

**SENATE AND HOUSE
JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

April 19, 2022

Tuesday

No. 14

*** * * * ***

Address by

The Honorable Dan Sullivan

United States Senator

Before a Joint Session

of the

Second Session of the

Thirty-Second Alaska State Legislature

*** * * * ***

April 19, 2022

Juneau, Alaska

The following was submitted for publication:

Good morning, everybody. Thank you, President Micciche and Speaker Stutes, for the invitation. Great to see so many of my friends and colleagues here. It's great to be back home, a place with grit, with spirit, with heart and I think we have showed that over the past two years, which have been some of the most challenging in our state's history.

I want to thank all of you for all that you did to get us through this very difficult pandemic. I hope, and I think, it started a little bit last night when I flew home and, midway through the flight, was told I could take off my mask. We're putting this pandemic in the rearview mirror. So, thank you. I mean that very seriously.

I want to let you know who is here with me. I have a big contingent of staff, and even more important than the staff who are here - Larry Burton, Chad Padgett, Amanda Coyne, Dana Herndon, Ben Dietderich - who do great, great work for me. You all know them. And, of course, the love of my life, my wife, Julie, is also here. Thank you to my team and to all the staff here. We know that they are the unsung heroes in terms of getting work done in any Legislature. How about a round of applause for all our staff.

Now I know it's a little late in the season to be giving this address. But I thought I'd come to the Legislature when you don't have anything to do. That was a joke, if you guys didn't actually laugh about that. But in all seriousness, I know how busy you are. So, I really appreciate the chance to give you an update on some pretty important issues we're working on.

On a serious matter, I think you all know, we lost an icon in our state recently with the passing of our late great Congressman Don Young. He received the farewell he deserved, his body lying in state in the United States Capitol, an honor that fewer than 50 Americans have ever received in our history. I miss him. Alaska misses him. The United States Congress misses him. I know that you all miss him.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

No. 14

April 19, 2022

His spirit looms very large over this body. He, as you all know, cut his very sharp political teeth here in the Alaska Legislature, first as a House member, then as a senator. And I think it was here where he realized his destiny. He once commented that, while serving as a state senator here, he decided he didn't like it much. He wanted to be where the action was in the people's House. As a matter of fact, he was recently quoted saying, back in those days, "Those state senators would just stand around with their hands behind their back and just talk." So, sorry my friends - Bert, Click, others. But, as you know, he felt the same way about the United States Senate as well.

Don's career - think about it, serving over three-quarters of the time in which we were a state - charted the course of Alaska's history on so many key issues. But he also knew that levity and humor - often in short supply during difficult, contentious political debates - are needed and appreciated in public life.

On the day Don passed, I called Speaker Pelosi to make the request for a ceremony in the United States Capitol. She was very supportive and recalled a recent conversation she'd had with Don. He was wearing a bolo tie with carvings of a salmon, a seal, and a walrus. "Don. I love your tie," Speaker Pelosi teased. "I think you're turning into an environmentalist!" "No, Nancy," he replied, pointing to the animals. "This is lunch."

He was funny and we also know Don wasn't shy. When the Alaska delegation went over to the White House in 2017 to witness the President signing the legislation that would finally open ANWR, something he had been working on for decades, he turned to President Trump and said, "So you're the other Don in this town!"

No, Don didn't make a habit of talking to you, our state Legislature, formally every year. But he did so periodically throughout the years. And, if you look at his speeches, he emphasized over and over the importance of Alaskans speaking with one voice, especially our elected officials.

As the famous quote goes, he said to this body in 1978, "If we don't hang together, we hang separately." A grim image, but Don was never much for using subtle metaphors. He softened his tone in his 1991 speech to the Legislature where he said this unity is the most important message you can all send to D.C. "Alaska cannot rest its hopes on the future on a fractured foundation."

Last year, I spoke to all of you about how the state was under attack by the Biden administration. If you didn't notice, I was pretty worked up at that time. The new President had already issued eight executive orders and executive actions targeting solely and specifically our state, focusing on dismantling much of the progress we made during the Trump administration on critical issues - energy projects, access to federal lands, supporting our Native communities.

