

**SENATE AND HOUSE  
JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

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**May 3, 2021**

**Monday**

**No. 3**

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**Address by**

**The Honorable Dan Sullivan**

**United States Senator**

**Before a Joint Session**

**of the**

**First Session of the**

**Thirty-Second Alaska State Legislature**

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**May 3, 2021**

**Juneau, Alaska**



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Many things have changed in our country since I last had the opportunity to speak with all of you in 2019. Monumental changes. But some things remain the same. Lyman Hoffman is still ageless, Bert Stedman is still the most dapper dresser in the building, Chris Tuck, I believe, remains the most eligible bachelor in Juneau, and the good health and courage of cancer survivor Shelley Hughes continues to inspire.

Something else has remained the same – I’m still your U.S. Senator. Now for some of you that might be good news, for others of you, not so much. But either way you’ve got me for another six years and I look forward to continuing our work together. And seriously, for Alaskans, I have been very honored that you all put your trust in me and we will continue to work together to earn that trust.

For many of us these past few years have presented many personal challenges. In the time since I last addressed this body, my family lost my mom, my dad, my mother-in-law and my father-in-law. My father-in-law, former Representative Bud Fate, loved serving in this body. He loved serving here with the ups and downs and the importance to Alaska. He was a true Alaska statesman and I want to thank so many of you who reached out to me and Julie for your condolences with this loss and the other losses in my family and to Governor Dunleavy for ordering flags to half-staff in honor of Julie’s father, Alaska State Representative Hugh “Bud” Fate.

In my view, my annual speech to the Legislature is the most important speech that I give all year. In preparing for this address, I always look at previous speeches to help set the context. I was recently doing that – perusing drafts of last year’s address – which was scheduled for mid-March, 2020, and of course, never happened. It’s a snapshot in time, right when this pandemic came barreling down on America and Alaska.

None of us really knew what to expect, but some of the lines in this speech, that I actually never gave, did come to pass. One stated this, “I will do all I can to work with all of you to get the federal resources Alaska needs to help us fight this virus.”

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Another part of the speech noted the idea of a ‘Manhattan Project’ for rapid vaccine development which ended up being Operation Warp Speed. And most importantly, the speech I never gave to all of you last year had this line, “One great advantage that we have as a state as this crisis unfolds, is our dedicated healthcare workforce. Some of the most skilled and compassionate professionals anywhere in the country who do an exceptional job serving Alaskans and keeping us safe.”

And as we look back on how Alaska has handled this crisis, leading the country in so many critical health areas: testing per capita, vaccinations per capita, one of the lowest death rates in the country per capita, you already did it, but how about another hearty round of applause for our great healthcare workers who got us through all this?

So, we’ve had a challenging year to say the least, and now we face new challenging realities, especially in terms of our economy and national politics. I was proud to have worked with so many of you, and the Trump administration over the last four years on many historic accomplishments for our state.

Opening ANWR, finalizing strategic Alaska resource development projects like Willow and the AK LNG project, and the Ambler road, and the A2A project, providing access to and control over federal lands, and the possibility of a gift of a road for people living in King Cove, and the North Slope, and the Tongass, something Americans all take for granted, except for us.

Rebuilding our military and Coast Guard after the reckless cuts of the previous administration with almost \$1.6 billion in military construction in Alaska. Undertaking a massive expansion of our V.A. System, which was voted the most improved system in the country last year and is doing much better at taking care of Alaska’s heroes. Achieving historic levels of Alaska tourism that helped supercharge small business growth. Launching an unprecedented half a billion dollar trade relief program for our fishermen as they struggled through the pandemic. And massively increasing federal law enforcement assistance, almost 70 million dollars to help our fellow Alaskans who have been ignored for too long with the challenges of crime and domestic violence in rural Alaska.

And although undertaken with a Republican U.S. Senate and a Republican White House, these weren't simply Republican achievements, these were goals that the vast majority of Alaskans had been seeking for decades. This was truly an Alaskan agenda that at its heart was focused on creating good-paying jobs, stronger families and a brighter future for our state.

But now, all of that is at-risk. In fact, it is under attack. A new Biden Administration has already issued eight executive orders and actions targeting Alaska's economy, jobs, and our way of life, clearly trying to dismantle the progress I just highlighted. This is not surprising. We knew this anti-Alaska agenda was coming if the National Democratic Party took control of the White House, the Senate and the House. Alaska is always the gift that National Democratic Administrations gives their extreme, radical, environmental supporters. This anti-Alaska agenda is wrong. Wrong for our working families, wrong for our economy, wrong for the environment and certainly wrong for our nation's economic and national security.

