

**SENATE AND HOUSE
JOINT JOURNAL SUPPLEMENT**

January 28, 2025

Tuesday

No. 2

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State of the State Address

by

The Honorable Mike Dunleavy

Governor

State of Alaska

Before a Joint Session

of the

First Session of the

Thirty-Fourth Alaska State Legislature

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January 28, 2025

Juneau, Alaska

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The following was submitted for publication:

Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Dahlstrom, Senate President Stevens, Speaker Edgmon, and members of the 34th Legislature. I want to thank you for the invitation to speak to you tonight, and to our fellow Alaskans as well.

Before I continue, I want to recognize my wife and the mother of our three daughters Maggie, Catherine, and Ceil, First Lady Rose Dunleavy. Thank you, Rose, for being such a great mom and the rock of our household.

I'd also like to recognize the members of my cabinet in attendance tonight. Could you please stand and be recognized? Thank you for everything you're doing for the great State of Alaska.

To the members of the Legislature: Welcome and thank you for being here to represent your fellow Alaskans. As I look around this room I see many familiar faces, and many new ones. Whether this is your first session, or your fifth, what we all have in common is that we were sent here by the people of Alaska. We asked the people of Alaska for their trust, and for the honor and the responsibility to serve their interests here in Juneau. We can't ever forget that. As I begin my seventh year in office, I know I haven't. We were voted in by the people, but we know that the halls here are filled with special interests.

As I've always said, there's nothing wrong with special interests, but they don't speak on behalf of the people. We govern for those who get up every day and go to work and take care of their families, but don't necessarily have a lobbyist here in Juneau. We govern for the parent sending their kids off to school every day expecting them to receive the best education possible. We govern for the elders who may rely on their communities to help fill their freezers or to gather firewood to keep them warm during the winter. Whatever policies we make down here, the ultimate question should not be how we impact the special interests. They're never going to be happy, no matter what. The question we must always ask ourselves is how our actions will impact our constituents.

For my time in this office, it's the fourth quarter. For some of you, it's the first. For others, well, let's just say it's overtime. Governors don't get to play overtime under our Constitution. For me, the clock is always ticking. And I have no intention of running out the clock and taking a knee with the time I have left. We organize into teams down here in Juneau, and naturally there's going to be competition. You even have a scoreboard over there that keeps track when you push that red or green button on your desk. But we can't lose

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sight of the fact that in the end, we're all on the same team. We're on the team represented by the blue sky and the gold of these eight stars. We're on Alaska's team. That's who we're playing for.

I'm optimistic about this final quarter, and that's because I can look back at the past six years and see what we've accomplished by working together, as a team of Alaskans, to fulfill the destiny embedded in our State motto of "North to the Future," and I look forward to working with each and every one of you once again to get our initiatives for Alaskans across the finish line.

So, how is our state doing? What is the state of our state? Because of our work, accomplished together in bipartisan fashion, the State of the State is heading in the right direction. I would like to share some statistics that support this.

Our population has not only stabilized but has grown from about 734,000 in 2020 to more than 741,000 in 2024. A combination of immigration plus births has helped raise our population to the highest level since 2017. Our jobs are growing as well. Last year we added more than 6,000 new jobs, and overall jobs are nearly 4,000 greater than in 2019 before we were hit by the pandemic. Alaska is projected to add another 5,300 jobs in 2025, which would break the all-time high reached in 2015. Our jobs grew at a faster rate than the rest of the U.S. for each of the past two years.

Our wage growth was 6.4 percent while the rest of the country averaged 5.5 percent. The unemployment rate averaged 4.6 percent for 2024, well under the 10-year average of 5.9 percent for Alaska.

Our investments are growing as well. Assets managed by the Department of Revenue grew by nearly \$600 million in 2024, the best performance in 10 years. The Alaska Permanent Fund has grown by nearly \$16 billion since 2020 and is projected to reach the \$100 billion milestone by 2031. The POMV draw on the Permanent Fund is scheduled for \$3.65 billion in 2025 and projected at nearly \$3.8 billion for 2026. Our state investment bank, known as AIDEA, grew its net income to a record high of \$66 million in 2024, and has paid the State nearly half a billion dollars in dividends since 1997. AIDEA is also leading our efforts for the biggest resource developments in Alaska's history to unlock our oil, our gas, and our minerals including critical assets such as antimony and cobalt.

