

AFN 2014 VOTING GUIDE



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ANA HOFFMAN AND TARA SWEENEY
AFN CO-CHAIRS

JULIE KITKA
AFN PRESIDENT



Dear AFN Delegate:

On behalf of the AFN Board of Directors and the members of the Media & Elections Committee, we are proud to present to you the 2014 AFN Voting Guide.

Our goal in issuing this guide is to ensure that Alaska Native voters are well-informed on Election Day, November 4. We trust that an informed voter will make the right decisions in the voting booth for her/his family, community and state. In the following pages you will read U.S. Senate and Alaska Governor candidates' answers to a comprehensive questionnaire that is focused on Native and rural issues.

We gratefully acknowledge the work of the AFN Media & Election Committee and AFN staff for their work on querying the candidates and publishing this voting guide.

We urge you to get out and vote and help others get to the voting booth. Remember: Your Voice Is Your Vote!

Ana Hoffman and Tara Sweeney
AFN Co-Chairs



ABOUT AFN

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska. Its membership includes 151 federally-recognized tribes, 134 village corporations, 12 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. AFN is governed by a 38-member board, which is elected by its membership at the annual convention held each October.

Our Mission

Alaska Native people began as members of full sovereign nations and continue to enjoy a unique political relationship with the federal government. We will survive and prosper as distinct ethnic and cultural groups and will participate fully as members of the overall society. The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic, and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community.

AFN's major goals are to:

- Advocate for Alaska Native people, their governments and organizations, with respect to federal, state and local laws;
- Foster and encourage preservation of Alaska Native cultures;
- Promote understanding of the economic needs of Alaska Natives and encourage development consistent with those needs;
- Protect, retain and enhance all lands owned by Alaska Natives and their organizations;
- Promote and advocate for programs and systems which instill pride and confidence in individual Alaska Natives.



VOTING GUIDE PRODUCED AND EDITED BY JEFF SILVERMAN
AFN DEPUTY DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS

VOTING FACT SHEET

HISTORY OF VOTING DISCRIMINATION IN ALASKA

Although the Tlingit and Haida had been attempting to cast ballots for years in Southeast Alaska, American Indians and Alaska Natives were only declared citizens, and therefore eligible to vote, in 1924. However, right after that in 1925, the Alaska Legislature enacted a literacy test that required potential voters to demonstrate that they could read and write English before they were allowed to vote. This was later added to the Alaska Constitution and remained the law until 1970.

THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

The Voting Rights Act (VRA) was passed with broad bipartisan support in 1965 to prevent discrimination in voting. The 1965 law prevented racial and ethnic discrimination in voting, and the 1975 amendments also prevented discrimination against people who speak Native languages. In general, the VRA means Alaska Natives must receive the same access to information and voting as non-Natives and that Native language speakers must receive the same information as those who speak fluent English.

The Recent Lawsuit, *Toyukak v. Treadwell*

In 2013, two elders named Mike Toyukak (Manokotak) and Fred Augustine (Alakanuk), and four tribal councils (Togiak, Hooper Bay, Arctic Village and Venetie) sued the State of Alaska, Division of Elections asking that all voting information that is available in English be available in Yup'ik and Gwich'in as well. On September 3, they won their case and the Federal Court ordered the State to provide all the same information that is in English in Yup'ik and Gwich'in. For the first time, in this upcoming election, the elders in your community who do not read or speak English fluently should be able to get all the information about the candidates and ballot measures in Yup'ik and Gwich'in.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A VOTER

- You have the right to a translation of any election materials before an election, such as information about what will be on the ballot, who supports and opposes the ballot measures and what the candidates believe. Your village has an election worker who answers all these questions up to three weeks before an election. That person's name should be posted at the school, store, post office and tribal council office.
- On Election Day, you have a right to a translation of the actual ballot. If you speak Yup'ik or Inupiaq, there will be a sample ballot in those languages at your polling place that can be read to you. Ask the worker in the polling place for help.
- You have a right to vote early (up to two weeks before the election) in most villages. Ask your local election worker.
- You have the right to vote absentee or by fax. Ask your local election worker for these forms, or visit the Division of Elections' website to get them: www.elections.alaska.gov
- If you cannot go to the polling place because of age or illness, you have a right to have someone else bring the ballot to you. Have a friend or family member go to the polling place and ask for a "special needs ballot."
- You have the right to bring anyone (except your employer) with you to the polling place to help you vote. That person can go into the voting booth with you. You do not have to vote by yourself.
- You have the right to ask the poll worker to help you vote.
- You have the right to vote even if your name is not on the list at the polling place. If this happens to you, ask the pollworker for a "provisional ballot."

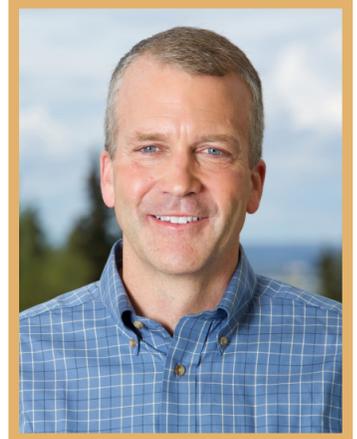


For the first time, in this upcoming election, the elders in your community who do not read or speak English fluently should be able to get all the information about the candidates and ballot measures in Yup'ik and Gwich'in.



**MARK
BEGICH**

**DAN
SULLIVAN**



COMPREHENSIVE

Bethel resident Ana asks: In regards to the many issues facing the Alaska Native community, what will be your administration's first priority?

BEGICH: My highest priority for Alaska's Native community as a U.S. senator is providing the federal tools and resources for Alaska Natives to prosper. This means access to development opportunities, from 8(a) contracting to Arctic resource development which creates jobs. This means getting rid of No Child Left Behind's one-size-fits-all approach that doesn't work in Alaska and providing health care for our veterans closer to home. This means local empowerment to deal with community concerns such as suicide, domestic violence and alcohol problems. This means proper management of fish and game resources to ensure access to traditional and customary foods. This means access and funding for basic infrastructure and services, from broadband to good schools to health care. As your senator the past six years, I have fought to deliver these essential tools and resources for Alaska's Native people.

SULLIVAN: With respect to the Alaska Native community there are several areas where I will focus. First, the high cost of energy in rural Alaska must be addressed. Far too many rural residents are paying some of the highest prices for gasoline and home heating fuel. I want to work with the Departments of Energy and Agriculture to develop partnerships that spark innovation and investment in rural Alaska to reduce energy costs. Second, the limited housing options in our villages are causing younger Alaskans to move. It is important for the fabric of our communities that we have affordable housing options in our villages. Third, public safety impacts the health of our communities and the ability of our children to do well in school. We need affordable energy, additional housing and strong public safety for healthy communities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The development of sustainable tribal economies that adequately balance Alaska's rural subsistence economy is key to improving the quality of life for Alaska Native peoples.

Dillingham resident Ralph asks: How will you encourage economic development in Dillingham and help to secure the basic infrastructure needed to develop, attract, and sustain profitable business ventures here?

BEGICH: There's no magic answer to this challenge in Dillingham or any other rural community or region. Government must promote economic development by providing basic infrastructure: transportation links including roads, ports and airports; high-speed broadband; and affordable energy. I've brought all of these to rural Alaska through the Recovery Act – which my opponents continue to oppose - and other federal funding. In fact, we've brought more money to Alaska in my six years in the Senate than in the previous six when congressional earmarks were a regular practice - \$35.4 billion. A special challenge to economic development in our rural communities is the need for capital. I've brought a long line of top federal officials, including virtually all cabinet members, to Alaska so they see our challenges first-hand and are more open to addressing them.

SULLIVAN: My whole career has been about getting results and building new economic opportunities for the people I serve. For instance, I led efforts to establish a historic deepening of the relationship of cooperation between the State of Alaska and the North Slope Borough. This led to increased infrastructure development and job opportunities in the region. I plan to take the same drive to get big things done for Alaska to the U.S. Senate. I believe in developing public-private partnerships where the government can serve as a resource for assessing the needs of our communities and the bridge to the private sector. It is time to create new models that achieve results for the Alaska Native community. For example, we need to reform the Denali Commission to help coordinate public-private investments. It is clear that past practices are not working, and the time for reform is now.

AFN CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE – U.S. SENATE

How are you specifically going to change the tax and investment climate in villages like Dillingham to expand private sector opportunities?