This ... "anti-Alaska agenda" has not abated. In fact, the number of Biden administration executive orders and executive actions focused on Alaska has now hit 21. I thought about focusing my speech today on these issues. But, in the spirit of our late great congressman, I realized that today should be about where we can all work together - all of us, Democrats, Republicans, Independents - on issues that we should focus on. There are many of these issues that truly matter for our state, our future, and the wonderful people we are all privileged to represent.

Let me begin with this week's visit by Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and her team. Now, I won't sugarcoat it. My relationship with Secretary Haaland has been strained. I've called her numerous times reminding her of pledges she gave to me during our meetings before she was confirmed. I have let her know that many of the actions taken by the department under her leadership are hurting our people.

I do, however, want to welcome her to our state last year. I mentioned to all of you that when she visits, it will be important for her to hear from all of us collectively on issues that really matter to us. So now is our opportunity. She should be here all week. We need to be respectful, but we also need to be strong and frank.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

No. 14

April 19, 2022

I have placed on your desks an op-ed that North Slope Borough Mayor Harry Brower and I recently collaborated on together in the Anchorage Daily News. In it, we ask Secretary Haaland to announce, when she is in our state, her commitment on four critical issues for our state that are directly under her control.

First is ANWR. After my legislative speech in 2017, some of you might remember I was presented with a joint resolution from this body - by the way, a unanimous joint resolution from this body - that in essence said now is finally the time to get ANWR done. And we did it. And when I say "we," I mean all of us - so many of you, thousands of Alaskans who, for decades, have been working on this vitally important initiative.

We got the hard part done - two mandatory lease sales to open ANWR for exploration and development, passed by the United States Congress and signed into law by the President of the United States.

Under our Constitution, President Biden and Secretary Haaland have only one responsibility: "...to faithfully execute this law." That's it. We are a nation of laws. Secretary Haaland should unequivocally tell all Alaskans that she will faithfully follow the law on ANWR and honor Alaska's already-valid leases without delay.

The second and very much related issue is that the Secretary needs to tell Alaskans that the Biden administration will uphold the President's commitment that he made to me and other Alaskans on the Willow Project in NPR-A. The stakes for the state, the stakes for Alaska and America, are enormous for this important energy development which will unlock hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil per day, as well as other opportunities in the NPR-A, not to mention billions [of dollars] in revenue for local, state, and federal governments, and thousands of Alaska jobs.

It is for this reason that almost everybody in Alaska - AFN, the North Slope Borough, the building trades, all of you - supports this vital energy project in our state.

Last year, Congressman Young, Senator Murkowski and I were in the Oval Office with the President for the signing of the bill that paved the way for cruise ships to return to Alaska last summer.

We had a discussion there, but I took the opportunity and said, "Mr. President, I'd like to change the subject, if you don't mind." I had a hand-out on Willow, and I talked to him and gave it to him and his staff. We saw some of the eye-rolling from the staff like I can't believe he's doing this. But it went to all of the elements of this important development.

The President said, "Alright, senator, I'm going to get back on this. Let me look at it." Two days later, a senior official from the White House called to say that the President of the United States supports, fully supports the Willow Project. Great!

In subsequent meetings with the Department of the Interior, we have worked with them to make sure they are going to get a supplemental EIS done by the end of this quarter, by the end of June, and that is critical to ensure that Alaskans can start building this project this winter. So, Secretary Haaland needs to reiterate these important commitments on Willow, which should not be a problem, since her boss, the President of the United States, has already made these commitments.

Finally, the Secretary needs to take action on two matters that have been an affront by the federal government to our Alaska Native communities for decades.

The first is the life-saving King Cove Road, perhaps the most enduring symbol of an arrogant, uncaring federal government in Alaska. When Secretary Haaland travels to King Cove this week, she needs to tell the determined citizens of that community that she fully supports the construction of the 11-mile gravel road to Cold Bay that will undoubtedly save lives.

And, she also needs to unequivocally voice her support for our heroic Alaska Native Vietnam veterans who are unable to select their Native land allotments because they were patriotically serving their country in a war that many Americans were avoiding serving.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

No. 14

April 19, 2022

Last year, before all of you, I went into some detail about this issue. It's an issue I'm very passionate about, and I worked hard to get my legislation signed into law to right this historic wrong. In fact, it was the number-one issue I raised with Secretary Haaland during her confirmation process. I told her, "You must rapidly implement this law, the public land order that is ready to go by your predecessor."

