

**SENATE AND HOUSE
JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

February 7, 2023

Tuesday

No. 4

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Address by

The Honorable Dan Sullivan

United States Senator

Before a Joint Session

of the

First Session of the

Thirty-Third Alaska State Legislature

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February 7, 2023

Juneau, Alaska

The following was submitted for publication:

Good morning, everybody. Thank you, Mr. President and Speaker Tilton. It's very much an honor to be back here. To all legislators—some of you new to me, some of you dear old friends—I just want to say, it's great to be back home with all of you!

Things around here have changed some. There's a lot of young blood in the building—men and women who have entered the arena. Welcome. As Teddy Roosevelt told us in his famous speech, "Citizenship in a Republic," the arena is not a place for the fainthearted. Roosevelt described it in vivid detail: the dust, the sweat, the fights, the triumphs, the defeats. He could have been writing about the end of any legislative session here—particularly if someone dares to cross Lyman Hoffman, or Click Bishop, or for that matter, the Speaker of the House, or any number of you.

But the eternal truth in Roosevelt's speech rings true today: "It's not the critic who counts, not the man...who points out where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man—and the woman—in the arena." That's all of you. So, thank you very much for that.

Before I get started with my remarks, as I always love to do in this address, I want to introduce my wife, Julie, the love of my life, the most important woman, the smartest and most gracious person I know. She is here, as always, by my side. If you don't agree with anything I say today, I know that you will agree with me when I say that I certainly married up. And, for that matter, so did many of you that I'm looking at in this audience.

And my team. I have a great staff. I think many of you know Chad Padgett, my state director; Amanda Coyne, my speechwriter and counselor; Ben Dietderich, he does press for me; and Dana Herndon, who is my Southeast Regional Director. I couldn't do this job without them, and I know you feel the same way about your staff. They're in the arena with us in service of our collective cause, which, of course, is Alaska. It's such a worthy cause. A big cause—not only because our state, geographically, is so large. But because everything in it is big: big hopes and dreams, big imaginations, big, larger-than-life people, like so many of you.

In this body, we have truck drivers, placer miners. We have fishermen and peony farmers. We have a whaling captain, and a doctor who is also a reindeer herder. We have pilots. We have military heroes. Heck, one of you regularly straps on plastic wings and parasails down a three-thousand-foot mountain just for fun!

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I would bet that no other legislative body in this country has such interesting representatives. Why is that? I'm convinced that it is because of our possibilities, our vast resources, our promise, our uniqueness that attracts and keeps people who are daring in spirit, in imagination, and in generosity. It's all of our jobs to keep that unique Alaska fire burning.

I know that in D.C., the big speech of the day today is the President's State of the Union address. I've attended those in the past—full of pomp and formality. With all due respect to the President, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the entire world than right here right now, with the people who really matter and with Alaska's brand of formality. Case and point: I'm confident that no one at the State of the Union tonight will be sporting more dapper attire than my good friend, Senator Bert Stedman. And a bolo tie, like Josiah is wearing.

In all seriousness, this morning, I want to talk about what we're doing on the federal level, in particular, my priorities, which I hope you share, and realizing what we all know: Alaska's enormous potential is not only critical for the people we represent—it is essential for our country's economic strength, our national security, and fundamentally, the soul of our nation.

Let me start with my number one priority: revitalizing Alaska's economy and creating opportunities for good jobs for all Alaskans. We have challenges, no doubt about that, but I'm optimistic, particularly as it concerns opportunities for resource development. The Economist magazine just had a big feature article about us, suggesting "a new oil boom" in Alaska.

With the Willow Project, which just received its Final EIS last week, and the Pikka Project, just those two projects, we could literally be looking at over \$10 billion dollars in private sector investment on the North Slope, over 3,000 construction jobs, peak production of these two projects at over 250,000 barrels a day, and billions and billions in revenues for our federal government, our state government, the North Slope Borough, and communities throughout our state. This is not some pie in the sky dream. This is on the cusp of happening right now.

But it's not just our oil and gas industry. As you all know, and you're all supporters like I am, Alaska is an all-of-the-above energy powerhouse. We have enormous wind, solar, hydro, tidal, geothermal and carbon sequestration potential. And, importantly, Alaska has the critical minerals the world needs now to support all of these new technologies and of course to support our nation's national defense.