Our airport in Anchorage, the second-busiest cargo hub in the U.S. and fourth busiest in the world, is also growing. Five new cargo carriers moved in last year, and cargo activity grew by nearly 5 percent in that time. In addition,

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Delta and United announced plans to expand their operations in Alaska, and WestJet will begin its first ever service between Anchorage and Calgary this summer.

Activity on the North Slope is growing as well. First oil from Phase 1 of the Santos-Repsol Pikka Project is scheduled for 2026 with peak production estimated at 80,000 barrels per day. Pikka Phase 2 is projected to produce another 80,000 barrels per day at peak production. The Willow project by ConocoPhillips is anticipated to produce at peak production 180,000 barrels per day starting in 2029. The overall investment is anticipated to be over \$8 billion dollars with approximately 2,500 jobs created during development of Willow.

In addition, the Nuna project, also by ConocoPhillips, is now in production with 20,000 barrels anticipated per day. In 2024, Hilcorp also invested around \$870 million into oil and gas in Alaska. In 2024, Hilcorp produced 39 million barrels of oil on the North Slope, a 2 percent increase compared to 2023. In 2025, they plan to spend over \$900 million on energy projects in Alaska and plan on producing 41 million barrels of oil on the North Slope, a 5 percent increase compared to 2024. There is additional work on the Slope that will likely add thousands more barrels of oil in the very near future.

There's also positive news on the mining front as well. The Red Dog mine received approval from the federal government for its permit to build a road to an additional find that will extend the life of the mine. The Graphite One deposit, north of Nome, the largest in North America, continues to move ahead with support from a Defense Department grant. Construction could begin by 2027 and the mine could be producing as early as 2029.

Our Alaska Energy Authority, known as AEA, is also moving ahead with a number of important energy projects that will reduce our reliance on gas. The Dixon Diversion project will be a \$342 million expansion of Bradley Lake, the largest hydroelectric facility in Alaska. It will benefit 550,000 Alaskans, or 75 percent of the State's population. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2027. During construction, estimates are for 3,250 jobs with a total economic output estimated at \$584 million dollars. Another energy project is the Sterling to Quartz Creek Transmission Upgrade. It will help to modernize the Railbelt's aging transmission system which is over 50 years old. This line carries 88 percent of the energy generated by Bradley Lake. Construction began this year and should be completed by 2028. During construction, an estimated 460 jobs will be created with a total economic output of \$96 million.

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One other project is the High-Voltage Direct Current line, or HVDC, submarine transmission line from Nikiski-to-Beluga. Construction should start in 2027. Again, during construction it's estimated that 1,470 jobs should result in a total economic output of \$332 million. That's 5,180 jobs in the next six years and over \$1 billion in combined economic activity from these projects. This is great news for Alaska.

The Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas Project is also progressing. With all federal permits in hand, rights of way defined, sellers and buyers of gas in negotiations, and builders, operators, and financiers discussing partnerships, the decades old dream of cheap, plentiful natural gas may soon be a reality with signed agreements on the near horizon. This project, supported by the Biden administration and championed by the Trump administration, will be the largest LNG project in the world. Thousands of great paying jobs, reduced energy costs, long term energy stability, and industry moving to Alaska will be the result. As you can see, there's quite a lot happening in the great state of Alaska.

Through our work together, we've also made Alaska a safer place by coming together to reform our criminal justice system and put the rights of victims ahead of criminals. We've rebuilt our ranks of State Troopers and Village Public Safety Officers. When I took office there were just 382 budgeted State and Wildlife Troopers positions. Today, we are at 411 positions, and I'm requesting an additional five Troopers in my budget to reopen the shuttered Trapper Creek post.

We have 77 VPSOs serving rural Alaskans as first responders, the highest number we've had since 2014. My proposed budget asks for funding for five more positions. We've added four dedicated MMIP investigators and three additional child crime investigators to solve cases in rural Alaska. We cleared the sex assault test kit backlog and introduced legislation to create a tracking system for these kits to ensure such a backlog never happens again. We're also collecting long overdue DNA. Like the processing of sexual assault kits, this evidence helps bring justice to victims and accountability for criminals.

The stats don't lie. Our overall crime rate is down 37 percent since 2018. Property crime is down 42 percent. Violent crime is down 17 percent. Felony sexual assault is down 27 percent. There is still much more work to be done to ensure every Alaskan, no matter who they are or where they live, can feel safe in their homes and communities. At the same time, we should be proud of the progress that we've made.