BEGICH: The Dillingham region is rich with fisheries and visitor industry opportunities which I believe we can take better advantage of. For example, well financed CDQ groups in the region can help create new opportunities through financial assistance to tribes, to create processing plants. As chairman of the committee, overseeing reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, I work to promote these opportunities every day. High-end fishing lodges in the region should provide more jobs to local residents. The challenge is converting these seasonal opportunities into year-round jobs. On taxes, I cosponsored a bill to protect Alaska native tribes from unfair tax practices that just passed the Senate. Another effort I am pushing would create a tribal set-aside of up to 10 percent of New Market Tax Credits to ensure that economic development can occur through tax incentives. I am actively pushing this as part of the Senate's tax reform debate this fall.

SULLIVAN: Changing the tax structure in rural Alaska, including places like Dillingham, lies at the state level. However, I will aggressively pursue federal policies that can improve the economic climate in rural Alaska, such as creating federal tax incentives for infrastructure investment to make rural Alaska more attractive. Further, working with organizations like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Native American Enterprise Initiative to pursue responsible federal tax policy is yet another way to leverage the public-private partnerships discussed in the previous answer. Finally, we need to reduce federal red tape that stifles and delays infrastructure projects throughout rural Alaska, like the King Cove road.

What does a successful economy in places like Dillingham look like to you?

BEGICH: A successful economy in places like Dillingham is established when the local community is making decisions about how to invest in building a solid foundation for future generations. It means jobs are secure, resources are balanced by sustainable development and preservation, children are learning the skills they need to contribute in a meaningful way to the economic foundation of the community, and the local leadership is invested in long-term planning to ensure energy security and an affordable cost of living. A continuing challenge for rural communities we must address is having the money to pay for hunting and fishing gear, gasoline and equipment.

SULLIVAN: A successful economy in rural Alaska is one that offers affordable energy, available affordable housing, strong public safety, a thriving education system, employment opportunities and fiscal policies that attract investment. In a cash economy, these are important components that help rural Alaskans continue to practice their traditional subsistence activities. We need to pursue federal policies that incorporate all of these elements, instead of the misguided job-killing policies of the last six years.

What is your plan to ensure resource development in rural Alaska equitably benefits rural Alaskans?

BEGICH: Most of Alaska's wealth comes from natural resources located in rural Alaska, but rural Alaskans receive too little of the benefits. I favor local hire preferences including government contracting opportunities so local residents can get local jobs. Through the 8(a) program, Alaska Native corporations successfully hire thousands of Alaska Natives and send benefits to rural villages. My Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) revenue sharing bill would ensure that resources derived from off shore oil development would reach villages across the state, including regional and village corporations, local governments and tribes. This is the only proposed version of a revenue sharing bill for Alaska that includes tribes.

SULLIVAN: Senator Stevens was an aggressive advocate for revenue sharing for development projects in Alaska, and I will pursue those types of benefits with the same tenacity. Further thinking outside the box, I would work to pursue some type of infrastructure bank from the federal share of resource development projects in Alaska to benefit our communities and build the necessary infrastructure to sustain our communities.

What is your plan to increase affordable broadband/internet connectivity to advance economic development in rural Alaska villages like Dillingham?

BEGICH: Rural Alaskans pay too much for high-speed Internet, which is vital for local economic development, education and medical care. Just this year, I worked with the FCC to send \$49 million through the Tribal Mobility Fund to upgrade wireless broadband in rural Alaska and I delivered another \$117 million for rural broadband expansion in the 2009 Stimulus Bill which my opponent continues to oppose. I've brought most FCC commissioners and two chairmen to Alaska to see first-hand our challenges and high cost of doing business, especially in rural Alaska. I'll continue to press Alaska's communications companies to offer high-speed Internet at affordable prices.

SULLIVAN: Connectivity in rural Alaska is critical to sustainable economic development. The information highway is virtual and an efficient way for our residents to do business. Having access to broadband/internet connectivity is the link needed to open up markets for Alaskans. We need to bring dollars home by having the Department of Treasury work with Alaskan BIDCOs to deploy the necessary capital through new market tax credits to build this infrastructure. These dollars have stopped flowing to Alaska, and it is unfortunate that Mark Begich has not used his position on the Commerce Committee to ensure their return.

AFN CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE – U.S. SENATE

Do you support revenue-sharing for off-shore oil, specifically ensuring rural communities closest to the sites also enjoy that revenue-sharing, and that such revenue goes directly to these communities rather than as a state pass-through?

BEGICH: Yes. Shortly before I was elected to the Senate, Louisiana secured revenue sharing for its state but Alaska missed out. So I have introduced my own revenue sharing legislation – S.199 – which provides 37.5 percent of federal offshore revenues to Alaska. My bill is unique in providing a majority of this revenue to local governments, Alaska Native village and regional corporations, and tribal governments. This would mean hundreds of millions of dollars to local communities to help offset the impacts of oil and gas development. My bill also requires any oil produced in federal waters of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas to be brought ashore by pipeline, which is safer than tanker transport and will keep oil flowing down the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

SULLIVAN: I believe that has the potential to be a fair arrangement, particularly for regions most impacted by resource development. I would also look at other models of how such local, community, State, and Federal revenue sharing has worked.

Anchorage resident Gerad asks: Considering the exceptional economic benefit the 8(a) program has provided for Alaska Native Corporations and their shareholders and the subsequent attacks on ANCs participating in the program, in the form of Section 811 of the NDAA FY10, that in effect discriminate against tribes and ANCs participating in the program by holding them to a higher standard for direct award contracts than any other potential recipients of direct award contracts at a fixed amount, what will you do to eliminate the negative impact caused by this legislation?

BEGICH: I have been very actively fighting back against attacks on the Native 8(a) program including the significant changes to the 8(a) program that were initiated in 2009, because I know the enormous benefits this SBA program provides to Alaska Native corporations and to Alaska Natives. Misguided senators from both political parties have attacked the participation of Alaska Natives, so I've stood up against both Democrat Clare McCaskill and Republican John McCain. I am actively seeking two amendments on 811 in the Defense Appropriations bill and the 2015 National Defense Reauthorization Bill. I'll continue to fight against any unfair attack on Alaska Native participation in the 8(a) program.

SULLIVAN: I will build a coalition in the Senate that vigorously defends the rights of Alaska Native Corporations, Tribal Enterprises and Native Hawaiian Organizations to participate in the 8(a) program. The attacks on this program by Democrat Senators Claire McCaskill and Ed Markey must be stopped. I am open to discussing how to champion the program to expand contracting opportunities for ANCs, TEs, and NHOs. Section 811 of the NDAA must be repealed, and through my leadership we can accomplish this together. Mark Begich's party continues to attack Native contracting, yet he has not effectively leveraged his high-ranking position in party leadership to repeal this damaging legislation. As a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Marines Corps Reserve, I understand the importance of having capable contractors providing service to the Department of Defense; I value that and will not stop fighting to protect and expand the program.

ENERGY

Rural Alaska's villages are among the most economically depressed communities in the nation. The financial situations in our rural villages are worsening with the highest per capita fuel costs in the U.S. For example, the fuel demands of 176 of the largest communities in rural Alaska with a combined population of 74,500 residents will spend over \$5 billion over the next 20 years for diesel fuel alone. Many of our rural communities are not connected to any regional power grids to offer economies of scale for electrical loads and are dependent on fossil fuels for heating of residential homes and commercial properties, transportation, and electricity generation. In winter months, these costs are exacerbated by the cold, harsh weather. Residents spend almost half their monthly income on energy/heating costs.

Leroy of Rampart would like to know what measures you will take to lower the cost of energy in rural Alaska and thereby reduce the cost of living in our villages. What would be the first measure you would take?

BEGICH: Energy costs in rural Alaska are higher than anywhere else in the country. This hinders rural economic development and is a huge burden for individual rural Alaskans. So I've worked with both Democrats and Republicans to increase investment in renewable sources and make more efficient use of existing energy sources. Wind power is being generated in villages and hubs across Alaska which is proving to be a part of the energy solution. I'm also fighting to get Alaska its fair share of revenues from responsible oil and gas development, including revenue sharing for Alaska Native regional and village corporations and tribes.

SULLIVAN: The high cost of energy in rural Alaska must be addressed. Far too many rural residents are paying some of the highest prices for gasoline and home heating fuel. I want to work with the Departments of Energy and Agriculture to develop partnerships that spark innovation and investment in rural Alaska to reduce energy costs.

AFN CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE – U.S. SENATE

The Denali Commission is a federal, state and tribal partnership created by Congress to address the needs of Alaska's distressed communities. The Commission works to enhance the economies of our communities by building and maintaining infrastructure projects in Alaska. The Commission also works with the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) on energy projects and grants in rural Alaska.