Right now, our country is heavily reliant on China—our chief geopolitical foe—for the vast majority of the critical minerals that we actually have in our own country and in our own state. This has to change, and Alaska is perfectly positioned to meet this need. Whether it's projects like Ucore, Constantine, Ambler, Graphite Creek or Donlin, we have the minerals and metals that Alaska and America need, right now.

Next, there is also cause for optimism on our long-sought goal of bringing Alaska's endless supply of clean-burning North Slope natural gas to Alaskans and markets beyond.

Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine has totally upended global energy markets. Our allies in Europe and Asia have a moral and strategic imperative to get off of Russian oil and gas, and Alaska is poised to meet this demand.

Yes, we have heard many times in our history, when the natural gas project seemed just right around the corner. We know that. And I'm not saying it's right around the corner, but as someone who has worked on this big dream for Alaska for many years like so many of you, we are seeing key stakeholder alignment in ways that has never happened before. That is very exciting.

Let me give you a more specific example. In October, I convened an Alaska LNG summit in Tokyo with U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel—a big fan of the project and my new best friend in Tokyo—key stakeholders, investors, producers, engineering firms, the Biden administration at senior levels, the Dunleavy administration, AGDC, Japanese government officials. We were all there working together to try to move this project forward. We need to keep working together—all of us—to try to tackle this enormous opportunity for our state.

Let me give you another cause for optimism: we've continued the significant military build-up in Alaska. As I often say, our state constitutes three pillars of America's military might: we are the cornerstone of missile defense for the whole country, we are the hub of air combat power for the Arctic and the Asia-Pacific, and we are a vital strategic platform for elite expeditionary forces.

We are building on all of these pillars with your help. Since I've been in office, we've secured billions in military construction for Alaska. That is continuing. This, of course, has enhanced America's national security but it's also been a great way to strengthen our economy and increase job growth in Alaska.

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This past year, I was honored to attend the flagging ceremonies for the U.S. Army 11th Airborne Division with many of you in Fairbanks and in Anchorage. The 11th Airborne has a proud and storied history, first activated during World War II for the liberation of the Philippines and the occupation of Japan. The core unit of the 11th Airborne is the former 5,000-person, airborne, 4th Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division—what we call the 4/25. I think we have members of the 4/25 here. The 4/25 has a special place in my heart, even as a Marine. Some might recall that in one of my first legislative speeches to this body, when the Obama Administration announced plans to get rid of the 4/25, I told all of you that that would happen over my dead body.

Well, I'm still here, and so is the 4/25. So what happened? Here's what happened. All of Alaska got in the arena—so many of you, my team and I, so many of us, common Alaskan citizens held rallies on this issue. We pulled out all of the stops collectively as Alaskans to get this strategically misguided Obama Administration plan reversed. We prevailed. And now we have an entire Army Airborne Division—one of only two paratrooper divisions in the entire U.S. military—stationed right here in the great state of Alaska.

Now I think all of you know that this represents a sea change in the Pentagon's thinking about the Arctic. It wasn't too long ago that our very own Department of Defense saw the Arctic as a strategic backwater: there was no strategy and there was a Pentagon focus on shutting down bases and units here in Alaska. Now, all of that has changed. With the standing up of the 11th Airborne Division in our state, a critical transformation of America's Arctic strategy has occurred.

And here is what's really exciting about this: just two weeks ago, I met with the Vice Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army, and he told me that the 11th Airborne Division in Alaska is now the number one duty selection station for soldiers in the U.S. Army. That is a big deal. Why?

The very high number of tragic suicides our military in Alaska has had has broken all of our hearts. I've heard from so many of you on this issue. The numbers as I think you know are astronomically high, particularly in the Interior. We've done much to address this, including passing legislation to improve the quality of life for our military. But, for those of you who have served in the military, you know, nothing is more important for the well-being of our troops than being part of a unit with high morale and high unit pride—and that is now happening in the 11th Airborne Division in Alaska.

We are also now home recently to the Department of Defense's newest regional security center, the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies, and real, substantial progress has been made on our nation's first critical deep-water Arctic port in Nome, and we are getting an icebreaker home-ported right here in Juneau, Alaska. That is going to happen. With all of these advancements, Alaska has rightly earned our place as the center of gravity for America's Arctic security operations and Arctic economic opportunities. With your help, this critical role will only increase in importance in the decades to come.

