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Address by

The Honorable Dan Sullivan

United States Senator

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of the

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The following was submitted for publication:

I. Introduction

President Stevens. Speaker Tilton. Members of the House and Senate from the Great State of Alaska. Thank you for inviting me to speak to you. It's always great to be home and to be here with you.

I wanted to begin by introducing my outstanding team who are here today: Larry Burton, my chief of staff; Chad Padgett, my state director; Amanda Coyne, my communications director; Ben Dietderich, my press secretary; and Kara Hollatz, my Southeast Regional Director. And, of course, the most important person in my world, the love of my life—my wife, Julie, is here. Also, before I start, Julie and I want to extend our prayers to Lt. Gov. Nancy Dahlstrom for the loss of her 100-year-old father-in-law, a patriot and a World War II veteran.

I also want to thank all of you, especially the freshman legislators, who have chosen to serve our fellow Alaskans by entering into the arena, as President Teddy Roosevelt called it in his famous speech, "Citizenship in a Republic," which I quote often. The arena is not a place for cold and timid souls—of which there are none here, as far as I can tell. Heck, one of you, Navy Seal Laddie Shaw, regularly straps on plastic wings and parasails down a three-thousand-foot mountain just for fun! Another one, I'm told, Forrest Dunbar, recently got engaged. Talk about entering the arena...

I'm always a little nervous before I give this speech. Why? Well, you guys can be a tough audience. It's hard to get Lyman Hoffman's approval. I think I may have done it a few times. I can tell by the slight nod of his head, and I know I'm doing well when Bert Stedman isn't reaching for his pocket watch.

In all seriousness, this is the most important speech I give all year because it helps chart the progress we've made working together—where we are, and where we want to go—particularly as we focus on building the state for the next generation.

II. Challenges

We have big challenges facing Alaska and America: continuing inflation that squeezes the budgets of working families; an open southern border that very negatively impacts Alaska; an increasingly dangerous world with aggressive dictators on the march. And this—what I call the "Last Frontier Lock-Up"—56 orders and actions specifically targeting our state by the Biden administration, something I'm fighting against every day. It's an outrage. No other state in the country gets singled out like this. I handed a version of this chart to the President when the congressional delegation met with him last March on Willow. I told him, respectfully, that this was just wrong, and we needed a ceasefire in this war against Alaska.

Unfortunately, this list is going to grow, particularly as it relates to the Secretary of the Interior's current rule-making efforts that will negatively impact access to NPR-A, ANWR, and Alaska Native Vietnam veterans' rights to Native allotments. Congress has directly and clearly legislated in these areas for the benefit of Alaskans. Nevertheless, the Department of the Interior ignores the law and the voices of our constituents, particularly those on the North Slope.

Eight times, top Alaska Native leaders from ASRC, the tribe ICAS, and the North Slope Borough, now led by your former colleague, Mayor Josiah Patkotak—who's doing a great job by the way—have requested meetings with Secretary Haaland to advocate against these proposed rules. Eight times, traveling thousands of miles to D.C., they have sought to have their voices heard—and she declined to meet with them each time.

The Big State that Could, and Did

So, yes, we have big challenges—some of which we have little control over. But one area where we do have control is our own sense of destiny and optimism. It's been said that optimism is a "force multiplier." I agree and our own history bears this out. On so many big Alaska issues, there have been doomsayers and naysayers and roadblockers, both in and out of our state—there still are today. But the optimists and those who dare greatly have consistently won the day.

As we all know, in the late 1800s, there was fierce debate about the Alaska purchase, with the naysayers arguing that the state was a barren wasteland. The critics came out again when Judge Wickersham, the then-territorial delegate to Congress, proposed that our state have its own legislature. Wickersham's vision won the day. In 1913, your predecessors from all across the state gathered in this city. The first order of business was this: To give women the right to vote, seven years before Congress ratified the 19th Amendment! What a remarkable example for all Americans, and this Alaska leadership role continued. Thirty-two years later, a strong Alaska Native leader named Elizabeth Peratrovich lobbied your predecessors to pass the nation's first anti-racial discrimination legislation. And your predecessors did—19 years before the 1964 Civil Rights Act!