Julie of Anchorage asks: Are you committed to ensuring the reauthorization and funding of the Denali Commission?

BEGICH: Yes. I have fought off efforts by members of Congress of both political parties to de-fund or eliminate the Denali Commission and have led the way to reform and reauthorize it. I proudly nominated to President Obama the first Alaska Native federal co-chair of the commission and recently had Joel Neimeyer reappointed. With the days of congressional earmarks long past, Joel is achieving significant progress, including assisting more than 100 villages with fuel, including improved bulk fuel management, reliable power generation to more than 60 communities and 120 state-of-the-art health clinics constructed to improve rural health care. Two soon-to-be-released GAO reports will suggest additional steps for Denali Commission improvements.

SULLIVAN: Yes, I will work to reauthorize and reform the role of the Denali Commission. Through the vision and leadership of Senator Stevens, the Denali Commission worked to improve infrastructure in rural Alaska. Under Mark Begich's leadership the program is not being protected and is the target of Congressional attacks.

VOTING RIGHTS

Native peoples were among the very last to achieve universal suffrage and continue to experience unequal treatment under the law and overtly discriminatory policies that prevent full access to the ballot box. It is only through working together that all underrepresented people will have the same rights others take for granted. Together with National Congress of American Indians and Native American Rights Fund, AFN supports the introduction of legislative language to replace the voting rights protections stripped from the Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court.

April of Anchorage asks: The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is currently consulting with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes about whether to propose legislation that will require tribal input on polling site locations, among other considerations. Will you support this legislation, if enacted, and work with the DOJ in its implementation?

BEGICH: Yes. This year I introduced S. 2399, the Native VRA bill, and appreciate the support of AFN. I am also working with DOJ as it too is working on legislation to ensure the Native Vote is protected. I am prepared to introduce additional legislation once full consultation between DOJ and Alaska tribal officials is complete. We must do everything possible to encourage voting in every village and town by making sure Alaskans have equal access to the polls, no matter where they live.

SULLIVAN: I look forward to reviewing the results of the consultation.

Would you support a bipartisan commission for the modernization of the State of Alaska Division of Elections?

BEGICH: Yes. The State of Alaska just lost a lawsuit in the *Toyukuk v. Treadwell* case because the State failed to adequately assist Alaska Natives in voting. I strongly supported the suit and am pleased it was successful. But threats to voting in Alaska are not over. In my annual address to the Alaska State Legislature earlier this year, I took them to task for pushing an unnecessary voter ID law which would particularly restrict voting by Native and rural Alaskans, because many village residents simply don't have the IDs required under this discriminatory proposal.

SULLIVAN: Yes.

Will you advocate for passage of Voting Rights Act amendments that specifically protect Alaska Native and other minority voters?

BEGICH: Yes – I already have. Shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court gutted almost 50 years of voting rights progress in the Shelby County case, I introduced my Native Voting Right Act of 2014. Written with the assistance of Native voting rights advocates, this bill makes sure all Alaskans, including First Peoples, have an equal

SULLIVAN: I believe no American should be disenfranchised from voting. Voting is a right that many Alaska Native men and women have fought to, and died for, protecting. In 2010 the Democratic Party originally sued to keep Division of Election poll workers from providing a list of write-in candidates to voters if they requested

AFN CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE – U.S. SENATE

opportunity to make their voices heard at the ballot box. I also am a strong supporter of Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy's Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 (S. 1945), which seeks to restore key voting protections. As attorney general, however, Dan Sullivan supported the effort to take away voting rights.

assistance. As your Attorney General, I took this case all the way to the Alaska Supreme Court to defend a voter's right to receive assistance. AFN joined the State of Alaska, and in that election- Alaska Native voters prevailed at the polls. If elected, I look forward to examining the amendments and legislation.

In Toyukuk v. Treadwell, the voting rights lawsuit in federal district court, Judge Sharon Gleason recently ruled that the state DOE failed in its duty to assist Native speakers with limited skills in English. Explain why you agree or disagree with Judge Gleason's ruling.

BEGICH: I strongly support Judge Gleason's ruling and believe the Parnell-Treadwell administration has failed miserably in its obligation to encourage widespread voting in Alaska. I said this of Judge Gleason's ruling: "Making the voting process more difficult because of poorly translated ballot language or burdensome identification requirements is nothing more than thinly veiled discrimination. Judge Gleason's ruling is a win in the effort to ensure all Alaskans can exercise their right to vote."

SULLIVAN: Yes, I agree that it is the State of Alaska's responsibility to ensure that election materials must be translated into Alaska Native languages, and that Alaska Native voters should be assisted at the polls in their own languages. As your Attorney General, I settled the *Nick, et al. v. Bethel, et al.* litigation, because I wanted to ensure that Alaska Native voters had the broadest opportunity to participate in elections. I agreed with Judge Gleason's ruling because voting is a fundamental right. Whether you speak Yupik, Athabascan, Haida or Inupiaq, voting information must be adequately translated.

FISHERIES

AFN's North Pacific Fisheries Management Council priorities include: 1) The Council further reduces the By-Catch of Chinook to 15,000 and a lower number if possible; and 2) Add a voting member to the NPFMC under 16 USC § 1852 (b). This member will be nominated directly by Alaska's tribes and appointed by the Secretary of Commerce.

Maude of Anchorage asks: Do you support NPTMC reduction of the Chinook by-catch? Yes or No.

BEGICH: Yes. The Council and industry have made great strides in reducing Chinook by-catch in the Bering Sea since 2007 to well below 20,000 Chinook in most years. I realize even that is unacceptable to village residents when subsistence fisheries are being closed. More needs to be done and I urge continued work toward minimizing by-catch. I also believe more scientific research needs to be done on Yukon and Kuskokwim Chinook stocks – including by the AYKSSI – because the by-catch numbers alone doesn't account for the severity of the current low abundance of Chinook.

SULLIVAN: The Council is actively working to reduce by-catch. I will defer to the Council process.

Do you support adding a tribally-nominated voting member to the NPFMC? Yes or No.

BEGICH: Yes, I support appointment of a tribal representative nominated as a voting member to the North Pacific Council. Currently that includes seats open to candidates put forward by the governor and I will support a tribal representative that is nominated. As I have noted previously, adding new members to the Council would require changes to the Magnuson Stevens Act which are highly contentious. A tribal representative could be seated next year if a qualified person, willing to take on the work of the Council, is nominated through the existing Council process.

SULLIVAN: The current appointment process provides opportunity for diverse representation of fishery users and Alaska fishing community interests on the Council. Alaska's majority on the Council (6 of the 11 Council members must be from Alaska) is critical to advancing issues such as by-catch management and minimizing impacts of federal marine fisheries on state waters and inland fishery users. I support additional Alaskan seats, but would be concerned about opening up the North Pacific Fishery Management Council composition if it puts the Alaska majority at risk, by other states such as Washington, from attacking it.

Myron of Bethel asks: Would you support the establishment of the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission for the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers? Why or why not?

BEGICH: I support tribal residents of the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers having a strong, informed and unified voice when advocating before the fish board and Council. I support capacity-building efforts as part of the response to the declared 2012 fish disaster. I'd prefer to work to build this within existing authorities such as AVCP and TCC and make the State working groups more effective before considering a new group.

SULLIVAN: No, not all the villages on each of the river systems support the establishment of a Commission. I encourage communication and collaboration towards meeting many of the proposal objectives.

Most fishery commissions are tied to treaty obligations which do not exist in Alaska. It's further complicated by the lack of consensus even among Alaska Native residents on the Yukon. The Yukon and Kuskokwim fisheries need a strong voice but I'd rather work to strengthen existing authorities than add a new one, but I will continue to listen to ideas that give more local control.

SUBSISTENCE

Protection of Native hunting, fishing and gathering rights is a part of federal law throughout the United States. Nowhere is it more critical than in Alaska. What we call subsistence is not a relic from the past. It continues to be the foundation of Alaska Native society and culture. A vast majority of Alaska's 120,000 Native people (nearly 20% of the population of Alaska) still participate in hunting, fishing and gathering for food during the year. Subsistence resources remain central to the nutrition, economies and traditions of Alaska's Native villages. The ability of Alaska Natives to continue to pursue their subsistence activities is closely linked to their food security.

Nick from Copper Center asks the following: Do you believe subsistence fishing and hunting should be an allocation priority? If so, what steps will you take to ensure that those who depend on subsistence will have priority access to resources during times of shortage?

