this body is also focused on taking care of the most vulnerable. When I started as the state's attorney general in 2009, many in the State Legislature—in particular Senators Lesil McGuire and Anna MacKinnon—helped me focus on the issue of sexual assault and domestic violence, which is a scourge in our state. I've now taken that passion to D.C.

I've had the opportunity to author two bills that have already been passed by my colleagues in the Senate that will bring more attention and resources to the fight against sexual abuse, domestic violence and human trafficking. These are significant challenges, both in Alaska and across the country.

Opioid addiction is also a serious problem plaguing our state and our country. I heard some of the stories of lives being decimated from this addiction from a group of constituents in recovery, including women from Juneau. The courage that it took these women to face their addictions had a huge impact on me. A bill that I co-sponsored which will help combat this problem will soon be coming to the Senate floor.

Our Vets: Alaska is home to more veterans per capita than any other state. We need to keep them here and we need to make sure they are taken care of. We're holding the Veterans Administration's feet to the fire about getting our vets the healthcare they deserve and have earned. Like so many one-size fits all policies, the Choice Act has simply not worked in Alaska. We owe our veterans a debt and I'm committed to making sure the VA delivers on that debt.

I'm also very supportive of some of the initiatives being taken here in this body. My friend Bob Herron will be proposing that our men and women in uniform who suffer from what's been called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, have the diagnosis changed to "Post Traumatic Stress Injury," a diagnosis that implies you can heal. Because you can.

As for resource development: As we all know, resource development is and has been Alaska's economic driver. And it will continue to be in the future.

Alaska's North Slope remains a world-class resource basin with huge untapped potential. We are beginning to see some major projects moving, which could produce hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil a day in the near future, mostly on state lands. This is exciting.

## **SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

**No. 14**

**February 29, 2016**

But the federal government has a history of putting the brakes on such projects and we cannot allow that to happen. In 1968, when then Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall proposed regulations that would have basically shut down placer mining in the state, the wise former Territorial Governor and then U.S. Senator Ernest Gruening put it this way:

“Alaska is different...laws and regulations made for the lower 48 states are not necessarily suitable to Alaska. In Alaska, we can prevent pollution by wise state action and federal cooperation without limiting desirable industrial development.”

Indeed, Alaska is different. We know how to responsibly develop our resources. But one size fits all regulations don't work. But to be honest, we're not going to see much, if any recognition of that, or any big home runs in the final year of the Obama Administration. To the contrary, we'll mostly be playing defense.

Unfortunately, this Administration has focused on locking up and controlling more lands in Alaska. They even are opposing a bill of mine that would make good on a promise to give Native allotments of land to Vietnam-era Alaska Native Veterans who missed the chance to apply. They have called it “unfair.” You want to know what's unfair? Penalizing Alaska Natives who served our country in the Vietnam War when many Americans were actively avoiding military service. And in this final year, we're expecting more of lockup attempts.

We all need to remain vigilant. Working together, we've killed a number of regulations and are using our oversight powers to continue holding the Administration accountable. Looking back on many of the speeches made to this body by our leaders, nearly all of them take some time to list accomplishments. Which is appropriate. We are politicians after all. So that's a bit of my list.

But I also think it's appropriate to broaden the aperture of my remarks and give an update about what's going on in the country and in the world, and to place Alaska within those narratives.

Let me start by saying there's good news. And there's bad news.

First, the bad news. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee last year, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said, and I quote:

“The United States has not faced a more diverse and complex array of crises since the end of the Second World War.”

The world is clearly becoming a more dangerous place. There's a lot of reasons for this, but one that's become clear to me and many others, is that America has been steadily withdrawing from the world.

A few weeks ago, I was with my colleagues in Munich for an annual global security conference. In a private meeting with us, the prime minister of a country pleaded with us to lead again. For the sake of global security, the world needs our leadership, she said. This was the theme of the conference.

And as the U.S. withdraws, we've left a leadership vacuum in the world and others are filling it—whether it be countries like Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China, or by terrorist groups like ISIS.

And they are filling it with a dangerous intensity across swaths of the Middle East, the Ukraine, on the Korean Peninsula, or in the South China Sea and the Arctic. That's the bad news.

So what's the good news? The good news is that Alaska is increasingly being viewed as the place with the strategic location, the assets, and the personnel including communities supportive of our military that play an increasingly important role in keeping America safe. This is good for the United States. And it's also good for Alaska.

The timing is right for us. The military has played a critical role in building Alaska. And now, during these challenging economic times, I'm fighting to ensure that the military is coming back to help sustain us.

## **SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

---

**No. 14**

**February 29, 2016**

We have a triad of military power, and capability, second to none, which is appropriately being recognized and bolstered.

First, we are the cornerstone of America's missile defense.

Second: We are becoming the hub of America's air combat power in the Asia Pacific and even globally.

And third: Because of our location and strategic airlift capabilities, we are becoming recognized as an expeditionary platform that can rapidly get some of the best trained troops in the world to hot spots all around the globe.

Let me go into each of these in a little more detail.

In the area of missile defense: Our country faces growing threats from intercontinental ballistic missiles from North Korea and Iran. In the next few years, the Department of Defense will be making investments on building and constructing projects in Alaska related to missile defense. Within the next few years, we'll have 44 ground-based missile interceptors in our state at Ft. Greely.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in military construction over the next several years to build the Long Range Discrimination Radar at Alaska's Clear Air Force Station. This is in addition to the millions of dollars in missile defense upgrades that have already occurred and are still ongoing at Fort Greely.