Unfortunately, she did not keep her commitments to me on this and has instead undertaken delay after delay, while Alaskan Native Vietnam veterans who are living - their numbers are unfortunately dwindling. This is truly an outrage.

Senator Murkowski and I have recently written the Secretary on this matter after I heard rumors that she was planning on announcing an environmental assessment for these allotments when she came up here this week, which will, in essence, amount to further delay. The letter is on your desk. In it, I implore her not to take such a disrespectful, shameful and unnecessary action.

The Alaska Legislature, all of you, have many powerful voices and I hope we can all raise our voices in unison to Secretary Haaland on this vital issue, as well as the King Cove Road, Willow, and ANWR. This is an important opportunity that we have this week with her in town, and we need to speak with one voice. But our opportunities to work together to move our state forward certainly don't end there.

Let me talk about another area that I'm hopeful we can all agree on, and that is infrastructure. We are resource-rich but infrastructure-poor state. Think about it. We have less road miles than Connecticut and we're almost 120-times bigger. When we do have infrastructure projects to build, radical, extreme Lower 48 environmental groups, often with assists from misguided federal judges here in Alaska and in the Lower 48, do their darndest to stop projects from being built. So, getting more infrastructure built for our state - roads, bridges, ports, harbors, broadband - has been a top priority of mine as your senator.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

April 19, 2022

No. 14

The five-year bipartisan infrastructure bill we passed last fall will go a long way to addressing many of Alaska's infrastructure needs. But only if we all work closely together. You have my unwavering commitment to do so. In fact, Congressman Young, Senator Murkowski and I already testified before a House committee and are looking forward to testifying in front of Senate Finance, as well.

While not perfect, this hard infrastructure bill has many provisions that fit closely with our state's priorities: water and sewer for underserved rural communities, billions of dollars in federal loan guarantees for the AKLNG project, permitting reform, which is a passion of mine, significant funding for the Essential Ferry Service, a passion for many in Southeast, historic infrastructure investments that touch on critical, long-sought and much-needed Corps of Engineers projects that have already been announced and awarded throughout Alaska.

Think about it. Right now - the ports of Nome, the Barrow breakwater project, the Kenai River coastal erosion project, the Moose Creek Dam near North Pole, and the Lowell Creek Project in Seward. I believe the biggest opportunity of all, with regard to infrastructure, is in the area of broadband. Historic federal funding over the next five years from this infrastructure bill, the Federal Communications Commission, the tribal NTIA program and the USDA Rural Connect Initiative should enable us as a state to wire every community in Alaska with internet connectivity, if we coordinate well and work together.

Think of the opportunities if we do that for education, for health care, for small businesses anywhere in Alaska if this happens. This will continue to be a focus of mine, which is why we are planning on convening a summit in Anchorage later this year to bring all stakeholders together. All of you, the Governor's Office, the feds, tribal entities, businesses, and telecommunications companies to make sure that we are coordinating closely together and as closely as possible to make this vision a reality.

Other visions for our state are also starting to become a reality. Take, for example, the Arctic and Alaska's central role in promoting America's interests here.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

No. 14

April 19, 2022

Seven years ago, at a Senate Armed Services hearing, I was a brand-new freshman, and the secretary of defense was testifying. I held up the Obama administration's Arctic Strategy, slammed it on the dais, and I said, "Mr. Secretary, with all due respect, this is a joke. It's not a serious document." It consisted of thirteen pages, six of which were pictures, and Russia was mentioned once in a footnote.

Now, seven years ago, no one on the Armed Services Committee seemed to care, especially those testifying from the Pentagon. Now, all of that has changed. Just four weeks ago, the NORTHCOM Commander was testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, and so many senators - Democrats, Republicans - were pressing the commander on Arctic security issues, on icebreakers, on the Port of Nome, on Russian aggression, and on other topics.

At one point, I looked back at this hearing and felt a little bit like a proud papa, because this is the issue I have been focused on in the Armed Services Committee for seven years, and now everyone on the committee was focused on the Arctic, including my Arctic Security Initiative bill, which became law last year, and will ensure that the Pentagon continues to maintain its focus on this critical area of the world - our area of the world.