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I want to thank the members of the Legislature past and present who have supported this administration's requests for more resources to protect Alaskans, and to deliver justice to those who would do them harm. I'll be asking for your support again this year: for more State Troopers, more VPSOs, more special investigators, and more response resources to double down on making Alaska safer. Together, we'll make sure that the only people who don't feel safe in Alaska are the criminals.

But as I mentioned, we still have much more to do. We're confronting a crisis of fentanyl being trafficked into our state that must be stopped. Last year, with your help, we passed enhanced sentencing up to second degree murder for those who deal in this poison that results in the death of Alaskans. When I announced this legislation in October 2022, it was a threat. Tonight, it's a promise. To those who are still dealing, and poisoning Alaskans: Justice is coming. So, I'd strongly suggest leaving our great state now, or you're going to be staying here a very long time courtesy of the Department of Corrections.

The cartels aren't going to stop trying, though, and for the drugs that make it through, our State Troopers will continue to lead the interdiction efforts. In 2018, our Troopers seized about 78 pounds of illegal drugs. Last year, their efforts led to the seizure of more than 572 pounds of drugs. More than two dozen Troopers across the state, in rural and urban areas, have doubled down on this effort over the past three years. They've seized tens of millions of doses of potentially fatal drugs as soon as they touched down in Alaska, before they ever reached our streets.

These deadly drugs often come in small packages through our mail system. Last year, the U.S. Postal Service named the Alaska State Troopers as a National Exemplary Partner as the most productive law enforcement agency in the country, at stopping the flow of illicit drugs into our communities. I'd like to take this moment to congratulate our Troopers for this honor and their efforts.

A leader in these efforts is Sergeant Jared Noll of the Alaska State Troopers, who is based in the Mat-Su with the Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit. He joined the Troopers in 2011 on patrol before transferring to the Drug Enforcement Unit in 2018, and he was promoted to Sergeant in 2021. Sergeant Noll helped lead a multi-agency effort last year over several months tracking dealers selling drugs and fentanyl poison in our Mat-Su and Kenai Peninsula communities. Not only did it lead to the indictments of four individuals involved in a multi-state trafficking operation, but they also seized over 75 pounds of drugs including heroin, meth, cocaine, and more than 35 pounds of fentanyl. That's nearly 9 million fatal doses of fentanyl, or enough

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to kill every Alaskan more than 10 times over. There's no doubt that this work by Sergeant Noll and his fellow law enforcement officers saved countless lives, and we're so grateful for all they're doing to protect Alaskans. Sergeant Noll, could you please stand and be recognized on behalf of your efforts to keep Alaskans safe, and the efforts of your brothers and sisters in law enforcement at all levels? Thank you, again, Sergeant Noll, and your brothers and sisters in law enforcement, for everything you're doing for the great state of Alaska. Public safety has been the top priority for this administration from Day One, and thanks to bipartisan support, as you've seen we've made real, measurable progress.

I also ran for this office with a priority to improve our education outcomes, and I'm pleased to report progress on this front as well. Nearly three years ago, in a bipartisan vote of 41 out of 60 members of the Legislature, we passed the Alaska READS Act to ensure that every student -- every student -- will be proficient in reading by third grade. Now that the READS Act is being implemented, what are the results showing us? The early data is very encouraging. In the last academic year, according to assessments used by school districts across the nation, the percentage of Alaskan students who met early literacy benchmarks grew from 41 percent to 57 percent. Among kindergarten students, proficiency rates rose from 24 percent at the beginning of the year to 60 percent by the end of the year. According to national data released last June, Alaska students outpaced the national growth in kindergarten, first, and second grades. I need to repeat that: since the READS Act passed, the data shows we are outpacing the nation for reading growth at these grade levels. This is astounding, but it shows how well kids can do when we all focus on reading.

Our classroom instructors deserve our thanks for this progress, and I'd like to take a moment for us to thank all the teachers out there who are working so hard to make sure Alaska has the best educational outcomes in the nation. In fall 2023, research from Harvard University concluded that our charter schools are also the best performing charter schools in the nation. I'll say it again: our charter schools are the best in the nation. But despite the evidence that parents want choice in public education, despite the evidence that students can succeed in more than one type of environment, there are some very loud voices that show up down here like the swallows returning to Capistrano with megaphones and T-shirts telling you that the only thing that matters is money. We even have people that will take the State to the Supreme Court to try to limit student options and force them into a one-size-fits-all model.