This will create substantial job opportunities for Alaska contractors, their employees and union members. Our state is also clearly becoming the hub of air combat power in the Asia Pacific. Our F-16s, the F-22s and the coming F-35s, the E-3C, our C-17s, C-130s, and KC-135s are all aircraft that support a multitude of national security objectives around the world on a daily basis. These missions are carried out by active duty and National Guard pilots and airmen—the best anywhere in the world.

And then there's our ground troops. Alaska has two of the best trained active duty brigade combat teams in the U.S. Army: The 1st Stryker Brigade—the “Arctic Wolves”—from Fort Wainwright, and 4th Brigade Combat Team 25th Infantry Division—known as the 4/25.

And that's in addition to our outstanding National Guard units, and our pararescue special operators, and of course, the thousands of Coast Guard members who perform heroic missions around our state and overseas on a daily basis.

We should have more of them. I was pleased to see that the governor's budget contained funding for an initiative to expand the Guard and the Alaska State Defense Force in rural Alaska. I want to thank Bob Herron and Lyman Hoffman, who have been for years championing this issue.

My number one priority during my first year in the Senate has been to advocate for defense and military policies that enhance the capability of Alaska's military triad for the nation—including increased defense spending to bolster our nation's defense and enhance Alaska's wellbeing.

There's a PowerPoint presentation that we've put together on the importance of Alaska's military for our national security on your desks. Share it with anyone who is interested.

Where the Obama Administration has done a good job on these issues—like in missile defense—I am the first to applaud them. But when they have strayed in supporting such national defense priorities in Alaska, I have used my seat on the Armed Services Committee to relentlessly make the case that they're wrong and need a course-correction. Let me provide you some examples.

First, Russia has been dramatically building up its forces in the Arctic. 4 BCTs, 11 airfields, 40 icebreakers – critical area of the world.

## **SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

---

**No. 14**

**February 29, 2016**

First, the Department of Defense's strategy for the Arctic? It is basically a 14-page brochure—six pages of which are pictures—that mentions climate change 5 times and Russia, once, in a footnote. It's not a serious strategy for one of the most strategic parts of the world.

I was able to include an amendment in the National Defense Authorization Act that requires the Department of Defense to create a true, detailed Operation Plan (OPLAN) for the Arctic and serious strategy for the Arctic.

Secondly, last year, the Department of Defense decided to cut the 4/25, essentially getting rid of the only Arctic trained BCT, as the Russians have built 4 new BCTs across the Bering Strait. This makes no strategic sense.

I have spent literally hundreds of hours making the case that keeping the 4/25 intact is not only in Alaska's best interest—but also in the country's. I have put my heart into this.

Trust me, if the Obama Administration does move forward with its initial plan to get rid of the 4/25, it will practically be over my dead body.

But the tide on this issue is starting to turn.

General Mark Milley, the Army's Chief of Staff, made good on a promise he made to me in his nomination hearing to put a hold on the decision, review it for himself, and come to Alaska with me to assess the 4/25. He and I visited the 4/25 at JBER three weeks ago.

And just last week, he said that he was going to recommend that the U.S. Army should hold off on plans to cut troops in Alaska because of the state's strategic location and advancing Russian military activity in the Arctic.

There's more to be done. More commitments to be made. But I'm cautiously optimistic that the 4/25 will be left intact!

## **SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

**February 29, 2016**

**No. 14**

I have a deep respect for these troops of ours, and their families, just as I know all of you do.

One of the best parts of my job is to get to the field and watch them train. Last year, I went to the national training center in California over Super Bowl weekend to watch the 1st Stryker brigade team train.

And just a few weeks ago I watched the soldiers from the 4/25 execute a nighttime-training, Joint Forcible Entry Operation into Fort Polk, Louisiana.

It's been a long time since I jumped out of a plane in full gear. I watched as more than 800 of our brave paratroopers jumped into the night and I was thrilled by watching America's might based right here in our state—demonstrate why they're so important.

Let me conclude these remarks by talking about a video that I recently saw, which reminded me of the old adage often attributed to Mark Twain, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme."

The video featured three Senators talking about Alaska. The one sitting in the middle moderated the discussion. The one on the left talked about how important Alaska—and the Arctic was—to Alaska's national security and how we should beef up defense in Alaska.

The one on the right talked about how important it was for the country to develop Alaska's natural resources.

If you closed your eyes and listened, you might think that they were all members of the current Senate Majority. But they weren't.

The year was 1960, and the Senators were Scoop Jackson of Washington State, John F. Kennedy, and our own Senator Bob Bartlett in the middle wearing a bow tie.

Senator Kennedy—who kicked off his presidential campaign in Alaska, by the way—spoke of the urgent need to develop a blueprint for resource development in Alaska. "It's to require very vigorous action by all us here and by the people of Alaska," he said.

**SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

---

**No. 14**

**February 29, 2016**

Senator Jackson talked about the importance of Alaska’s role in terms of missile deployments, our air power, and how important it was to keep airmen in Alaska.

Senator Bartlett looked delighted. He loved our state—with all of its promise—with all of his heart.

Today, history isn’t repeating itself, but it’s rhyming. Our priorities today are the priorities of yesterday. And the solutions they spoke about then sound a lot like the solutions to our challenges today.

In his legislative address in 1966, Senator Bartlett said that Alaska’s history is “magnificent and stirring...Each of us here has a part in the making of that history. That is one of the elements that makes an association with Alaska so exciting and thrilling” he said. It is thrilling and exciting, isn’t it?

He also talked about the future. How he, and this body, would work together to create a magical place for all. And they did. We live in a glorious state, still so full of freedom and opportunity, of Alaska-sized dreams.

You have big decisions to make and you have a lot of work to do to continue to create this magical place. For us, and for our children. In Washington, we’ll do everything in our power to help you.

God bless you all and God bless Alaska.

**Please report corrections to the Senate Secretary's office.**