BEGICH: Yes. The current law governing the subsistence preference as defined in ANILCA is not working. The State of Alaska has refused to grant a preference to rural/Alaska Native residents, which is a real problem. I will continue to educate federal administrators such as the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to ensure federal involvement in subsistence management for hunting and fishing that includes a rural preference. My opponent Dan Sullivan, however, appealed the Katie John case and tried to take away the rights of Alaska Natives.

SULLIVAN: Management regimes for both the State of Alaska and the Federal Government support subsistence as the highest use priority. I

Do you believe the present dual (federal-state) management system for subsistence hunting and fishing should remain or do you think it should be changed? Why or why not? What solution(s) would you pursue in office?

BEGICH: The current management system has been broken for many decades and needs to change. I support more local control and stronger co-management practices once an agreement can be reached by Federal, State and Alaska Native groups.

SULLIVAN: The current system is not working for Alaskans, and I support streamlining the management of our fish and game. We are over-regulated and it is time to reduce our regulatory burden.

Would you support a federal/tribal/state co-management system on tribal lands? Why or why not?

BEGICH: Yes. I support more local control including co-management of resources on tribal lands.

SULLIVAN: Currently, most tribes in Alaska do not have a land base.

After some 20 years of litigation, the Katie John subsistence rights case was concluded when the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the state's appeal. In your opinion, why or why not was this the correct ruling?

BEGICH: The Supreme Court got this ruling right. Katie John was a heroic leader who bravely stood up for what she believed in. Thanks to her, current and future generations of Alaska Natives have defined subsistence fishing rights. There is a clear difference between myself and Dan Sullivan on this issue. Sullivan appealed the Katie John case and tried to take away the rights of Alaska Natives.

SULLIVAN: The litigation has provided clarity on the scope of Federal government jurisdiction on the waterways of Alaska. However, the issue of subsistence management of game resources continues.

Rosita of Juneau asks: Do you support a rural subsistence priority on all Alaskan lands and waters? Do you support a Native preference for subsistence?

BEGICH: I have been looking to the Alaska Native community to determine what type of preference will work best for all. I have heard much discussion about a Native preference, a rural-plus preference, and will work to support the recommendations for policy changes set forth by AFN.

SULLIVAN: This is a conversation that must continue to take place across Alaska, with Alaska Natives and other Alaskans. All options should be placed on the table and all parties should come together in good faith to find a solution. I am open to working with the Native community further on this issue.

AFN CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE – U.S. SENATE

Would you support an Alaska constitutional amendment that would enable a rural preference for fishing and hunting resources and a return to state management of all Alaska lands?

BEGICH: Yes. I was a strong supporter of the Alaska constitutional amendment when that was being considered by the voters of Alaska. I worked behind the scenes with my colleagues on the Anchorage Assembly to put a subsistence amendment initiative on the Anchorage municipal ballot – and it passed overwhelmingly. For me to support a return to state management, including enforcement and protection of a rural preference, we need a governor that supports such a practice in order for it to work.

SULLIVAN: This is a conversation that must continue to take place across Alaska, with Alaska Natives and other Alaskans. All options should be placed on the table, including a constitutional amendment. Further, we must bring all parties together in good faith to find a solution. I am open to working with the Native community further on this issue.

Will you commit to seeking appropriation in amounts necessary for federal agencies to fulfill the mandates of Title VIII of ANILCA, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act and other laws that impact the ability of Alaska Natives to continue to harvest the resources of the land and sea that have sustained them for thousands of years?

BEGICH: Yes. I have fought for adequate appropriations to meet the needs of co-management authorities. I've also fought hard to exempt subsistence users from having to buy duck stamps. I have sponsored legislation to do this and am hopeful this provision will pass the Congress in November.

SULLIVAN: Yes. Federal agencies charged with fulfilling congressional intent through Title VIII of ANILCA, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the MMPA must be adequately supported by the Obama Administration and Congress.

Will you commit to implementing co-management under the provisions of the marine mammal protection act?

BEGICH: Yes. I'm a strong supporter of marine mammal co-management. The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission is a great example of how well this can work and I have pushed the Department of Interior to adopt a similar model in managing polar bears. I've supported the work of the Indigenous People's Council for Marine Mammals' (PCoMM) on sea otters and support funding for other Alaska Native co-management organizations.

SULLIVAN: Alaska currently has successful marine mammal commissions. I do agree that they must be adequately funded by the Administration and Congress.

SAFE FAMILIES, PUBLIC SAFETY

Protecting women, children, and vulnerable citizens from violence and abuse is a key ingredient in ensuring rural Alaskans are safe in their home communities. Following release of the Indian Law & Order Commission's "Roadmap for Making Native America Safer," new opportunities are available for community members, leaders, and lawmakers to work together to increase public safety in Alaska. An entire chapter of the Report is dedicated to reforming justice in Alaska, which receives special attention due to its vastness, Nativeness, and continued exemption from national policy changes.

Gerard of Anchorage would like to know what your proposed course of action is to address these findings?

BEGICH: In 2013, President Obama signed into law the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). However, VAWA contained a provision (Section 910) that excluded Alaska Native tribes from the tribal jurisdiction provisions. I do not support such exclusions and will continue to work for the advancement of my bill, the Safe Families and Villages Act and other measures, such as more funding for local law enforcement and tribal courts. While both the Governor and Dan Sullivan, as attorney general, have disagreed with my position, I will continue to work to protect our communities.

SULLIVAN: Our tribal courts and rural law enforcement must have adequate funding for training, capacity development and equipment. The findings demand further cooperation between the State and the tribes; and as we know, cooperation is key to successful law enforcement. As your Attorney General, I strongly advocated to the Departments of Interior and Justice for increased funding for VPSO training and tribally-funded police officers in Alaska. I am open to working with AFN to participate in a roundtable to further discuss these issues, find alignment in areas we agree, and work towards positive solutions for our villages.

In 2013, President Obama signed into law the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). However, VAWA contained a provision (Section 910) that excluded Alaska Native tribes from the tribal jurisdiction provisions.

Gerard asks: Will you work with your fellow Congressional Delegation members to repeal section 910 and protect Alaska Native women?

BEGICH: Yes, and I am actively doing so.

SULLIVAN: I support the Violence Against Women Act of 2013. Unlike politicians who only talk about the issue, as your Attorney General I spearheaded the Choose Respect campaign, which focused on ending

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the epidemic of domestic violence across our state; it has been my highest priority. Regarding Section 910, tribal protection orders are already being honored by the State of Alaska. I will consult with communities on amendments to ensure that the Violence Against Women Act protects Alaska Native women to the fullest extent.

The Safe Families and Villages Act of 2013 (S. 1474) would create a demonstration project by which participating tribes would have clearly confirmed authority to enforce tribal laws regarding alcohol and substance abuse, and domestic violence within their village.

Gerad would like to know if you support amendment and passage of S. 1474?

BEGICH: Yes. I first introduced this bill in 2009, and again in 2013 as a new member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. A large factor in my decision to give up the Budget Committee for the Indian Affairs Committee was to have leverage to see this bill passed by the Senate. In September 2014, S. 1474 was given a hearing, mark-up with the AFN and tribal amendments, and considered on the Senate floor in the form of a “hotline.” Every single Democratic senator supposed the bill but it was held up on the Republican side.

SULLIVAN: As someone who led the charge of dramatically increasing law enforcement in our rural communities, I am committed to, and have a strong record on, the issue of public safety in our Native communities. I have achieved results by doubling law enforcement in rural Alaska. Before I support this bill, I will work with the U.S. Justice Department and AFN to more deeply and fully understand the concept of tribal court criminal jurisdiction over non-members.

SELF-GOVERNANCE

Tribal nations are America’s first governments and our role in the American family of governments is written into the Constitution, codified in treaties, executive orders, acts of Congress, and court decisions. Like state governments and foreign governments, Indian tribes have the inherent power to govern their people and their lands.

Jerry of Tanacross asks: What is your assessment of the state of the relationship between my tribe and Congress and the federal government?

BEGICH: I am a strong supporter of tribal self-governance, and understand how the government to government relationship has evolved and grown over time. I think the current relationship is one of mutual respect with ample room for more tribal empowerment.

SULLIVAN: Tribal relations can certainly improve. The Obama Administration fails to act in the best interests of tribes. For example, in the 2012 *Ramah* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the federal government must pay the full contract support costs associated with the Indian Tribal Self Determination and Education Assistance Act Agreements. The Obama Administration was compelled to consult with tribes and pay the full amount of the contract support costs. This only took place after Republican leadership on the Senate and House Appropriations Committees directed the President to take action and correct this funding imbalance.