I've been on the Senate floor repeatedly calling for a cease fire on the Biden Administration's war on Alaska's working families. We need to continue to raise our voices, all of us, as we've done in the past, working together, to fight for the great people we represent. Now I agree, all of this can certainly be a bit disorienting. In just a few months, I went from being in the Senate majority to the minority and having a federal government in charge that was a partner in progress for Alaska that's now turned to an obstacle, blocking opportunities.

So, how should we be thinking about this? What should our strategy be? As a U.S. Marine and Korean War history buff, I found some inspiration from the past. One of the most epic battles of the Korean War was the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir where 20,000 United States Marines were surrounded by 120,000 Communist Chinese soldiers. And, oh by the way, it was 30 degrees below zero in the mountains. I have a painting, in my office in Anchorage, of the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir reminding me that no matter what kind of day you might be having, it could be a lot worse. The surrounded and heavily outnumbered marines had to retreat back to the sea. When the

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dismayed marines asked their commanding officer how he would explain the retreat, the first in marine corps history, he remarked, "Retreat? Hell, we're just attacking in another direction." Colonel Chesty Puller, the Corps' most decorated officer, remarked similarly, "The enemy is in front of us and behind us, they are on both of our flanks, those bastards can't get away from us now." Through grit and determination, attacking and counterpunching, and sticking together, the United States Marine Corps won the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir against great odds.

I'm sure you didn't expect a lecture on the Korean War this morning, but the lessons and strategy are important. Even when all seems stacked against us, we need to look for ways to gain ground where we can even if we feel we are in retreat right now. So, I want to touch on a few tactical victories, draws and defeats we've already had as we move into the clearly more hostile terrain of the Biden Administration.

When I interviewed Gina Raimondo for her position as U.S. Secretary of Commerce, I got her commitment to work with me and all of you to finally get the NOAA Fairweather research ship home-ported in Alaska – its rightful home. We made good progress on this goal with the help of the Trump Administration and the fancy footwork of Senator Bert Stedman. Thank you, Bert, on that great progress. I must admit I was very pleased when Secretary Raimondo called me just a few weeks after she was confirmed by the Senate to tell me she'd be announcing close to a twenty million dollar investment for the construction of a dock, a pier, and an office facility complex for the Fairweather, and that that ship, with a crew of 51 members, would finally be home-ported in Ketchikan by the end of 2021 after a two-decade absence. That is an important victory for Alaska.

Senator Murkowski and I just hosted the Commandant of the Coast Guard last week in Juneau, the Speaker was with us. We had a constructive discussion with him and the Governor on a vision that I think all of us share. Where we're also having victories, more ships, like the Fairweather in Alaska, more ships like icebreakers. Actually, not more, we need icebreakers, more Coast Guard cutters. This is not some pie in the sky vision, this is actually happening right now. We

are getting more ships throughout our state. The key is to combine this with the ability to do heavy maintenance and ship building throughout our state in places like Ketchikan, in places like Seward. That vision is also starting to happen and that is a victory as well.

Another victory was the recent announcement by the U.S. Air Force for four more KC-135 tankers to be home-based in Alaska with an additional 220 airmen and their families. You combine this increase with the hundred fifth-generation fighters that are coming to our state by the end of next year; that's F-35's and F-22's. No place on the planet has that kind of fire power for the Air Force, and our state is truly becoming one of the most important centers for air combat power anywhere in the world. This is great for America's national security, but also really great for Alaska's economy.

But to be honest, we've had more draws than victories with the Biden Administration, especially their views on American oil and gas. For example, on day one, President Biden issued an executive order shutting down ANWR development. We'll see about that, Mr. President. The law we got passed mandates lease sales and development; it mandates it. The President has a duty under the constitution to faithfully execute the laws. Occasionally, this administration, on these issues will listen, so it's important to have avenues into the White House and other places.

In January, when the Biden Administration announced a 60-day pause on all federal lease decisions, I received urgent text messages and phone calls from Alaskans working in the NPRA saying they were in the process of laying off hundreds of our workers who were doing drilling exploration work because of this lease decision. I told them to hold off and frantically worked the phones with the brand-new Biden team, saying to them, "It can't really be your intention, in your first month in office, to lay off and give pink slips to hundreds of Alaskan workers on the North Slope. Is that true?" It took some time, but they said "No," and they let the work proceed. And now, if you're hearing the rumors correctly, these hardworking Alaskans likely discovered a lot more oil in NPRA and that's great for our state.