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This is incredible. Thankfully, those people lost. But it shouldn't've had to come to that. We shouldn't be fighting over great performing charter schools that parents and educators wish to expand. Parents and students shouldn't be put on a waiting list to attend the school of their choice. And yet, every year, there are students on waiting lists trying to get into the school of their choice. Why? Parents know what's best for their kids, and the environment they'll do best in. You know what's best for your kids, and what environment where they'll best succeed. We should be working to expand these opportunities. We shouldn't be wasting precious time and resources here in Juneau, or in court, fighting with people who want to limit options for parents and students. Shouldn't we be able to agree that what's important is supporting approaches to achieve better outcomes, under the umbrella of public schools, and ensuring needed funding is in place to support all school programs?

These schooling options, charter schools and public homeschooling are public schools. They're not private schools like some would want you to believe. I'll talk to anyone about more money if the conversation is also about different approaches and better outcomes, and that's what my education initiatives will include this year. Our job is not to favor one over another and be led by special interests, but to serve ALL students by giving them as many choices as possible.

Like education and public safety, I also ran for this office to ensure the State lives within its means. Over six budgets, this administration has held operating spending growth to just 8 percent since 2019, and the budget I've introduced for the next fiscal year is consistent with this trend while providing key investments in education, public safety, energy, and affordability in housing and childcare. Holding spending in check has helped us put money into savings for times when oil prices are low, pay down debt, and improve our credit ratings, all while providing the essential services Alaskans expect. But money doesn't grow on trees. If we want more money for programs, we need more resource plays to fund them. That's the deal we made to become a State. That's how we overcame opponents to statehood who didn't believe we could support ourselves by taxing such a small population.

We can support ourselves by creating more wealth from our resources, not pick-pocketing cash from each other's pockets. Our Permanent Fund, and our Dividend paid as our people's rightful share of our resource wealth, were built through the foresight of those who came before us and are the envy of our fellow states. The Fund has largely grown through the savings from our oil production, and it will grow further with deposits from future carbon markets once they are set up, as well as the Alaska LNG Project, and our mineral riches, as well as new projects on the North Slope.

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I also ran for this office to attract investment to Alaska, and under this administration our business environment has remained stable and predictable. As a result, we've attracted billions of dollars of investments on the North Slope from our well-known operators and new entrants to the state. Forecasts are not written in stone, and decline is not inevitable. Decline is a choice, and I reject that choice. Most Alaskans reject that choice. Ten years ago, in the 2014 Revenue forecast, our North Slope production was predicted to be just 314,000 barrels per day by 2024. If that prediction had come true, if we'd allowed it to come true, we'd be preparing to dismantle one of the greatest engineering marvels the world has ever seen in the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Instead, our production last year was nearly 150,000 barrels per day greater than the 2014 forecast, and we are poised for additional growth in the coming years.

As mentioned earlier, future production at the Nuna field, and Willow and Pikka are only the beginning of a North Slope renaissance that will sustain our pipeline operations and stabilize our revenue for decades to come. At peak production, Willow, Pikka, and Nuna will total about 280,000 barrels per day. That's more than half of our current volume in the pipeline. In a few years, because of this investment on the Slope, we can be reporting overall production of over 650,000 barrels per day. That doesn't even account for the restoration of our opportunities at ANWR and full potential at NPR-A under the Trump administration. AIDEA's leases that are being restored by the Trump administration are well situated to recover large amounts of some 3 to 4 billion barrels of oil estimated to lie in the Northwest corner of the 10-02 area. The Department of Interior estimates the state could see as much as an additional \$2 billion per year in revenue if ANWR is fully developed.

We can develop our way to prosperity if we're given the opportunity and we take advantage of it, just the way our future was envisioned at Statehood. This administration has done its part to hang up the Open for Business sign on Alaska, and as Governor, I couldn't be more excited about the next four years under the most pro-Alaska President we've ever had in President Donald J. Trump! President Trump singled out Alaska, out of all the 50 states, for its own series of Executive Orders. This is unprecedented and demonstrates his view of the importance of Alaska as a solution to America's energy, manufacturing, and national security issues.