Jerry further asks: How do you plan to use your role to improve government-to-government relationships between my tribe and the federal government?

BEGICH: Tribes are the closest form of government to the people and I’ve always believed have the best feel for how local solutions work. As an active member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, I constantly remind federal agency officials, like the acting director of the Indian Health Service and the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, to work to honor and strengthen that relationship.

SULLIVAN: I will ensure that when it comes to federal agencies making decisions about issues impacting tribal governments that they do so with consultation and cooperation, rather than just dictating to our tribes.

EDUCATION

Alaska’s public education system is failing Alaska Native children. Alaska Natives constitute 19.5% of the state’s population, and 23% of its school population. Alaska Natives students are dropping out of school at a rate of 7.8%, which is twice the rate of other students. Native youth are graduating from high school at a rate of only 47%. In the past several years, regions with Native enrollments greater than 80% often had the lowest proportion of schools meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and the percentage of Native students passing the reading, writing and math benchmark exams is below all other students statewide.

These statistics compel us to seek a new approach to education for Alaska Natives. Part of the reason for poor academic achievement among Native students is the lack of culture-based programs.

Aurora of Saxman asks: Will you protect Headstart programs and funding?

BEGICH: Yes. I've always been a strong supporter of Headstart and quality early childhood education programs. Research proves that kids who get a strong start on their education are more likely to succeed – and less likely to get into trouble later. Earlier this year, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I voted for the bill that pumped \$1 billion back into Headstart. I am also a proud co-sponsor of the Ready to Learn Act, which will make grants to support quality early childhood efforts, including Headstart. And I have introduced my own bills to boost such programs: loan forgiveness to recruit and retain good pre-K teachers, and tax credits for parents to help them afford quality child care. How to improve the Alaska Native graduation rate is a complex question, but part of the answer is getting our kids into good early childhood programs like Headstart.

SULLIVAN: Headstart programs play a critical part in helping our children get the foundation they need for a lifetime of success.

What can Congress do to improve Alaska's K-12 and higher education?

BEGICH: We need more local solutions and more Alaska Native teachers in our classrooms. I oppose the top-down requirements of No Child Left Behind. When it comes time to reauthorize the big education bill next year, I'll be fighting for more local control so teachers can use their on-the-ground knowledge to help students succeed. Alaska Native/American Indian reviewers must be involved in that process. Also, we must fully fund initiatives that provide internet broadband to remote locations. I just visited an amazing school in Kiana where students were building traditional baskets by hand and on 3-D printers in their fully-wired classroom. We need more Alaska Native teachers and more Native languages taught in our schools. Native organizations could fund scholarships for the UA Master's in teaching program, where mid-career professionals can earn teaching degrees. Finally, I support bills to help students and families get lower interest rates on their student loans.

SULLIVAN: Engaged parents are the key to any child's successful education, Native or non-Native. There are schools where Alaska Native students are doing well. Examples include the Alaska Native Charter School in Anchorage, Kodiak town and village schools, and the 5-star Chignik Lagoon and Igiugig schools. In districts like the North Slope Borough, Native children are experiencing great growth. Congress needs empower these schools and help others to replicate their success. I will work to empower Alaska's tribes, parents and communities to drive change for their children by making sure they are at the table where decisions are made, and have the data, funding and tools they need to help children succeed.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Alaska Natives face many barriers to adequate health care and wellness. Terrible statistics demand the attention of our communities and our leaders in all governments, including the nation's highest number of deaths by suicide, and high rates of obesity and diabetes.

Tim of Kotzebue asks: How will you address the high rates of obesity and diabetes?

BEGICH: The best solution are healthy activities and better diets, including more traditional foods. I have a bill to set aside highway funding for trails, bike paths or other community efforts. I support funding for the Special Diabetes Program that targets treatment and prevention of Type 2 diabetes in Alaska Native/American Indian populations, including permanent authorization. My bill to allow traditional subsistence foods in schools, nursing homes and other places became law when Congressman Young and I got it passed in the farm bill.

SULLIVAN: I will support the Special Diabetes Program for American Indians and Alaska Natives because it helps tribes address the high rates of diabetes in their communities through prevention and treatment. Eating more traditional foods, and less processed foods is the key to reducing obesity and diabetes in rural Alaska.

The lead-in to your question mentions suicide, an ongoing tragedy in Alaska. I don't have all the answers, but one of my bills helped get funding to train teachers and others to recognize and address signs of mental health issues and violence. Another of my bills would fund brain research to give us more scientific information about the reasons people commit suicide.

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The Affordable Care Act (ACA) included permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which brought the entire IHS system, including tribal and urban program and clinics, into the new system of health care delivery. Successful and seamless implementation of the ACA will increase health care access for American Indians and Alaska Natives, support the IHS system of care, broaden services provided in rural communities, and strengthen an integral network of providers.

Tim further asks: Do you support the Affordable Care Act, yes or no? If so, how will you improve it?

BEGICH: Yes, I voted for the ACA. At the time, I said it was far from a perfect bill and would need some fixes. I still believe that. One example is the law's confusing and conflicting definition of "American Indian" for determining eligibility for benefits, or exemptions from some ACA requirements. I have introduced a bill to fix this, and have pushed the administration repeatedly on this issue. In September, the administration issued important guidance to clarify the definition. Your question mentions the ACA's permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. To me, this was one of the most important elements of the health reform law. Not only did I support it, I talked personally with Majority Leader Harry Reid and insisted the IHCA language be in the final bill. I got his attention, and the language was included at the last minute.

SULLIVAN: I do not support the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Alaskans are losing their health care plans, and premiums are rising. Small businesses can no longer afford to provide health benefits to their employees and the hidden taxes in the ACA are making it harder for them to create new jobs for Alaskans. I recognize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act was permanently reauthorized as an amendment to the ACA, but it is time to fix the other provisions of the ACA. I strongly support the Indian Health Service budget and Indian self-determination contract support costs.

Will you support passage of advanced appropriations of Indian Health Service funding?

BEGICH: Absolutely. I am a proud co-sponsor of Senator Murkowski's bill on advanced funding for IHS. With my seats on both the Senate Appropriations and Indian Affairs committees, I am in a strong position to push for funding certainty needed by the agency and, more important, the tribal and other programs that rely on this funding to deliver important local services. Believe me, both the administration – especially IHS Director Roubideaux – and Senate leaders have heard my strong views on the need for advanced appropriations.

SULLIVAN: Advanced appropriations is a Republican led bill in the House and Senate, and it is critical to allowing our tribes to better manage their scarce Indian Health Service funding. Congress has failed to deliver funding on time to tribes and the IHS nearly every year since 1998. Yes, I look forward to working with the Alaska delegation.

What is your view of the current system for funding of the Indian Health Service?

BEGICH: My view is there should be more funding. One of my biggest fights during my time in the Senate is over the Contract Support Costs due our tribal organizations. The idea that the federal government has not fully met its trust responsibilities to our First Peoples by underfunding support for health services is appalling. The administration is finally paying attention. I wrote strong letters, threatened to "hold" the reappointment of the IHS director, and introduced my own bills. One pushed for tribes to get their day in court to fight for back-due payments. Another makes it clear the administration can't fund back-due payments at the expense of other Native programs. Thanks to a full-court press that includes tough, hard work by Alaska's best tribal attorneys, we are getting results. Within the past year the federal government has agreed to back-due payments to Alaska tribes totaling more than \$500 million.

SULLIVAN: Funding for IHS is inadequate in Alaska and across the country.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Alaska has nearly 10,000 undocumented immigrants, including many children, that need legal protection in our country. AFN has an organizational position called First Americans for New Americans.

Julie of Anchorage would like to know where you stand on immigration reform?

BEGICH: I support immigration reform and voted for a comprehensive immigration reform which passed the U.S. Senate a year ago but is now stuck in the U.S. House. This bill contains the right mix of increased border security, enforcement on employers, and a clear path to citizenship for immigrants who have played by the rules.

SULLIVAN: When it comes to immigration, first and foremost we must secure our borders. It is a national security issue. It is a matter of sovereignty. Other countries do it, there's no reason we can't as well. I also do not support executive amnesty.

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I am disturbed by the serious humanitarian crisis we face as tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors attempt to cross the southern border. Any new funding must not only help care for these children according to our laws and values, but also address the issues leading to this increase in unauthorized entry. I'll continue to advocate for immigration reform and responsible spending.