Against often fierce naysayer opposition, big ideas for Alaska in the Congress continued to win the day—Statehood in 1959, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Act in 1973, and ANWR in 2017—the last two by the thinnest of margins in the U.S. Senate because of massive naysayer opposition. Ladies and gentlemen, we are the big state that could!! But the doomsayers and road-blockers are still out there, ready to pounce. It is our job to continue to prove them wrong. And the best way to do that is to continue to work together. How do I know? Because we are currently prevailing in another epic Alaska battle between the negative naysayers and the Alaskan optimists.

III. Willow / Thank You

Last year I focused a lot of my address on a respectful call-to-action to all of you. I told you that we needed an all-hands-on-deck effort to get the President to reapprove the Willow project. Talk about naysayers. We were fighting an organized army. Every newspaper outside of Alaska, every Lower 48 environmental group, nearly all of the Democratic think-tanks, 300 million TikTok users, Patagonia—the whole company, and dozens of White House staffers all fiercely opposed Willow. We worked night and day against that army. We set up a war room, held press conferences, gave speeches, wrote letters, had dozens of meetings with federal officials.

First, we had to convince the White House, which was a struggle. Then we had to convince the courts. I asked you to pass a unanimous resolution of support, which you did, and I handed that to the President—in the Oval Office—along with this Last Frontier Lock-Up chart! And I asked you to sign onto a unanimous amicus brief. And you did, which turned out to be decisive in our court victory over the naysayers. You all and so many groups across our state—Alaska Native organizations, boroughs, the building trades, businesses and contractors—showed what a united Alaska could do.

So, thank you! Thank you! The far-left Lower 48 eco-colonialists are still fighting against Willow. But we're winning. This project is going to bring roughly 200,000 barrels a day down TAPS and billions in revenue for our communities and our state. This winter alone, ConocoPhillips is directly hiring 1,800 workers. 1,800 workers! And they are spending close to \$1 billion this winter, with enormous positive impacts throughout our state. Epic!

IV. Investments

It's not just Willow. We have other large-scale investments coming our way. We have the Pikka project, expected to bring another 80,000 barrels of oil a day in just its first phase. It will also generate billions of dollars in revenue and provide thousands of good-paying jobs. We're beginning to see very significant funds from the bipartisan infrastructure bill coming to us—particularly as it relates to broadband build-outs. Imagine the opportunities for entrepreneurs, education, health care, if every community in our state is fully connected.

Southeast Conference is predicting that this year is going to be another great year for tourism, dramatically rebounding from the dark days of COVID. We just passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee the FAA Reauthorization Act, which is going to be a homerun for Alaska aviation. Cargo and general aviation investments continue to surge in our state from the private and public sectors—hundreds of millions of dollars. We're building a strategic Arctic Port in Nome and ice breakers for America, one of which is slated to be homeported right here in Juneau. Some of these big ideas we've been talking about for decades. Now we're doing them.

We're continuing to build up our military. We all know how strategically important Alaska is. This year, as Chinese spy balloons floated across our communities, joint Chinese-Russian naval exercises took place right off our shores, and Russian bear bombers were flying near our coastline, the rest of the country got the memo. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, since I've been in office, we've secured close to \$3 billion for a dramatic military build-up in Alaska, with the most recent National Defense Authorization Act, adding close to another \$400 million.

This, of course, has enhanced America's national security, but it's also been a great way to strengthen our economy and create good-paying Alaska jobs. Last year, I spoke extensively about the new era of authoritarian aggression that we have entered. We live in a very dangerous world. I just got back from the Munich Security Conference, where assembled world leaders discussed many of these national security challenges. I highlighted just how important our state is—with our expanded military, strategic location, and natural resources. More than any other state, Alaska has a critical role to play during this dangerous time. In keeping with the theme, it is important to note that we had to fight the national security naysayers who sought to shut down our military bases. They saw the Arctic and Alaska as a strategic backwater...Not anymore.

In sum, with all of these investments, in the next four to five years, we're on track to see roughly \$25 billion in private sector and federal investments to our state. This is not pie-in-the-sky. This is happening. And good-paying jobs by the thousands will part of this.

V. Challenges

A. Workers and Housing

We have to be ready for these investments, particularly with a well-trained workforce. We want Alaskans—our constituents, our kids—to fill these good-paying jobs. I was at the pipeline training center recently in Fairbanks and they said it's going to be a banner year because of Willow and other projects.