Let me talk about another area where we've made good progress for our economy: real progress on much-needed infrastructure for our state. The bipartisan infrastructure bill that we passed in 2021 wasn't perfect, but here's the bottom line: we are a resource-rich but infrastructure-poor state. Think about it. We have less road miles than Connecticut and we're almost 120 times bigger than that puny little state.

So, getting more infrastructure built—roads, bridges, ports, harbors, ferries—has been a top priority of mine as your senator. Billions of dollars for Alaska have been secured as the result of this infrastructure bill. Most recently we saw the announcement of close to \$300 million dollars to improve the ferry system of Southeast Alaska. That was due to Senator Murkowski's hard work on that issue.

One of the most transformative aspects of this infrastructure bill, in terms of federal dollars, is the focus on federal broadband dollars and connectivity for our state. With these funds—and we will be getting billions, because we wrote the infrastructure bill to focus on communities and states without internet connectivity, and unfortunately, we were number one in that category—but with these funds, the goal of connecting all Alaskans—every community, every village and town—is within our reach. Coordination, however, is key. The critical player now is going to be the state and all of you. We need to be good stewards of these funds. This is an enormously exciting opportunity for Alaska.

That's why, last summer—I know a number of you attended and I was very honored—we convened a summit in Anchorage on this very topic. We brought together senior federal officials overseeing broadband funds. We brought together the governor, many of you, leaders in the state—local, tribal leaders—industry, to ensure that we have a plan to work together so that there's no duplication of services, no waste or abuse of these funds, and that the feds understood our unique challenges. Think of the opportunities if we

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can achieve this together: for education, for small businesses, for telehealth. The opportunities for Alaska are limitless. This is something you have my commitment to work with all of you on in the coming years.

Let me talk about another area where we have seen, in some ways, the best of times and the worst of times. That is our fisheries, which employ more Alaskans than any other industry. Salmon is the lifeblood of our state, our economy and our cultural traditions. We've seen shocking and unprecedented declines among some species while, in other parts of the state, runs have been at historic highs. All Alaskans can agree—we have to address research gaps with data and the best scientific minds, including our Indigenous communities that have harvested salmon for thousands of years. We must understand why stocks of certain salmon, like our iconic Yukon King, have crashed. This is an imperative for me and I know it's an imperative for so many of you.

There's good news on that front: my Alaska Salmon Research Task Force Act was recently signed into law. This will expand our understanding of this challenge so that we can achieve increased abundance and stability in our salmon stocks for the benefit of all Alaskans.

As many of you know, I serve on the Commerce Committee, which has oversight for America's fisheries. I like to brag about Alaska—my Senate colleagues, I think, get sick of it. I call our great state the Superpower of Seafood. And we are. About two-thirds of all seafood harvested in America—commercial, sport, subsistence—comes from our great state and our great waters. We need to defend this key element of Alaska.

Let me give you one example where we need to work together to defend this fishery here in Southeast. You may have read the news: a Seattle-based environmental group known for its extreme positions has filed a misguided, manipulative lawsuit arguing that Alaska's small-scale, hook-and-line troll salmon fishery is somehow endangering the existence of Puget Sound orcas hundreds of miles away.

Now, this is in my view a frivolous lawsuit. However, this group is weaponizing the Endangered Species Act. They're not claiming that it's the fishery near them in Washington state or the pollution in Puget Sound in Washington state. They're blaming our fishery, hundreds of miles away in Southeast, and they are requesting to the judge to shut it down. We cannot let this kind of craziness stand. I've committed to fighting against this kind of abuse of the system with everything I can to make sure the livelihoods of hard-working Alaskan families in Southeast and our economy here remain strong. I ask you to help me to join in that fight, which doesn't get enough attention.

Finally, on tourism, we are seeing a robust comeback in this vital sector following the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic. To help support that comeback, Congress recently passed my bill called the *VISIT America Act*, which I've been working on for years. It was primarily drafted in large part with the direct help of the Alaska Travel Industry Association. They've done a great job, so I want to thank them for that work! This legislation will elevate the priorities of the tourism sector to the highest levels of our own federal government, and require a strategy across several federal agencies to boost tourism in places like Alaska and other parts of our great nation. We are seeing hundreds of millions of dollars in private sector investment being planned for tourism in Alaska as we recover from the pandemic, as well as in the aviation sector—particularly air cargo—an industry that employs thousands and in which Alaska plays a globally dominant role.

