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THE HONORABLE DON YOUNG

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Address to the Joint Session of the  
Seventeenth Alaska State Legislature  
Second Session

The following speech was submitted by the Juneau Office of Congressman Don Young for publication in the joint journal supplement:

Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. President . . . Members of the Alaska State Legislature . . . fellow legislators . . . I thank you for inviting me to speak with you today.

Your reaction to my address last year was so rewarding . . . I now look forward to this time as a highlight.

This week, you will hear from the entire Alaska Congressional Delegation . . . I hope we will give you a good idea of our goals for Alaska and our nation as a whole.

When I came to Alaska 33 years ago, it was not the lure of the Last Frontier that drew me . . . it was the SPIRIT of Alaska that existed here . . . the feeling that there was nothing . . . Alaskans could not do.

The Alaska Highway had been completed some 17 years earlier . . . a massive project that played a key role in opening Alaska to the Lower 48 . . . launching a period of tremendous growth for our state.

It is fitting that this year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the highway. Again . . . The Spirit of Alaska made it possible.

From the earliest days of our history, the spirit of Alaska has been a driving force. Look at the challenges to survival that our Native people have overcome . . . We have all marvelled at the frontier spirit of the sourdoughs . . . Haven't we asked . . . How did they get all that heavy equipment up here? . . . We admire the spirit of our fishermen and their families . . . braving winter storms to make a living.

With this Alaskan spirit we created a healthy and growing tourism industry . . . We have maintained a vital timber industry . . . We opened the Red Dog mine and other mining projects . . . we built new roads . . . new airports.

We developed one of the finest military structures in the world . . . with military bases in almost every region of our state.

We completed the Parks Highway . . . built the DEW line warning systems . . . the Trans-Alaska Pipeline . . . a project of which I am very proud . . . We Americanized our fishing industry by passing the 200-mile limit.

With our spirit we have built our state and protected our environment. We STILL live in the most majestic state in the nation and the most scenic land in the world!

For the upcoming Congressional session, I have five major goals to benefit the people of Alaska.

The cornerstone of my program is to continue my work with our two Senators and the State of Alaska. Our highest priority must be the opening of ANWR . . . there is NO question that this legislation is a jobs bill.

In Alaska, it will play a tremendous role in our economic future. Nationally, it will be good for our workers. We will face major hurdles, mainly the entrenched liberal leadership in Congress and the professional environmentalists.

These people have made stopping the ANWR bill their number one priority. The American public is not being told that this legislation will create thousands of new jobs . . . not only in Alaska . . . but in every region of our nation!

I say this today without malice . . . or criticism to those of you who are members of the Democratic Party. I believe we are all Alaskans first and the majority of us support Alaska's effort to open ANWR.

As our dependence on foreign oil continues to rise to new levels, our vulnerability to severe economic shock increases.

When this shock arrives . . . as it will . . . the voters of America will say to those who voted to depend on foreign oil and against developing domestic oil . . . **WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH!**

I ask you today as Alaskans . . . Let us work together . . . we are gaining momentum . . . The Bush Administration has made some positive moves toward Alaska's position on the revenue-sharing provisions. Last year, the federal budget claimed 100 percent of the ANWR revenues. This year . . . after a lot of hard work . . . the Administration says it will now accept a 50-50 split.

While this is not the 90-10 split we are entitled to . . . it shows that the Bush Administration is moving in the right direction.

A second major goal is to make sure that a fair share of the fish from Alaska . . . STAYS in Alaska. Our fishing industry is the largest private employer in Alaska. I am leading the charge in the House of Representatives to get White House support . . . to adopt regulations that give onshore processors fair allocations of groundfish harvest . . . a move which would be extremely beneficial to our thousands of fishermen . . . fish processing workers . . . and support service workers.

Again . . . we return to jobs . . . this proposal will keep people working in our towns and our villages. The Alaskan spirit must rise when the federal government is wrong . . . we must fight for our rights.

My third goal . . . and I hope you will join me . . . is to support Governor Hickel in his efforts to challenge the federal government in court on violations of our Statehood Compact . . . Our rights as a State have been repeatedly violated by the federal government and these lawsuits are a correct course of action.

In Congress, our delegation is the first line of defense. Here in the legislature . . . you can pass state laws that can help win the fight . . . and the Governor can and should use the courts whenever it makes sense.

This Alaska first philosophy . . . the fighting against long odds is what the spirit of Alaska is all about.

I am working on several major programs to address the needs of the people of Alaska on the federal level. The passage of a good comprehensive health bill is one of them.

I will not support the election year show bills that are being paraded about as the answer.

I want legislation that will truly address the health concerns and the problems of access and affordability.

At this time, I feel that the best legislation is H.R. 1565 . . . more commonly known as the Health Equity and Access Reform Act . . . which is designed to address the following issues:

- Improving and expanding access to health care for the self-employed, uninsured, the poor and unemployed;
- Controlling health care costs;
- Reforming the small group health insurance market to make available a low cost, basic policy;
- Expanding community and migrant health centers . . . to provide quality service to millions of Americans on a sliding scale fee basis in both urban and rural areas;
- And extending equal tax incentives to the self-employed for up to 100 percent of the cost.

By facing these important issues, I believe we will take great strides in solving many of the existing problems.

I am aware that you all know a great deal about about this issue and will be considering major comprehensive reforms for Alaskans.

Much of what you do here will be applicable to the national legislation, and your work here will help me in Washington.

My fifth goal is an economic package for our state . . . an immediate implementation of funding for the national transportation bill. This is once more a jobs bill.

A strong transportation system is vital in Alaska to attract business and investors to ensure our economic growth. This \$151 billion program is designed to create jobs and projects throughout our nation. Through my work with Senators Stevens and Murkowski, we secured funding for Alaska that is higher . . . per capita . . . than a majority of the other 49 states.

I am also supporting investment tax incentives . . . a reduction in investment taxation to stimulate economic growth in every state in the Union.

It raises the amount that small and medium-sized businesses can expend on certain assets . . . machinery and materials necessary for start-up and growth.

We must move forward through the use of tax incentives to help businesses create more jobs.

The President's Jobs package may also be another appropriate vehicle for ANWR legislation.

This package will create thousands of new American jobs and reduce unemployment through numerous incentives.

I have introduced a bill with over 175 co-sponsors from both parties seeking major revisions in the national wetlands policy. My bill will free up millions of acres of land for new economic development and continue to protect true wetlands.

It is almost as important as ANWR for our state's economic future.

I am introducing legislation to impose an environmental tax on all imports from nations failing to meet U.S. environmental standards imposed on U.S. products. Why must we handicap our American businesses with environmental regulations and allow foreign nations to violate them . . . and sell their products in America . . . often at a much lower cost?

These are some of the priorities I have for this Congressional session.

I ask for your support in a true statement of the Alaskan spirit and unity that has built our great state.

I commend you men and women for serving in the legislature. Public Service is an honorable institution . . . it is also a sacrifice . . . the stress and strain imposed upon our families is a hardship.

It is time for all Alaskans to revive the "can-do" spirit . . . get involved . . . run for office . . . participate in the process . . . vote.

We have a democracy! Our form of government can only be made better through hard work and the involvement of our people.

I quite frankly am dismayed with the constant attacks on politicians. I say to those who criticize the loudest . . . bring forth a solution or get out of the way.

Alaska and the Alaskan spirit are on the rise.

Thank you and God Bless You.