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Speaking of the promise of the NPRA, the real project that we should all be focused on right now is Willow. Perhaps the most strategic project for Alaska, and I would say even for America, since the development of Prudhoe Bay. The estimates are up to 180,000 barrels a day. Billions in revenue for the state of Alaska, billions in revenue for the North Slope Borough. The lowest greenhouse gas-emitting oil project anywhere in the world, and two thousand direct jobs in the construction of this project with about seventy-five percent going to the building trades.

The EISs and NEPA reviews for this project started with the Clinton Administration, then went to the George W. Bush Administration, then went to the President Obama Administration, and were finalized during the Trump Administration. So unlike ANWR, the Willow project has never been considered controversial until the Biden Administration put it under a review at the request of some of its radical environmental allies who have sued to stop it.

We were ready to begin construction on this project this winter, until it was halted. So in terms of battles with this administration, the Willow project right now is a draw. They're looking at it, they're reviewing it. Once again, it's been NEPA'd and EIS'd for 25 years but they're looking at it again. I have consistently raised the strategic importance and jobs benefits of Willow with every member of the Biden cabinet, every member.

Local voices matter, like the voices of the Arctic Inupiat who are doing a great job raising this issue with federal officials. But we need all of your help, especially our Democratic friends in the legislature. You all have powerful voices. Please underscore the importance of Willow in any and all conversations you have with any Biden Administration officials. We need to turn Willow into a victory for Alaska and America.

Similarly, we need to turn our stalemate with the CDC, over allowing cruise ship passengers to Alaska, into a victory. The road has been hard and immensely frustrating, with the fate of hundreds of Alaskan small businesses and thousands of jobs in our tourism sector hanging in the balance.

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My staff and I, along with Senator Murkowski and Congressman Young, so many of you, the governor and his team, have been working this issue relentlessly. Not just daily, but literally hourly. For instance, I've had calls with the secretary of HHS, two days ago the secretary of Homeland Security, just yesterday, and about two hours ago the Canadian Transportation Minister. We are making progress, but we are running out of time. Again, I want to ask for your voices on this critical issue for Alaska and our small communities and jobs to be heard. The Legislature's voice here is so important and powerful and welcome.

Now I don't like to dwell on them, but we've had a number of defeats already with the new administration. Let me name just one where again your voices are going to be very important. When the new secretary of Interior went through her confirmation process, she gave me a number of commitments. The number one issue I pressed her on and asked for her help on, was to help our Alaska Native communities. The communities that supported her the most vocally.

But almost immediately she failed to live up to those commitments. You may have seen, just a few weeks ago, the Interior Department announce that it will delay, for two additional years, the removal of encumbrances on lands in our state that we have been waiting for the federal government to remove and act on for decades.

These public land orders were thoroughly reviewed. Years, millions of dollars in terms of environmental reviews, and were fully completed by the Trump administration and ready to be implemented – literally hitting "send" to the federal register. The Biden Administration stopped this action for a 60-day review, and then they just came out and said no, it's going to be an additional two years.

The impact of this two-year delay will be most acutely felt in rural Alaska, where communities will be denied access to gravel resources to build out local village infrastructure, and ANCSA and statehood land settlement entitlements will be further delayed. But most egregiously, and the number one issue I've talked to her about, is through this misguided decision, it will dramatically limit the lands available to those thousands of Alaska Native Vietnam-era veterans

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who were unable to select their land allotment because they were serving their country in a war that many people were avoiding service in. For decades, all Alaskans, Native, non-Native, Democrat and Republican came together to try to right this wrong.

In last year's Congress, or two Congresses ago, I was able with our delegation to shepherd legislation addressing this injustice that we got signed into law and the PLOs, Public Land Orders, were the way in which we were going to implement this law. I called Secretary Haaland immediately when I heard the news of a two-year delay. I told her that as a result of her decision, Alaska Native Vietnam Veterans who served their country admirably, when so many avoided service, and who have waited decades for the land allotments, might not be able to live long enough to get these.

The secretary's going to come to Alaska and visit. When she does, I ask all of you, Democrat, Republican, Native, non-Native, to give her an earful on what I view as this very shameful decision.