So, there you have it, literally billions—easily 10, maybe even 20 billion dollars in the next five years—from the private sector and the federal government poised to be invested in our state. The main challenge, in my view, in fully realizing this potential is a federal government that can't or won't permit economic development projects in our state in a timely manner, and the lack of trained Alaska workers to do these jobs. We have to work together to address these roadblocks to Alaska's future, as well as undertake policies that keep our children here, with opportunities and good jobs. I believe that, with these investments poised to come here, good jobs should be right around the corner.

Good jobs bring pride. They bring family dignity, and shared purpose. Good jobs create strong families, strong communities, strong states and strong countries. I truly believe that the best social program in America is a good job. We need more of them here. We need to work together on that.

But we can have the best jobs, the best economy in the world, and none of it will matter if our people are suffering from the blight of sexual assault, addiction, and mental health declines. We have enormous potential as a state, but we also have to address these pressing social challenges—which is another top priority of mine. I have been focused on our huge, horrific challenge of sexual assault and domestic violence—with many of you—since my time as your attorney general.

I brought elements of our state's Choose Respect strategy with me to the U.S. Senate, with a particular focus on getting pro-bono legal services to survivors. Studies show that survivors of domestic violence have a much better chance of securing protective orders and breaking the cycle of violence when they are represented by a lawyer. But often the cost of that representation is prohibitive.

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Working with members of both sides of the aisle in the U.S. Senate, I've been able to pass bills focusing on this issue. The Pro Bono Work to Empower and Represent Act, or the POWER Act, as we call it, was signed into law in 2018. That has been helping combat domestic violence and sexual assault by connecting free legal services with survivors. To date, the POWER Act has reached more than 61,000 attorneys across America to help with these free legal services, and it hasn't cost the U.S. taxpayer one dime!

I'm proud to say that a reauthorized version of my POWER Act was recently signed into law, making this effective program permanent. Some of you might remember when we did these summits here in Alaska many years ago—the pro-bono legal summits. The idea was to create an army of attorneys to help across the state and now what we have is an army of attorneys across America who are going to help empower survivors.

Another issue that has been a passion of mine is addressing the devastating impacts of addiction and its stigmatization. In the fall of 2016, I had an extremely moving meeting in Washington, D.C. with eight Alaskan women, who my office later lovingly referred to as the “amazing eight.” This was probably the most poignant and powerful meeting I have had in my time in the U.S. Senate. Each of the women had their own powerful story of facing addiction. They were incredibly courageous—they were all in recovery. The meeting opened my eyes on this issue, and many elements of it. And it opened my eyes to the fact that addiction is not a moral failing. People who are suffering from addiction need our help, not our judgement.

As a result, I got very involved in this issue, helping pass significant legislation, like the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, to help our communities combat addiction, and holding, with many of you, a Wellness Summit in the Mat-Su Valley to help Alaskans more deeply understand this challenge and how to combat it.

We've been making progress and bringing much-needed awareness to this huge problem, but I fear that, post pandemic, we are backsliding. Between 2021 and 2022, we lost more than 100,000 of our fellow Americans to overdoses. And now, Alaska has the highest rate of overdose deaths per capita than any place in the country. There are many reasons for this backsliding, and I am committed more than ever to work with all of you on how to address it. One reason that really incenses me is our open and porous southern border.

There is a tidal wave of fentanyl being made in China, coming into our country through our borders from Mexico—a staggering 4,000 percent increase in fentanyl seizures has occurred in just the last three years. 4,000 percent! I'm not sure what kind of politics allows for fully open borders. I've been there on the Rio Grande at night; our borders are open. This is literally killing Americans. Just last week, I had a call with the Secretary of Homeland Security and again called on him and the Administration to work to fix this fixable problem for America!

Finally, as it relates to social issues, there is one more area that I want to work on with all of you. There is a mental health crisis across our nation that is risking destroying our young people. According to one expert, “there has never been a generation of young Americans this depressed, this anxious, and this fragile.” Suicides among adolescents over the previous decade have jumped 29 percent. The numbers in this area are staggering for teenage girls. There was a 50 percent increase across the country in suicide attempts during the pandemic.