Here's where we can all work together. Senator Murkowski and I, and Congressman Young were able to get passed into law last year the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies, which the Department of Defense - and this will be a DOD-run center - recently announced will be headquartered in Anchorage. With your help, this has the potential to be the leading Arctic security and economic security think-tank in the world, regularly convening global experts and the most innovative minds on the strategic importance and needs of the Arctic and its people.

The potential for this initiative, and it's happening - this isn't pie-in-the-sky - it's announced, we're doing it. The potential for this initiative for our state for our country, in my view, is limitless.

So, too, is our potential to be the leading location to study the oceans and the need to keep them clean and healthy and sustainable.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

April 19, 2022

No. 14

Last year, I mentioned the important victory that we had achieved, working closely with Senator Bert Stedman and his team, on finally bringing the NOAA research vessel, the Fairweather, back to Ketchikan, where it belongs. The new pier and homeport facility right now for the Fairweather are being built in Ketchikan. An estimated 50 crew members and NOAA researchers will reside in Ketchikan at the end of 2022.

My bill, the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act, was signed into law. Now, SOS 2.0 as we call it, which is the most comprehensive ocean clean-up legislation ever to come out of the United States Congress, contains a provision establishing a congressionally-chartered Marine Debris Foundation. I've been making the case to NOAA that the natural place to headquarter this foundation on the oceans is Alaska.

Think of the potential for our state, with our university systems, ocean and fisheries experts, combined with NOAA's research facilities here in Juneau and in Ketchikan, this new Marine Debris Foundation, all attracting the best minds in the world to help foster and grow our economic opportunities that relate to clean and sustainable oceans, while strengthening our coastal communities.

My team and I would like to work with you all of you and the university to put forward a compelling proposal to convince the new Marine Debris Foundation board to set up shop here in Alaska, the state with more coastline than the rest of the lower 48 combined, and fisheries responsible for approximately two-thirds of all seafood harvested in America.

So that's a pretty good list. Not so much a Democrat or Republican list, but components of an Alaska agenda that we can all focus on together - ANWR, NPR-A and Willow, the gift of a road to the people of King Cove, the gift of land to Alaska Native Vietnam veterans who earned it, much-needed infrastructure for Alaska, and making our state the recognized global leader on Arctic and ocean issues.

Let me conclude by mentioning two more areas of cooperation. Both have been in the news a lot. Both are, in many ways, very tragic. And both are critically important to our future as a state and nation.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

No. 14

April 19, 2022

With more veterans per capita than any state in the country, I am convinced that Alaska's communities take care of our military members and their families better than any place in the country. I have witnessed that my whole career. But our military members stationed in Alaska are taking their lives at horrendously high rates - 11 last year alone, with six more being investigated already this year. This is a very personal issue for me, as I know it is for many of you.

Over two decades ago, I had a young Marine under my command - handsome, strong, committed - who called me late one night struggling with a hard, personal issue. We were scheduled to have a drill weekend in a few days for the Anchorage-based Marine recon. unit that we both served in. I told him, "Don't worry, Marine, I'll see you in a few days. You and I can tackle this issue together." My Marine didn't have a few days. I think about this tragic suicide a lot. What more could I have done? What more could the Marine Corps have done? We can do more, we know we can do more. We need to do more.

The U.S. Army, at the highest levels, has been focusing on this. Indeed, the Pentagon has been focusing on this big challenge in Alaska, and I commend them for that.

Recently, Senator Murkowski and I, and Congressman Jackie Speier, a Democrat from California who chairs the House Armed Service Personnel Subcommittee, sent a letter to the Secretary of the Army on ideas.

We have to address this horrible crisis. Think about it. It's a horrible crisis. In the last four years, more soldiers have died in Alaska from suicide - nearly 40 - than were killed in action in Afghanistan. It shouldn't be that way.

Now, I don't know what all of the answers are, but I'm sure many of you have answers. Many of you have heard from your constituents about this. What are they? Let us know. We need everybody working on this.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

April 19, 2022

No. 14

The letter we sent to the Secretary of the Army is just the start. This coming week, Congresswoman Speier and I will be holding listening sessions with junior enlisted, NCOs, with their spouses and behavioral health providers, at JBER in Anchorage and Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks to learn more about these life-and-death issues for America's finest.

I appreciate Congresswoman Speier for coming up to Alaska to do this, focusing on our troops here in our great state.