The University of Alaska system is doing a great job across the state providing an excellent, affordable education. Eighty percent of Alaskans who graduate from the university system stay in Alaska.

But it's not just job training that we need. We also need housing. The lack of affordable housing in our state is a huge issue. I hear about it everywhere I go—from our big cities to the smallest villages. It is a major obstacle and chokepoint to getting and keeping jobs, to having a family, to building communities, and to expanding our military throughout Alaska.

This past summer, I invited the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to Alaska. She traveled our state and I hosted a roundtable with both urban and rural Alaskan stakeholders. She got an earful and, to her credit, she kept a commitment to establish a specific task force with the Association of Alaska Housing Authorities to focus on how HUD's burdensome regulations make housing more expensive, particularly in rural Alaska. She also committed to fix funding disparities between urban Alaska and the rest of the country. This is a good start.

I also introduced a bill with Senator Ron Wyden—the Democratic chair of the Senate Finance Committee—that would expand housing tax credits to include middle income workers, like teachers, police officers, nurses, and pipeline workers—the backbone of so many communities. This bill has strong bipartisan support in our state and in Congress. It's an idea whose time has come.

I'm really hoping that these initiatives can be part of a more comprehensive approach working with all of you to address the very real problem of housing in Alaska.

B. Opportunity: Intellectual Hub

A few years ago, I laid out a vision to all of you about making Alaska a future intellectual research hub for critical areas that make us unique: our vast minerals and natural resources, including boundless renewable energy; our unique role as America's Arctic; our abundant

oceans that we need to keep clean; and our strategic location that enhances America's national security and provides our state with exciting economic opportunities.

This vision is becoming a reality and it's really exciting. Of course, the University of Alaska is doing its part, pulling in over \$225 million in research funds in 2022—it's highest level ever! But we're just getting started. The Department of Defense's Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies, which Senator Murkowski and I got into law a few years ago, already has more than 40 of the best minds in the world now working at its JBER headquarters.

Not to be outdone by DOD, just a few months ago, after a full court press by your congressional delegation, the Department of Homeland Security announced a \$46 million grant to UAA to focus on critical Arctic issues. And it's not just in Arctic security research where we have made historic progress. The NOAA research vessel, the Fairweather, is finally homeported back in Ketchikan, bringing many research scientists and the crew of this ship back to our state. We all worked together on this important endeavor for years. Thanks, especially, to Bert Stedman and his staff. The ribbon cutting ceremony in Ketchikan this past August—on a beautiful, cloudless day—was one of the most satisfying celebrations I've ever attended as Alaska's U.S Senator!

Finally, you all have heard me talk about my passion for our oceans and my Save Our Seas 2.0 Act—the most comprehensive ocean clean-up legislation ever passed by Congress. SOS 2.0 established a congressionally-chartered Marine Debris Foundation, which has enormous potential to bring innovative private sector funds and ideas to ocean clean-up and prevention. For the past two years, I have been relentlessly pressing for this Foundation to be headquartered in Alaska. Today, I am very pleased to announce that it will be... right down the road at an ideal place: the Juneau campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences and the University of Alaska Southeast, which already do great ocean-oriented research. The Marine Debris Foundation based alongside these programs has enormous potential.

There are only a few congressionally-chartered foundations and they have a strong history of becoming important, large enterprises that can employ thousands—think of the American Red Cross, the American Legion, the National Parks Foundation.

Imagine the potential for our state with all of this research and these resources: our university systems, ocean and fisheries experts, NOAA's research facilities here in Juneau and in Ketchikan, Arctic security experts at JBER and UAA, and this new Marine Debris Foundation. The sky is the limit on Alaska becoming a world-class research hub, positively impacting our economy and the next generation for years to come.

C. Challenge: Russia Fish

Fish is in Alaska's DNA. As a member of the Senate Commerce Committee, which oversees America's fisheries, I never tire of telling my colleagues that Alaska is the "superpower of seafood." Over 66 percent of all seafood harvested in America—commercial, sport, subsistence—comes from our state.