What's causing this? I think all of you know, it's a very complex issue. There's certainly not one cause. There are many factors—and the pandemic certainly didn't help. But I don't believe it's a coincidence that increases in depression rates among young people, particularly teenage girls, began to rise considerably in 2013. What happened then? Facebook acquired Instagram and young people began to flock to the site. Then came selfies and TikTok, which wrought an invidious obsessiveness. Even those who aren't parents know that there is something horribly amiss with a whole generation who have been so addicted to their phones by Big Tech, and they can't seem to look up from their phones. For parents, it can feel frustrating and helpless.

I'm a Republican and I generally follow the principle of less government and more freedom. But I believe government should step in when the financial interests of big business are hurting our people, particularly our young people. Big Tech's business model is to get our children hooked. And guess what: our children are hooked.

I've sponsored bills, like the Kids Online Safety Act, to help parents shake the vice grip that these companies have over our children. But I believe more needs to be done. I'm convinced that social media has played a nefarious role in our mental health crisis and the lack of resiliency among our youth. I'm working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find solutions to give parents more power over what their children are watching on their phones. One idea is to limit some social media for kids under 16.

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This is going to be a big battle. When I mention this idea, you can imagine, there's certain companies that hate it. Big Tech special interests are very large. But, again, this is the arena that Teddy Roosevelt spoke of, and the mental health of our children is at stake, and working with all of you, I think we need to prevail.

Finally, I want to say a few words about the larger geostrategic challenges we're facing as a nation, and our role as Alaskans in confronting it. Like many of you, 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.

We need to fully understand the broader implications of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. We have entered a new era of authoritarian aggression, led by Russia 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 of Russia and Xi Jinping of China—are increasingly working together to achieve their aggressive goals and are becoming increasingly emboldened and provocative. Just last week, we had a giant Chinese spy balloon violate U.S. air space and float across our country, beginning right here in Alaska. We must wake up to the fact that this new era of authoritarian aggression will likely be with us for decades. We need to face it with strategic resolve and confidence as Americans.

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 it: our global network of allies, our lethal military, our world-class supplies of energy and other natural resources, our dynamic economy, and most important, in my view, our democratic values and our commitment to liberty.

Alaska has an enormous role to play in ensuring that America prevails in this new era of brutal dictatorships versus democracies. Think about it. Our strategic location, our exceptional military, our world-class energy and mineral resources that can supply America and our allies for decades. In fact, our state—more than any other state in the Union—should be poised to play a critical role, as we have throughout our history, and in this process, we will benefit through more investment, a stronger economy, and better jobs in Alaska.

Many of us know about the critical role Alaska played during World War II—including the Aleutian Islands Campaign and the Lend Lease Program. But less is known about our role during the Cold War. Military leaders, and certainly President Eisenhower, at the time understood Alaska’s critical importance. In fact, Eisenhower, after World War II when he was chief of staff of the Army in 1947, came up to Alaska to see for himself our strategic location and our Arctic tough soldiers. Because of what he saw here, and what he knew as a military commander, when he became president—and the Cold War started to really heat up—he initially opposed Alaska statehood. But the reason was for strategy reasons. He worried that “the tremendous strategic importance of Alaska to our national defense,” might be compromised if the federal government didn’t have complete “freedom of movement and action by our forces up here.”

Eventually, with the urging of many, including a young tenacious lawyer at the Department of the Interior during the Eisenhower Administration—who we all know is Senator Ted Stevens—President Eisenhower changed his mind on Alaska Statehood. But he and his Administration, and the rest of the nation understood during the Cold War just how critical we were—the "Guardian of the North" and the "Top Cover for America." And investments came in that helped make the state that we know today. Between 1951 and 1955 alone, **\$12 billion** in today’s dollars came into Alaska.

The Distant Early Warning System—called the DEW Line, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning sites, the Nike missile system, roads. New bases. Some are expanded now; some have been closed. For example, “Mile 26” base, south of Fairbanks, was renamed Eielson Air Force Base and its runway was extended to over 14,500 feet—the biggest runway in America at the time. Fort Greely. All of these sites came into being during this time.