The recent flood of undocumented immigrants at the southern border is about more than just a lack of border security, though. It is symptomatic of a bigger problem. The Obama Administration has consistently shredded the rule of law. Federal agencies single-handedly change the rules when the White House doesn't feel like enforcing the law or answering to the American people. This cuts Alaska's elected officials out of the process and empowers D.C. bureaucrats to ignore Alaskans' concerns. As your U.S. Senator, I will stand up for the rule of law.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Natasha of Anchorage asks: What is your view of the land into trust option for Alaska tribes?

BEGICH: I support the DOI's proposed rule to remove the Alaska exemption.

SULLIVAN: There are too many outstanding questions that the Department of Interior has failed to address with respect to Alaska to take a position on the issue. Until the litigation on the *Akiachak v. Jewell* is concluded, land into trust isn't a viable option in Alaska at this time. This should not be a top-down driven initiative by Washington, but something that Alaska Natives must work to come to a consensus before being imposed on Alaska.

What are the top three unanswered questions about the land into trust option?

BEGICH: What I continue to hear from Native leaders is the consultation process was not adequate. One question I see still unanswered is whether DOI received all of the concerns and considerations before reaching a final rule. Another is what the final rule will do to address surface/sub-surface split owners, and another question is how the entire process will work in Alaska. I see this as an opportunity for tribes and Native corporations to work more collectively to make decisions that can better the lives of tribal members and shareholders.

SULLIVAN: The first question is where will tribes get their land? The second is about surface and subsurface ownership rights. What happens in the situation where tribes received surface title to lands from their village corporation while the regional corporation owns the subsurface rights and wants to develop those resources and the tribe is not aligned with those goals? Finally, the third question is whether lands conveyed to regional and village corporations through ANCSA are even eligible to be taken into trust? Those are some of the questions the Department of Interior has failed to address.

Natasha further asks: Will you advocate for increased budgets for the Bureau of Indian affairs programs?

BEGICH: Yes. There will need to be more money to support additional staff to work on Alaska issues as a result of the new rule.

SULLIVAN: Yes.

THE CHANGING ARCTIC

The United States is an Arctic nation, one of eight in the world. The Alaskan Arctic can be described as an "emerging economy" similar to other countries around the world. Though climate change presents great challenges and the continuing need to adapt, it also presents opportunities to responsibly develop natural resources and infrastructure that can benefit Arctic residents. It is a priority of AFN to advocate for a stable Arctic region, where economic and energy resources are developed in a sustainable manner that benefits Arctic residents while respecting the fragile environment and cultures of indigenous peoples.

Melanie of Nome asks: Do you agree that climate change exists and is a problem Americans and Alaskans need to address? If so, what should the federal government be doing to protect the people of my village from the effects of climate change and adapt for the future?

BEGICH: Yes, climate change exists and Alaska is ground zero for its impacts. We are experiencing its impacts more than other Americans, from coastal erosion threatening our northern coastal villages to melting frost heaves damaging roads to ocean acidification which impacts of our fisheries. The first bill I introduced when arriving in the Senate in 2009 was my Arctic legislation which I called the Inuvikput package, from the Inupiaq word meaning "the place where we live." This legislation focused on slowing climate change with better science, addressing the unique health challenges of northern people and addressing infrastructure needs, such as coastal erosion.

SULLIVAN: Climate change does exist in Alaska. We see it through erosion of our coastlines, new species migrating north, and thinning ice conditions impacting marine hunting traditions. Although the science is still out on the causes of climate change, I do know we also cannot stop climate change, but we can work to adapt. The federal government's responsibility to Alaska Natives includes healthy communities, and resources should be allocated to ensure our communities most impacted by climate change have the tools necessary to adapt.

I have brought top federal officials to Alaska to witness first-hand these changes and win their support for action. In August, I took the commandant of the Coast Guard and U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx to Nome and Unalakleet to see Alaska’s transportation and deep water port needs.

What is your definition of Alaska’s strategic role -- as part of both the Arctic and Pacific regions -- in American foreign and economic policy?

BEGICH: Alaska is playing an increasingly vital role in the world for two reasons: the only reason the U.S. is an Arctic nation is because of Alaska; and because of the rise of Pacific Rim nations including China, Alaska should serve as the gateway to Asia given our strategic geographic position. Alaska is America’s model when it comes to developing cutting-edge Arctic technology and practices, from oil and gas development to protecting subsistence resources for Arctic people. We have much to share with other northern nations, such as through the Arctic Council. Because of Alaska’s geographic proximity, our state is vital to our national security. Military personnel and equipment can be dispatched from Alaska bases quickly to Asia, Europe and even the Middle East. That is why I am so committed to protecting Alaska’s military bases and our veterans.

SULLIVAN: Alaska is the keystone to America’s strategic position within the circumpolar Arctic. Our state is a member of the most powerful nation in the world, and our geographic location positions us for opportunity. It is critical that we leverage that position with the federal government to promote economic development opportunities for our villages and our government contracting entities. Further leverage that position to build the necessary infrastructure to support an increased focus on Arctic transportation, economic development, and protection of our marine environments that support sustainable subsistence traditions. We should use this approach for domestic and foreign Arctic economic policy. As someone with significant and real world foreign policy and military experience, I will be ready on Day One to deal with these and other foreign and economic policy issues for Alaska.

How do you propose to encourage industry to partner with Alaska Native entities to develop a workforce that will participate in all phases of Arctic development?

BEGICH: The peoples of the Arctic and their elected representatives should govern the Arctic. Industry, whether energy, transportation or telecommunications, are working in the Arctic at the invitation of the Arctic people and their governments. Industry must meet the highest standards, where lack of preparation or carelessness could be devastating to those who live in the Arctic. I have called on industry to engage with local communities by funding a series of mini-grants to indigenous people in eight Arctic nations to advance scientific knowledge. I have proposed the Council host a forum for service providers to formulate how to get broadband into more villages across the Arctic.

SULLIVAN: Traditional knowledge must be incorporated into any resource development that takes place in the Arctic. As your Senator, I will aggressively pursue enactment of economic policy that encourages industry to partner with Alaska Native entities. Native entities are already pursuing those types of arrangements outside of the government. Look at the groundbreaking announcement recently made by Shell and Arctic Iñupiat Offshore, LLC. That was done entirely outside of the government and is a model that has changed the way business is conducted in Alaska. I will leverage my relationships with industry to explore options to partner with Alaska Native entities.

What role do you see the State playing as the U.S. assumes the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2015, and how will you ensure that those people who live in the arctic are represented in policy-making decisions that affect them?

BEGICH: Alaska should, and already is, playing a key role in the Arctic Council. The Obama administration wisely agreed to my proposal to create a special U.S. Arctic representative and at my suggestion, named Fran Ulmer a special Arctic advisor. In August, Arctic Representative Papp visited Alaska at my invitation and I detailed several ways the federal government needs to engage Arctic peoples. This includes: hiring Alaska-based staff to assist with the Council; engaging local communities, industry and scientists; improving Arctic telecommunications, maritime transportation and safety; and keeping the Arctic safe, healthy and livable.

SULLIVAN: I have significant experience working inside the U.S. State Department on issues of national security, so I have a deep understanding of how that department works. I will use my previous experience working for Condoleezza Rice to ensure Alaska has an even more visible and prominent role within the Arctic Council. Alaska is strategically positioned globally and has a pivotal role in ensuring a successful U.S. Chairmanship. I also support Alaska Native representation inside the policy circle of the Arctic Council.

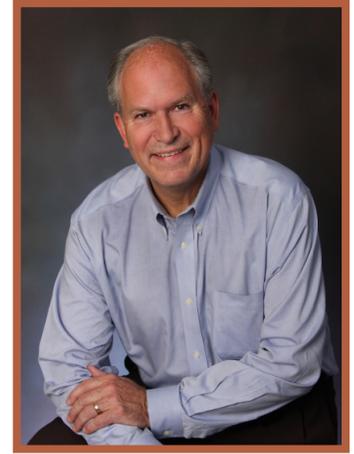
I also proposed the U.S. convene a Presidential Summit in Alaska to identify issues the international community should pursue in the Arctic as America’s readies its chairmanship of the Council. Alaska is well equipped and well experienced in hosting such high-profile international forums so there is no better venue as America’s only Arctic state.

I further support having the Arctic Economic Council serve as the economic advisory committee to the Arctic Council. This is important because we have the Aleut International Association, Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Gwich’in Council International, and the Arctic Athabaskan Council as permanent participants representing Alaska Natives in both the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council, therefore linking the two is the right thing to do.

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SEAN
PARNELL



BILL
WALKER

COMPREHENSIVE

Bethel resident Ana asks: In regards to the many issues facing the Alaska Native community, what will be your administration's first priority?