I also never tire of educating federal officials on these issues. Whenever a new Secretary of Commerce is appointed, I tell them, "Congratulations on becoming the new Secretary of Commerce. I know you'll want to focus on the U.S. economy and international trade. All good. But when you get to your office and see your budget and org chart, you'll realize a lot of your job involves fish. And that's where me and my office come in!" I'm proud to say that I have the best fish staff in Congress. And we need great staff because we have a lot of challenges in this critically important area of our state.

In 2014, when Vladimir Putin invaded the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine, the United States put sanctions on Russia. Russia then retaliated, banning nearly all American seafood into the lucrative Russian market. Our fishermen were losing tens of millions of dollars because of this unfair and unlevel trading relationship. I've been working almost ten years to get this fixed! It literally took a major war to finally make progress.

After the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, we worked hard to get a provision that prohibited all Russian seafood coming into the United States into President Biden's sanctions package against Russia. However, Russian and Chinese officials quickly exploited a loophole that gave them continued access to the U.S. market by sending Russian seafood through China to avoid U.S. sanctions. This unfair arrangement drove down seafood prices globally and hurt hard-working Alaska fishermen. It also supported Vladimir Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine and bolstered human rights abuses in China.

My team and I worked relentlessly with our fishermen over the past year and a half to get this dictatorship loophole closed. Finally, in late December, this advocacy paid off: The U.S. Treasury finally closed this loophole, delivering a blow to the authoritarian regimes in Russia and China and significantly helping Alaska's fishing communities. This goes into effect today!

D. Trollers

Last year, I emphasized to you all another fish challenge that, if we worked together on—like we did on Willow—we could overcome. And we did.

A Seattle-based environmental group known for its extreme positions filed a manipulative lawsuit trying to shut down Alaska's small-scale, hook-and-line troll salmon fishery. This would have significantly harmed hundreds of small, family run fishing businesses in Southeast, with an economic impact of close to \$100 million.

We did not let that happen! You all passed a resolution to protect the Southeast trollers. My team and I led another amicus brief to the court. So far, we have prevailed and it looks like we will continue to do so, allowing our Southeast trollers to breathe a sigh of relief.

E. King Salmon

Still, another big fish challenge: We've seen shocking and unprecedented declines among some species of Alaska salmon, especially kings, while, in other parts of our state, runs have been at historic highs. Last year, I told you that my Alaska Salmon Research

Task Force Act had just been signed into law—the brainchild of my wife, Julie. And, now, the Task Force is up and running, with an added working group focused on salmon returns in the Yukon and Kuskokwim.

This Task Force brings together the best minds at the federal, state, and tribal levels, with the goal of better understanding the causes of these precipitous salmon declines and to identify the research gaps. I'm hoping that the research that comes out of this Task Force can be used to return our state to abundant and strong healthy salmon runs.

F. Farm Bill

Finally, as it relates to fish, I believe it's time to go on offense. Thousands of Alaska fishermen are going through a very difficult time right now. Our fishermen are the farmers of the sea. Farmers get loans. Why shouldn't our fishermen? Farmers get crop insurance. Why shouldn't our fishermen get insurance? Farmers get federal relief when foreign markets are closed. Farmers get help when extreme weather hurts their harvest. Why shouldn't our fishermen?

The Farm Bill that we're currently negotiating presents an opportunity to de-risk our fishing operations in ways the U.S. government does for farmers. My legislation, called the National Seafood Supply Act, begins to accomplish this. It's a big idea. But there are many naysayers who are against my bill, even though it will dramatically benefit our hard-working fishermen and their communities. Stay tuned.

G. Challenge: Energy

Let me conclude with our need to work together on two additional challenges: energy and fentanyl. In October, the Alaska Energy Authority was awarded more than \$200 million—with a state match—from the bipartisan infrastructure bill to significantly expand renewables, modernize our state's electrical grid, and help lower the cost of energy for thousands of Alaskans. The delegation strongly supported this comprehensive AEA grant from the Department of Energy.

But we still have serious Southcentral energy supply challenges. The good news is that we have been here before. Some Alaskans might remember how, in 2011, we were facing a looming natural gas shortage. It was so bad, we were practicing brownouts in Anchorage. Some dooms-dayers said that the only solution was to import natural gas from Canada. But we didn't allow that to happen. We united together as a state—the legislative and executive branches, with the private sector—and came up with a bold plan to incentivize Cook Inlet exploration and production. And it worked! I was the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources at this time and was very involved with this successful strategy.