We have a second chance at opportunities that looked like they slipped away four years ago: ANWR, Ambler Mining District, NPR-A, the Tongass, the King Cove Road, more than 5 million acres of overdue state land transfers, and so much more. The last administration took more than five dozen executive orders and actions against Alaska, and it's no exaggeration that we

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were sanctioned more heavily than countries like Iran and Venezuela for the past four years by our own federal government. Now, under the Trump administration, we have hope. Now, under the Trump administration, we have hope for billions of dollars in opportunities, thousands of jobs, and increased economic and national security for Alaskans, our fellow Americans, and our allies around the world.

All of it is suddenly possible once again. All we have to do is embrace these opportunities and make sure we have policies in place that let the world know we are Open for Business, not just on federal lands, but state lands as well. Nobody can compete with our natural resources of every kind including timber, minerals, oil, gas, land, water, and renewables. But in order to take advantage of our God-given resources, we must compete on policy with other states and sovereigns. We have the resources. We have the location on the globe, but we need the policies to give us the edge as an investment destination for private capital.

To this end, my administration will be introducing legislation to ensure we have the most competitive licensing process that attracts professional talent and allows them to get to work quickly. To this end, the executive branch will be continually reviewing our permitting and regulatory processes to find efficiencies and remove barriers to investment and opportunities. We'll also be introducing a comprehensive education bill to ensure our schools have the best outcomes in the nation. We need the best trained workforce for the opportunities coming our way, and my proposed budget contains multiple initiatives to build this workforce for the future, and this will become a reality with your support.

We need to get more Alaska lands into Alaskan hands, and we'll be re-introducing legislation from last session to give every Alaskan a chance to live the Alaska dream and get a piece of the Last Frontier. We need to manage our forests sustainably rather than watch our wealth go up in smoke every summer, and we'll be introducing legislation to this end to develop our vast untapped timber resources. These are policy decisions, and they're in our control whether they're my ideas or your ideas. I don't really care whose idea it is as long as it's moving Alaska forward and making us the most competitive place to live, raise a family, and do business. We need to craft these policies, together, not policies that are "hers" or "his," but are policies for all of Alaska.

Alaska is not an experiment anymore, like we were in 1959 when we joined the Union under a Statehood Compact unlike any other. We are required to develop our resources and settle our lands for the benefit of our people. We

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are not a fantasy or a folly, as the Alaska Purchase was called by critics of Secretary of State William Seward in 1867. Alaska has always been a place where risk is rewarded, and where dreams turn into reality. Alaska has always been a place for those who think big and have a vision for what we can be.

For those of us here in this room, we owe it to those who've come before us, for those we serve now, and for generations to come, to think big, to be bold, and to enact policies in order for us to compete.

We've proven our ability to provide energy, food, and minerals to our nation and the world. We've proven our strategic value as a true frontline fort on a dangerous frontier that's regularly being tested by Russian jets and Chinese ships and is at risk from North Korean missiles. We're an Arctic nation because of Alaska, and we stand ready to become the Panama of the North as shipping increases through the Bering Strait and the Northwest Passage. That's our reality.

At the same time Alaska allows the United States to project strength across the globe, we do have vulnerabilities to address here at home. We aren't connected to an electric grid. We're thousands of miles away from markets and dependent on a long and fragile supply chain for our food. Again, that's the reality, and we can't propose policies to shore up our weaknesses unless we recognize these deficits. The good news is we have everything we need to take care of ourselves and then some here in the great state of Alaska. I see these opportunities everywhere. I see opportunities to make Alaska safer. I see opportunities to increase choice in education and improve outcomes. I see opportunities to make Alaska a more affordable place to live whether it's housing, childcare, food, or energy. I see the opportunities to monetize carbon through carbon capture and nature-based offsets creating new revenues for the State of Alaska. I see opportunities that are second to none for energy of all kinds.

Oil, natural gas, coal, wind, solar, hydro, emerging sources in geothermal, tidal, hydrogen, and advanced nuclear. One energy opportunity should not, and does not, diminish another. Things change quickly, and the energy transition as it was known just a few years ago is gone. The near future will not be about replacing one source of energy with another.

Driven by advancements in supercomputing and artificial intelligence, the future of energy is now additionality from resources of all types. Energy demand is skyrocketing around the globe, and Alaska has everything we need to power and heat our homes and businesses -- affordably, reliably, and sustainably -- while also exporting our tremendous resources to the world.

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We'll address the short-term shortage of natural gas for Southcentral, and we recognize that some of those solutions may be painful and certainly won't be popular, but they will be temporary. The last thing we should do is adopt short-sighted solutions to short-term problems that are far more costly in the long run. In the long run, the Alaska LNG Project will be a game-changer just like the Trans-Alaska Pipeline was, and still is. I don't know about you, but I can't imagine an Alaska without TAPS. I shudder to think what our State would have become without it.