Finally, in terms of victories, draws and defeats, there are two long-term battles that are before us now that in my view will shape America for decades to come. The Biden Administration in its first hundred days has already proposed six trillion dollars in spending. That is more than we have spent, inflation-adjusted, to win World War II.

They are tempting America with cradle to grave, European-style socialism. They are cutting the ties between work and income and in so doing undermining the notion of earned success and the dignity and importance of work. This connection between wages and work is what has made us the most creative, dynamic, and productive country in the world since our founding. That is what is at stake here. I believe it is dangerous and detrimental to our country's long-term fiscal and cultural health to look for big government to be part of every aspect of our lives.

The second challenge before us is one that I have been talking about since I arrived in the Senate six years ago. It is the huge geostrategic threat posed by the rise of China. This threat grows by the day as the

Chinese Communist Party exports its authoritarian model abroad, continues to cheat in most areas of international trade, and massively builds up its military to challenge ours. This is a direct threat to our security and our way of life.

The one thing the president of China, President Xi Jinping, and the Communist Party of China fear more than anything is a long-term, bipartisan American foreign policy to address this challenge. I am working day and night on this strategy, including working closely with many members of the Biden Administration. When it comes to facing down the Chinese Communist Party threat, we are all Americans and we all must work together to prevail as we have done in the past when other hostile global powers – Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union – threatened our country.

Let me wrap this up by going back to the Korean War. When all seemed lost and the U.S. military was on the verge of defeat, and being pushed into the sea in 1950, the U.S. Marines spearheaded one of the most daring bold strokes in American military history: the amphibious invasion at Incheon, which turned the tide of the entire Korean War in just a few days. Even when we feel under siege we need to always think about strategic, bold strokes for Alaska and America. I have a few that I have been thinking about that I would like to share with you and get your help on.

First on energy. The central pillar of the Biden Administration's climate plan is to restrict the production of American energy, and in my view, kill American jobs, especially in states like ours, while doing next to nothing to restrict global climate emissions. One energy expert I talked to called it the "Import More Energy into America Plan."

We have an opportunity for a much better plan that American working families can thrive under. And that is based on the many resources we have right now – here, in our country and in our state. Natural gas, renewables, minerals, and cutting-edge research into renewables and manufacturing and microgrids. We have the best workers in the world. We have incredible ingenuity.

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I passed out a plan – hopefully you have it on your desk – that I have been working on with some of the country's top energy experts, top union leaders, and many of my Senate colleagues. The plan would be about jobs, and energy, and opportunity, and yes – would also cut global greenhouse gas emissions, and Alaska can be and will be a driver of this plan.

Take a look, I plan on taking this national. I have a serious alternative to the Biden plan which will empower our adversaries like Russia and hurt working families. I mean it very sincerely, I would love your input, would love your views, and we think we have an opportunity for Alaska and our country, and we are really trying hard to make this a bipartisan plan.

Finally, one of the benefits of my job when you're talking about other opportunities is to get a sense of what's going on throughout America and what's going on in America right now is that the pandemic accelerated, with telework and the reality of things like Zoom, a new way of working, and that dysfunctional and mismanaged cities across the nation are hollowing out.

People have had enough and they're leaving. If you look around at what's happening in the United States, more and more of our smart young dynamic people are leaving places to build businesses in other places that are well-managed and where they can have a lifestyle that they crave like in our great state.

This is happening all over. Just look at what's going on in Florida, Texas, Montana, Idaho. I believe we have an incredible opportunity right now to attract resilient, self-sufficient, freedom loving people, entrepreneurs and risk takers with big ideas like those who built our state and who can help us grow our economy to the next level.

We all know it but it's important to remember, we have so much to offer. We have a great diversity of people and cultures. We have a new frontier full of endless possibility in our arctic. In the summer we play under a midnight sun and in the winter, we ski under skies dancing in

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the light. We have a fascinating climate and geography to put the best minds to work. We offer weekends full of adventure. We have a spirit and a story and a history, so much of which is lacking in other lifeless dull places in the Lower 48.

And we have freedom. You can feel it the way I do in the air when you get off the plane when you're coming home. Right now, there's competition for those who can bring new ideas to create jobs and dynamism and make sure we have opportunities here, and keep our kids here, like we all want them to stay here. We have great opportunities in that regard if you look at what's going on in America right now. Working together we can make progress on all these things, the battles, the stalemates, the bold strokes and as always, I look forward to doing that with all of you. Great to be home. Thanks again for the opportunity to say a few words.

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