We need all options on the table for Alaska energy to address this challenge, including more gas from Cook Inlet, which I believe exists. Most recently, I've been working hard to minimize federal risks and maximize international opportunities for a natural gas pipeline from the North Slope to tidewater that would provide affordable, abundant energy for Alaska for generations—and transform our state.

I've briefed many of you about the significant progress we've made in advancing this project, including the three trips in the last two years I've made to Japan and Korea. There is big Asian demand there for Alaska LNG. I've heard it from the highest levels of government there myself. Because of the roughly \$30 billion in loan guarantees that we secured, the Alaska LNG project is the only natural gas project backed by the full faith and credit of the United States—and the only U.S. West Coast LNG project that has all of the necessary federal permits and approvals, including the FERC export license.

The challenge is putting the pieces together. This is an extraordinarily complex endeavor, I know, and there are other good ideas being discussed, all of which we need to consider. The cynics and naysayers both in and out of our state are telling us it's an impossible task. Don't believe them. You have my commitment to work with every single one of you to help us address these big energy challenges for our state.

H. Fentanyl: One Pill Can Kill Campaign

One of the most frustrating things I've witnessed in my time in the Senate involves the Biden administration's policies that have resulted in an open southern border. I've seen first-hand along the Rio Grande River this national security and humanitarian catastrophe. This past December, over 300,000 illegals entered the U.S.—an all-time monthly record. By the end of this year, it is estimated that over 10 million illegals will have crossed into America during this administration's four-year term, shattering previous records. When I speak out against this catastrophic and damaging open border policy, I sometimes get asked—why do I care, given that Alaska is 4,000 miles from the southern border?

Here's my answer: Our state suffered the largest increase in fentanyl overdose deaths in 2021, with a 75 percent spike from the previous year. Last year, the Louisville Courier Journal wrote extensively on this topic. I urge every one of you to read this article. It starts like this: "The infamous Sinaloa Cartel, once headed by notorious kingpin 'El Chapo,' and others in Mexico are targeting Alaska with drug pipelines, driving up the overdose death toll." It goes on: "Deadly fentanyl and other illegal narcotics continue saturating the urban centers of Anchorage, as well as Juneau to the east and Fairbanks to the north. From those main hubs, shipments are dispersed far and wide, stretching from tiny islands off the southern coast all the way up to the Arctic region."

Ladies and Gentlemen: This is happening, in our state. We all need to work together to educate our fellow Alaskans—particularly our young people—about this deadly drug. The DEA says that 7 out of every 10 pills seized contain a lethal dose of fentanyl.

I applaud the work that Governor Dunleavy and Rep. Craig Johnson are doing to increase penalties for those who bring this deadly substance to our state. Education is also important. Our kids need to know that a pinprick of this substance can kill them. One Pill Can Kill. And my team and I will be working with the governor's office, the Attorney General, the Department of Public Safety, and the DEA on a "One Pill Can Kill" educational campaign. I hope that you and other Alaskans can join us in this campaign to save Alaskans' lives.

VI. Conclusion.

Time and again, our state has battled the skeptics. We have done what others said couldn't be done. It's not easy to build a state—particularly with our harsh weather, our vast expanse, and our distance from the Lower 48. But through hard work, strong leaders, and great citizens, we have prevailed time and again. And I am convinced that we will continue to do so. We have to, for our children and the next generation.

On February 6, 1956, minutes before our state's constitution was officially ratified, the following resolution—a message to the state's children—was read on the convention floor: "We bequeath to you a state that will be glorious in her achievements," the resolution said. "...a land where you can worship and pray, a country where ambitions will be bright and real, an Alaska that will grow with you as you grow... you are our future. We ask you to take tomorrow and dream... We are certain that in capturing today for you, you can plan and build."

Throughout the years, our state has made great achievements—despite great obstacles and negative naysayers. We are the big state that could. Working together, with a sense of Alaskan optimism, we will continue to achieve where others think we will fail. We will continue to work tirelessly to realize the dreams of our children, and their children, so that they can plan, and they can build.

Thank you.

Please report corrections to the Senate Secretary's office.