Alaska LNG provides opportunities for low-cost energy, exports, data centers, our idled fertilizer plant, and the thousands of jobs that go with it, that will cement our founders' vision of Alaska as a resource giant. We also can't forget that 20 percent of the income from the Alaska LNG Project will be devoted to rural energy projects as well. That's potentially hundreds of millions of dollars per year. This provision in the LNG project will transform the energy landscape in rural Alaska tremendously.

Imagine a surety of energy at prices comparable to the Railbelt. This is what this project can bring. These are the opportunities we have to keep in mind when we're debating policies and resource development. We have a destiny to fulfill, and it's up to us to have the vision and the determination to see it through.

We need the Alaska LNG Project; we need the Dixon Diversion; we need coal and carbon capture; we need wind, solar, geothermal; and we need to be able to transmit that power wherever and whenever it's needed. We reformed our Railbelt transmission system last year to get rid of market-distorting wheeling charges, and we're taking another step this year to create the financing tools necessary to modernize our grid. Working together, we'll build a transmission system that can serve Alaskans and industries from around the world who are looking North at the same opportunities I see. I see opportunities to feed ourselves and grow our economy by taking advantage of our clean and abundant farmlands and fresh water. We've taken action to enhance our food security over the past several years since the pandemic threatened our long and fragile supply lines.

Last week, I took another major step by introducing an Executive Order to establish the Alaska Department of Agriculture. The "Alaska Grown" label shouldn't just be a logo on our sweatshirts. It should be on our tables, in our schools, in our stores, and in our restaurants, here and around the world.

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By creating this Department, we will provide this industry with what it needs to succeed. We will ensure that agriculture remains a priority for future administrations and Legislatures as well. I believe this action will grow an industry that has lacked attention for far too long. With your support, we'll stand up this new Department over the next two years to position it for success.

As I've traveled around the country, and the world, during my administration, I'm often struck by how little people know about Alaska, and what they think they know is very often wrong. They may think we can't grow food because it's too cold. They may think we can't have solar power because it's too dark. They may think we can't have natural resource development because our environment is too fragile. They may simply think we just can't compete. I love proving these assumptions wrong.

This past year, Alaskans were inspired by the performances of young folks who competed and achieved at the highest levels of their sport and gave us all something to cheer for. We saw Alissa Pili's journey from state basketball champion at Anchorage Dimond High, to a collegiate All-American at Utah, and then the Number 8 overall pick in the WNBA Draft by the Minnesota Lynx. At the Summer Olympics we saw Kristen Faulkner from Homer come out of nowhere to win two golds in cycling in Paris. At those same Olympics, Sagen Maddalena joined the list of UA-Fairbanks alums to win medals in the shooting sports with a silver in riflery. In rugby, which wasn't even an Olympic sport until 2016, Chugiak High graduate Alev Kelter helped lead the USA to the bronze medal in a thrilling finish. Kelter isn't just a three-time Olympian, she's also the national team's all-time leading scorer and we're proud she still calls Alaska home. Whether they were born and raised here or honed their skills here, these young women are a part of Alaska's story, and Alaska is a part of theirs. They truly represent the Alaska spirit. When they had an opportunity, they seized it. When they were given a chance, they showed they can lead the world.

Alev Kelter is here to represent this Alaskan spirit, so let's take a moment to recognize her achievements, and for every Alaskan story like hers, that inspires us all to see what's possible. Alev, could you please stand and be recognized? Thank you again, and congratulations for your hard work. Young folks like Alev are the reason I'm an optimist about Alaska. I'm an optimist because I believe in the people of Alaska, and the great things we can accomplish together.

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The people are the reason I've stayed here for more than 40 years. The people are the reason I chose to serve. I'd like to believe that's the same reason all of us are here to serve as well. There's no doubt we're going to have our differences over the next few months. But I believe we're going to find more areas where we agree than we don't. That's because we're Alaskans. I believe that our wins are going to be Alaska's wins. When we put our minds together to create good policy, great things will happen. I'm ready to get to work, and to work together. I know you are, too. Thank you again for the invitation to speak with you and our fellow Alaskans tonight.

God bless Alaska, and God bless the United States of America.

Please report corrections to the Senate Secretary's office.