PARNELL: My administration's first priority is, and will continue to be, safety. Alaskans have to be safe in order to be healthy; to get an education; to enter a career that supports a family; and to build a better future for our children. My administration has increased law enforcement statewide, including doubling the number of Village Public Safety Officers in rural communities and trooper support. I will continue to work with communities and all Alaskans to eradicate domestic violence and sexual assault in all our communities.

WALKER: There are several issues that are so important that I will address them immediately upon entering office. I will accept Medicaid expansion funds. I will issue a Declaration of Disaster on the cost of energy in Alaska and take immediate steps to reduce the cost of energy in Alaska. I will also put in place a sustainable budget that will allow continued and predictable funding of services for the future.

In regards to the Ballot Measures, Ana asks: Do you support ballot measure 2, An Act to Tax and Regulate the Production, Sale, and Use of Marijuana? Yes or No.

PARNELL: No

WALKER: No

Do you support ballot measure 3, An Act to Increase Alaska's Minimum Wage? Yes or No.

PARNELL: Yes

WALKER: Yes

Do you support ballot measure 4, An Act Providing for Protection of Bristol Bay Wild Salmon and Waters Within or Flowing Into the Existing 1972 Bristol Bay Fisheries Reserve? Yes or No.

PARNELL: No

WALKER: Yes

Ana would also like to know your plan for dealing with Alaska's budget deficit. Where will you make cuts? Where will you increase?

PARNELL: I approached our state's finances like any household would. I worked to increase income today and over the long haul by stabilizing our oil tax regime to get new oil production and new revenue. On the expense side, I led an effort to tackle the state's fastest growing expense—the annual payment on Alaska's unfunded pension debt. My solution to pay down the debt and lower annual payments by hundreds of millions will bring Alaskans benefits for more than two decades.

WALKER: I will offer a fiscal plan that includes spending reduction that puts in place a sustainable budget in relation to the revenue the state generates. Initially, cuts will focus on the capital budget, which has grown immensely in recent years.

I believe in living within our means, and my record is one of going after that goal in responsible ways to increase revenue and reduce spending while providing the greatest opportunity for Alaskans to thrive. I will continue that course.

I make no specific promises to increase funding at this point, but two areas I'm determined to improve are the quality and consistency of public education and adequate public safety throughout Alaska.

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TRIBAL/STATE RELATIONS

Since statehood the complex relationship between the state government and Alaska Natives has ranged from generally positive to generally adversarial.

Richard of Kasaan would like to know your specific plans for policy and legislation that will improve relations between your administration and the statewide Alaska Native community.

PARNELL: I believe in strong relationships with the Alaska Native community that fosters partnerships, where we all pull together to create more opportunity in Alaska. One way my administration is encouraging partnerships is reflected in agreements defining our clear goals in areas of cooperation. I am pleased my DHSS has strong working relationships with Tribes in juvenile justice, child support and other areas. I signed an MOU earlier this year with the largest Tribe, the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes. We pledged a new level of communication and cooperation on education, workforce training, and jobs. The Parnell administration negotiated agreements with tribal courts on alcohol and domestic violence cases and we await signatures.

WALKER: I will explore options for partnerships and cooperative agreements that would strengthen the state and tribal relationship, especially in areas identified through existing AFN and tribal and other tribal non-profit organizations (subsistence, cheaper energy, improved education including vocational training, aggressive actions to reduce and prevent sexual assault, village safety, infrastructure needs, and many other areas). It is advantageous for tribes to have federal and tribal dollars to match State funds. Matching revenue sources increases our capabilities.

TRIBAL/STATE RELATIONS

The development of sustainable tribal economies that adequately balance Alaska's rural subsistence economy is key to improving the quality of life for Alaska Native peoples.

Dillingham resident Ralph asks: How will you encourage economic development in Dillingham and help to secure the basic infrastructure needed to develop, attract, and sustain profitable business ventures here?

PARNELL: Broadly, economic development should involve attracting private sector resources (like seafood/fisheries investment); using government to clear hurdles the private sector faces; and building on a local community's natural and cultural strengths. For example, my support of the Bristol Bay Port is a way government was able to provide opportunity to the private sector by supporting infrastructure development for the largest salmon fishery in the world. This, in turn, supports a natural and cultural strength of the Bristol Bay area. Economic development in any area begins with certainty on three issues; energy, taxes, and regulation. My administration is now in its seventh round of issuing renewable energy grants. I've kept taxes low and predictable, giving stability for small businesses to make future plans.

WALKER: One idea that I've been developing is modeled after the X-prize where the state and private investors would work to incentivized competition, that would be open to all Alaskans that pushes the limits of creativity to solve some of Alaska's most daunting challenges, such as home heating, warm low cost housing, improved infrastructure, etc. This A-prize (A for Alaska) would invite teams to compete for cash prizes on specific proposed project ideas and would result in the state working with these entrepreneurs on marketing their product. Additionally, I am committed in reducing the cost of energy in Alaska including Dillingham, not only to make rural Alaska affordable but to allow for value added opportunities throughout the State.

What does a successful economy in places like Dillingham look like to you?

PARNELL: A successful economy is one in which every Alaskan and their community leadership can see and seize opportunity. A successful economy combines the strengths of the local culture, people, and resources, with private sector investment.

WALKER: A successful economy in Alaska starts with affordable energy. This would stimulate growth in unimaginable ways. It's followed by an education system that meets Alaskan's specific long-term growth needs, and finally will require leadership to develop infrastructure needs that spur entrepreneurship across Alaska.

What is your plan to ensure resource development in rural Alaska equitably benefits rural Alaskans?

PARNELL: With better opportunities in education, rural students and rural areas can more equitably benefit from jobs in resource development. In my term of office, I made sure rural Alaskans had more equitable treatment in education—more equitable school construction funding (like the new schools in Emmonak, Alakanuk, and more); better curriculum in resolving the Moore litigation; and more career technical education resources being poured into rural areas. We also embarked on a new digital teaching initiative to deliver higher quality courses to rural classrooms. I supported and funded expansion of the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, and

WALKER: I intend to maximize efforts at truly local hire and local work force training for projects in rural Alaska. I will continue to promote quality educational opportunities in rural Alaska. My administration will support expansion of connectivity as a key to education, medical care, and business development. Finally, I will fight to reduce costs of energy for business and local residents alike.

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am a strong advocate for job training. I will continue growing paths of opportunity in education for all Alaskans.

Additionally, resource development and taxes from the resources will continue to fully fund PCE in the budgets I propose, will fund more VPSOs and troopers, more schools, and lower cost energy across the [Editor's Note: This response exceeded the 150 word limit].

What is your plan to increase affordable broadband/internet connectivity to advance economic development in rural Alaska villages like Dillingham?

PARNELL: I supported taking advantage of several federally funded programs to expand the connectivity of rural Alaska, and I support those actions. Connectivity is an economic driver, and provides opportunity in other areas as well, such as education and telemedicine. We are also exploring ways that small rural communities can benefit from connectivity to the local school, which is often the best connection in the community but can only be shared outside the school in limited ways by law.

WALKER: I support continued funding for universal service and rural utility service programs. We also have to be innovative and forward thinkers when it comes to rural Alaska and connectivity; technology moves fast and by the time it reaches rural Alaska runs the risk of being obsolete. Fiber optic and other terrestrial communications – such as microwave – can be very expensive to put in. However the cost of it after installation should be affordable given installation is often built on federal subsidies. Thus in addition to working to expand subsidies to build terrestrial communications throughout rural Alaska, the State should seek to have grants and other incentives tied to competition in the last mile. Ensuring multiple providers have access to reasonable backhaul rates is an important piece to allow effective competition and lower rates. Multiple providers at the local level is critical to encouraging competition in services and rates.

ENERGY

Rural Alaska's villages are among the most economically depressed communities in the nation. The financial situations in our rural villages are worsening with the highest per capita fuel costs in the U.S. For example, the fuel demands of 176 of the largest communities in rural Alaska with a combined population of 74,500 residents will spend over \$5 billion over the next 20 years for diesel fuel alone. Many of our rural communities are not connected to any regional power grids to offer economies of scale for electrical loads and are dependent on fossil fuels for heating of residential homes and commercial properties, transportation, and electricity generation. In winter months, these costs are exacerbated by the cold, harsh weather. Residents spend almost half their monthly income on energy/heating costs.

Leroy of Rampart would like to know what measures you will take to lower the cost of energy in rural Alaska and thereby reduce the cost of living in our villages. What would be the first measure you would take?