But it wasn’t only Alaska’s military that eventually helped win the Cold War. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union was desperately trying to increase its oil production in the Far East, but it didn’t have the technology to drill in the permafrost. But we did. Enter Prudhoe Bay and the Trans Alaska Pipeline System producing at peak production over 2 million barrels a day, which strengthened our economy here, and our nation’s economy, and our nation’s national security and energy security. So, again, we played this critical role.

The ingenuity of our people also helped out. The CIA actually had an operation in Alaska, called “Operation Washtub,” to recruit Alaskans to act as “sleeper agents” in case there was a Russian invasion. They wanted fishermen and bush pilots, prospectors, bartenders, hunters, and trappers to be undercover CIA agents. In fact, many of you would probably have been

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perfect candidates for that program. We can play that role again in order to prevail in this new era of Chinese and Russian authoritarian aggression, and we are doing that right now in terms of our military build-up which has been very bipartisan back in Senate, which is important.

But in terms of our resources, we need to have the Biden Administration recognize Alaska's huge potential, and unfortunately, many in this Administration don't.

In a Wall Street Journal op-ed last year titled "Let Alaska Sell American Energy to the World," read by millions of people, North Slope Borough Mayor Harry Brower and your very own Alaska State Representative Josiah Patkotak stated the following:

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

I'm glad they wrote that, because what's so frustrating to me is how the federal government just doesn't understand how crazy its policies can be—particularly as it relates to Alaska and our nation's national security.

Let me give you another example. The Ambler Mining District is considered one of the most extensive sources of undeveloped zinc, copper, lead, gold, and silver anywhere in the world. America desperately needs such minerals for our renewable sector, for our economy, to compete against China, for our national security. But as you all know, we have no transportation or road to the Ambler Mining District. So, the State, all of you, with AIDEA, and private investors, pursued a road, including a 5-year, \$5 million-dollar environmental impact statement started during the Obama Administration, and completed during the Trump Administration. So far so good. But on the same day President Biden hosted a summit—which I supported—on critical mineral supplies for America and fixing our supply chains—he hosted this at the White House—his Interior Department reversed the Record of Decision on the Ambler Mining Road. Like Mayor Brower and Representative Patkotak said, this is crazy.

And this is part of a larger challenge that I've been fighting back in D.C: the target on Alaska. Too many officials in the Biden Administration don't see Alaska as a great resource to help strengthen our country, which we all know it is. They see our state as a place to lock up and shut down instead.

You all might have heard me refer to this “war on Alaska.” It sounds a little harsh, I know. But this is what I mean by that: in two years, the Biden Administration has issued 44 executive orders or executive actions solely focused on our state. 44 in two years. Just Alaska. No other state has gotten this kind of unwarranted attention. Even my Democratic Senate colleagues, when I point this out to them, are kind of stunned. I tell them, if there was a Republican administration targeting your state with 44 executive actions, and you came to me and asked for help, I would help! This isn’t the way to treat a state in America.

To their credit, some of them are trying to help, and I really appreciate that, particularly as it relates to the most important resource development project our state is looking at right now, and that is Willow. One of the most important resource projects probably in our state’s history, right now. Who knows, maybe the President will mention his support for the Willow Project tonight in his State of the Union tonight and announce a ceasefire in his war on Alaska. I’m not holding my breath.

However, let me end where I began, on the Willow Project, and an ask for all of you. As I noted, a final EIS was issued last week. Although it’s not perfect, we can live with it in terms of building this project. But this project is very far from getting final approval. A Record of Decision will be issued in 30 days. The stakes for Alaska and America are huge. Think about it.

- 2,500 construction jobs—75 percent of which are with the building trades of America. It’s one of their top priorities.
- Peak production of close to 200,000 barrels a day.
- 17 billion in revenues for the feds, the state, the North Slope Borough.
- Highest environmental standards and lowest greenhouse gas emissions of any major project like this in the world.
- And broad-based support from so many Alaskans, particularly the Alaska Native leaders and Alaska Native citizens who live in the region.

But the battle is going to be ferocious over the next 30 days when the Record of Decision is finalized. Just read the press: after the announcement of this Final EIS last week, every major Lower 48 environmental group in America, with their budgets in the tens of millions and their army of lobbyists and activists, said publicly they are pulling out all the stops to kill this project. These groups have high-ranking allies within the Biden Administration and the national media who share their goal of killing Willow and shutting down key elements of Alaska’s economy.