Finally, I want to say a few words about the other story that is dominating the news here at home and around the world, and that is Russia's barbaric invasion of Ukraine. As much as we have been appalled by the brutality of the Russian dictator Vladimir Putin, we have also been inspired by the courage of the Ukrainian people, their military and elected officials.

I think many of you know, I care deeply about America's national security and focus a lot on these issues as your senator and as a colonel in the United States Marine Corps. On the eve of the outbreak of this war, I attended the annual Munich Security Conference in Germany with a bipartisan group of United States senators, meeting with defense, military and foreign policy leaders from around the world. President Zelensky was there, as well as the imposing Mayor of Kiev, Vitaly Klitschko.

But the most moving meeting I had was with a number of young Ukrainian parliamentarians, mostly women - strong, smart, brave elected officials. They reminded me of many of you in this chamber. And now, you see some of them on TV showing courage in spite of the grim odds stacked against them in their country.

In that meeting I had with them, they asked me this simple question: "If we are invaded, Senator, will America help us?"

I replied, "Yes, we will help you." And I have tried to ensure that we keep this promise by relentlessly pressing the Biden administration and the Pentagon leadership to adopt a winning strategy for Ukraine.

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

No. 14

April 19, 2022

What is a winning strategy for Ukraine? More lethal weapons, tighter sanctions, more intel sharing, and more American energy supplies to our European allies who are dangerously dependent on Putin, who uses Russia's energy as a weapon.

This should be a clarifying moment for all of us. We need to fully understand the broader implications of this barbaric invasion of Ukraine. We have entered a new era of authoritarian aggression led by Russia's and China's dictators who are increasingly isolated and dangerous, driven by historical grievances, paranoid about their democratic neighbors, and willing to use military force and other aggressive actions to crush the citizens of such countries.

These dangerous dictators, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, of China, are increasingly working together to achieve their aggressive goals, and they are trying to split the United States from our allies.

We must wake up to the fact that this new era of authoritarian aggression will likely be with us for decades and we must face it with strategic resolve and confidence.

The United States has extraordinary advantages relative to the dictatorships of Russia and China, if we are wise enough to utilize and strengthen them. Think about what those are: our global network of allies, our lethal military, our world-class supplies of energy and other natural resources, our dynamic economy, and, most important, our democratic values and our commitment to freedom and liberty.

Xi Jinping and Putin's biggest weakness and vulnerability is that they fear their own people. We should remember and exploit this fact in the months and years ahead.

So what does that mean for us in Alaska? I believe Alaska has an enormous role to play in ensuring that America prevails in this new era of brutal dictatorships versus democracies.

Think about what we have: an incredible strategic location, a very lethal military. We just received our full complement of F-35s at Eielson last week, making our state the only place in the world with over 100 5th-generation fighters. We have our world class energy and

SENATE AND HOUSE JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT

April 19, 2022

No. 14

mineral resources that can supply America and our allies for decades to come. And, you all know this, we have a commitment to freedom, probably more than any other place in America. You can literally feel it when you get off of the plane when you're home, as I did just a few hours ago.

Unfortunately, the federal government is right now inhibiting our ability to unleash these powerful Alaskan assets. No one has said that better and with more clarity than one of your very own - Representative Josiah Patkotak - along with Mayor Harry Brower, in a recent Wall Street Journal op-ed read by millions of Americans. Take a look at it. It's on your desk.

My favorite line from their compelling piece was this: "Even as Russian tanks lined up on the Ukrainian border in February, the Biden administration froze up drilling on federal lands and issued rules making it harder to build natural gas pipelines. We may be Inupiat Eskimos 5,000 miles away from the Washington policy machine, but we know crazy when we see it. And this is crazy."

Now, more than ever, the federal government needs to be a partner with us, with our state, enabling Alaska to unleash these incredibly powerful strategic advantages for our country, for the benefit of our state, for the benefit of America, for the benefit of our allies, and literally, right now, for the benefit of the world.

I hope we can all work together on these and other things that I mentioned in my remarks today.

Thanks again for taking the time to listen. Thanks for all you're doing for Alaska. You have my commitment on these and other issues to work very closely with the Alaska Legislature for a brighter future for our great state. Thank you very much.

Please report corrections to the Senate Secretary's office.