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We need to fight back—all of us in the arena. In Alaska, Willow is a bipartisan issue. Senator Murkowski, Representative Peltola—who by the way supports Willow—and I have requested a meeting with the President to make our case. Some of you know I’ve done this before with the President in the Oval Office. Two days after I pitched him on Willow, 18 months ago, his team came back to me and said the President supports the project. I hope President Biden remembers this and keeps his word to Alaskans.

If we get this meeting, I will respectfully make this argument: the President and his Administration have been going to places like Saudi Arabia begging for oil. They’ve even lifted sanctions on Venezuela—a terrorist state—to produce more oil for America, but you won’t let Alaskans do the same? In the wise words of Josiah and Mayor Brower: “Crazy!”

So here is the ask. In 2017, after my address to this body, then Lieutenant Governor Mallott and Speaker Edgmon handed me a unanimous, bipartisan, bicameral resolution from the Alaska Legislature—it was from all of you—that in essence said this: we have an opportunity at long last to get the 1002 area of ANWR open! Senator, go get it done in the Congress of the United States.

I looked at all of you and said, “Roger that.” And we succeeded. When I say “we,” I mean all of us. We succeeded because of support from this body—from Democrats, from Republicans, from Independents—all people across the state who spoke with one, unified Alaskan voice on this issue. In order for the Biden Administration to approve an economically viable final record of decision in the next 30 days, they will need to hear from all of you.

I’m respectfully asking for a call to action. Please, draft up another resolution and pass it so that we can show people in D.C.—who, by the way, certain congressmen are claiming that Alaskans and Alaska Natives don’t want the Willow Project—and say, that’s not correct. We need you to call the White House. You’re all good politicians—use your connections. We need to make some noise for the betterment of our state and our country! I’m trying to do this in my own capacity.

I was on a national TV show last week, encouraging all Americans who care about national security and energy security to call the White House, to call the Department of Interior, to say you support the Willow Project. Granted it was on Fox News, so I’m pretty sure that not all Americans were watching, but you get my point. We need to do that across all sectors of our economy, our state, our country, and politics. If we do get an economically viable Record of Decision in the next 30 days, then Conoco and its strong Alaska workforce will immediately begin construction.

We know what is going to happen next: all the powerful Lower 48 environmental groups with their hundreds of millions of dollars and their elite Wall Street lawyers will immediately file a lawsuit for an injunction in Alaska's federal District Court to stop Alaska workers from working and to once again have the courts kill the Willow Project. I will be filing an amicus brief in this critical lawsuit. In it, the federal judge will be ruling on whether Willow is in Alaska's and America's interests. With all due respect to the judge, as a life-tenured judge, cloistered in her chamber, she doesn't know the answer of what's in the public interest, and certainly groups, like the Center for Biological Diversity and Greenpeace, don't know what's in the public interest, despite their power and influence in the media.

But here's the thing: we do. We know what's in the public interest. We are elected officials in our great Republic, we are citizens in this Republic, in the arena. That is literally our job, to discern what the public interest is. So, I hope all of you—every single one of you—can sign onto this amicus brief, when we're in litigation, and tell the judge that Willow is unequivocally in the public interest for our great state and for our great country, and let Alaskans finally build it!

I want to conclude by thanking all of you again for everything you do. We know that there are many, many reasons why we love our state. Our landscape, our people, our sense of adventure, of freedom. We are unique. We are not like so many places in the Lower 48—wrung out, dull, overcrowded, polluted. By and large, we aren't too divided by our politics, our religion, our origins. We work together when times are tough, and we share when times are good. We are a state generous of spirit and that's because of people like you, people in this room. If we stick together, always remembering that our future rests on continuing to create a place with a sense of purpose, where freedom of spirit, adventure, legend, and community are interwoven, the possibilities, not only for our state, but for our country, are endless. America is not fully America without Alaska.

We have much work to do for our fellow Alaskans. And we have so much to offer our fellow Americans because our state embodies so much of what is the best of America. I look forward to continuing that work together with all of you.

Thanks again for the invite to say a few words - actually more than a few words. God bless our great state and our great nation. Thank you very much.

Please report corrections to the Senate Secretary's office.