PARNELL: First, we need to continue what we are doing well, and build on that. Renewable energy programs are bringing locally acceptable solutions in areas far from the grid. Weatherization has proven highly effective in addressing energy demand. I continue to support Power Cost Equalization, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, the Heating Assistance Program, and FuelWatch.

In the near term, the Interior Energy Project I led and funded holds promise to fuel river system communities with natural gas once infrastructure is built from the North Slope to Fairbanks. We are making historic progress on a gasline project that leverages the sale of state gas to overseas market in order to also supply low-cost, clean gas for Alaskans. This is a longer-term solution that will ultimately bring tremendous benefit across Alaska.

WALKER: First, upon entering office, I will make a declaration of disaster so the state can focus its efforts on bringing the cost of energy down. I will evaluate all possible options including reducing taxes, compressing natural gas for distribution on Alaska's river system, researching the potential for small gas development in larger rural communities like Bethel, Nome and Kotzebue. Alternative energy sources must also play a prominent role in our energy future. In the longer term, an in-state gasline will allow distribution of cheaper liquid energy by truck, rail, barge and other methods throughout Alaska. I will also ensuring in-state refineries can purchase State royalty at market price, rather than at a premium, which should help reduce the cost of fuel oil. Reducing the cost of energy would be my first priority as well as accepting the expanded Medicaid.

Leroy further asks: With diesel fuel at \$10 per gallon and electricity costing \$1 per kilowatt hour, what are you going to do to reduce energy costs?

PARNELL: Please see above answer.

WALKER: We must look for local energy solutions across the state. In addition to the items listed above, the State of Alaska can be an effective facilitator of alternative energy solutions, potential spur gas lines, and taking a strong leadership role in removing unnecessary regulations and red tape from potential federal and state agencies.

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The Denali Commission is a federal, state and tribal partnership created by Congress to address the needs of Alaska's distressed communities. The Commission works to enhance the economies of our communities by building and maintaining infrastructure projects in Alaska. The Commission also works with the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) on energy projects and grants in rural Alaska.

Julie of Anchorage asks: Are you committed to ensuring the reauthorization and funding of the Denali Commission?

PARNELL: I support reauthorization of the Denali Commission, and I included substantial funding in the last budget. There are federal-state issues related to indemnification that need to be addressed related to financial support; and, until recently, the Commission lacked the federal authority to accept state funds. We continue to work together on mutual priorities.

WALKER: Yes.

The State of Alaska's support for energy conservation and efficiency gained a lot of new interest in 2008 when energy prices were spiking. Melanie of Nome asks: If elected, what will you do to facilitate support of energy conservation, retrofitting and weatherization?

PARNELL: I have advocated and funded energy conservation and efficiency programs during my tenure as governor and would continue doing so because they are effective for Alaskans. Conservation, retrofitting and weatherization are ways we can use less energy, decreasing overall costs to families. Getting the word out about these existing programs is also an important part of reducing costs.

WALKER: A one-size fits all approach to energy conservation does not work. I will direct my administration to work with BIA and Tribes to find the best solutions that fit local climates and are affordable. I support funding for affordable energy projects such as AHFC's weatherization program and the energy rebate program. I believe that all public facilities should be subject to energy audits in order to maximize energy efficiency.

VOTING RIGHTS AND ELECTIONS

Native peoples were among the very last to achieve universal suffrage and continue to experience unequal treatment under the law and overtly discriminatory policies that prevent full access to the ballot box. It is only through working together that all underrepresented people will have the same rights others take for granted. Together with National Congress of American Indians and Native American Rights Fund, AFN supports the introduction of legislative language to replace the voting rights protections stripped from the Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court.

Kim of Anchorage asks: Has the State Division of Elections (DOE) done an adequate job protecting all Alaskans' right to vote and ensuring everyone has fair access? If not, how would your administration improve the DOE?

PARNELL: I believe the Division of Elections has made progress, but not enough according to Federal District Court Judge Gleason. The Division will work to implement the changes required by the judge, and I will support funding in the budget to implement the judge's decision.

WALKER: We need to expand access to the ballot for all eligible Alaskan voters by assuring equal access to voting and providing greater opportunities for voter registration. That's why I favor exploring options for mail-in ballot elections in Alaska and increasing access to online voting and absentee ballots (e.g., expanding the number of locations for in-person absentee voting) for all of our residents, while making sure that the sanctity of the ballot is preserved.

Would you support a bipartisan commission for the modernization of the DOE?

PARNELL: I would support an independent review of elections policies and practices, resulting in recommendations for improvement.

WALKER: My preference is a nonpartisan commission that would put party politics aside and tackles the tough problems that continue to plague our state.

What measures will you take to improve the Language Assistance Program and early voting in the villages?

PARNELL: The Division of Elections will continue working to improve the Language Assistance Program and ensure all voters are aware of the early vote option.

WALKER: I believe that we have a duty to provide full language services to Alaska Native speakers, including trained bilingual speakers and all voting-related materials in the appropriate language. My administration will expand the number of in-person early voting sites in rural Alaska and make sure that workers are both sufficiently trained and adequately compensated.

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The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is currently consulting with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes about whether to propose legislation that will require tribal input on polling site locations, among other considerations. April of Anchorage asks: Will your administration support this legislation, if enacted, and work with the DOJ in its implementation?

PARNELL: I need to see legislation to make a decision, but if it becomes law, we will follow it.

WALKER: I support limited government overreach. With that in mind, I support working with local and tribal governments to resolve issues of a localized nature. The location of polling site should be resolved locally. I support the self-determination of communities to make these decisions.

FISHERIES

Myron of Bethel asks: Would you support the establishment of the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission for the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers? Why or why not?

PARNELL: Support for Inter-Tribal Fish Commissions depends on the structure and function of the commissions. I support improved mechanisms to bring lower, middle, and up-river users together to understand each other's needs and perspectives, and to provide managers with consolidated feedback that reflects the consensus of affected users. Fisheries in these regions would also benefit from structures to further involve affected users in research, management, education, and capacity building. Increasing involvement of users in management and research projects has been one of our priorities.

WALKER: I am interested in exploring co-management options with federal and tribal entities. As to the specifics of your proposal, I would need to evaluate the specific details to give a precise answer. But, I can say that I will develop a much closer relationship with tribes, tribal non-profits, and corporations to ensure that the state is living up to the promises made during the ANCSA & ANILCA to make sure that we have abundant fish and game resources to meet your subsistence needs. To that end, it is my intent to develop cooperative agreements and partnerships with tribes and corporations that are interested in improving fish and game management on Alaska Native lands.

During the 2013 Legislative session, and again in 2014, Alaska House Bill 77 was considered by our Alaska state legislature. HB 77 takes away the rights of the public, tribes and other entities to apply to reserve water within streams in order to maintain sufficient flow. Sufficient flow is necessary for various public interests including transportation, fish and wildlife protections, and water quality.

April of Anchorage would like to know if you support this legislation and will you support similar legislation in the future?

PARNELL: During my tenure as Governor, the Department of Natural Resources has processed more applications for water reservations than all previous state administrations combined. On HB 77, I asked for that bill to be held in committee after hearing from the public, thus preventing its passage. Still, I remain concerned that we need to protect Alaska water rights from outside environmental groups and those who intend to treat such rights as a commodity to be bought and sold to stop development of our natural resources outside of the normal permitting process.

WALKER: I am very concerned about Governor Parnell's HB77 and its limitation on local input regarding water rights.

SUBSISTENCE

Protection of Native hunting, fishing and gathering rights is a part of federal law throughout the United States. Nowhere is it more critical than in Alaska. What we call subsistence is not a relic from the past. It continues to be the foundation of Alaska Native society and culture. A vast majority of Alaska's 120,000 Native people (nearly 20% of the population of Alaska) still participate in hunting, fishing and gathering for food during the year. Subsistence resources remain central to the nutrition, economies and traditions of Alaska's Native villages. The ability of Alaska Natives to continue to pursue their subsistence activities is closely linked to their food security.

Nick from Copper Center asks the following: Do you believe subsistence fishing and hunting should be an allocation priority? If so, what steps will you take to ensure that those who depend on subsistence will have priority access to resources during times of shortage?

PARNELL: I honor and acknowledge subsistence as the foundation of Alaska Native culture and identity. Subsistence culture cannot be created, added to, or taken away by legislation; it just 'is.' We have a complex set of laws resulting from dual state and federal

WALKER: I will follow the law when it comes to subsistence priorities. The state of Alaska is squarely at fault for managing a diminishing resource which has led to all user groups fighting over a smaller pie. The state must overhaul the Alaska Department of Fish

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management. Obviously, as governor, following Alaska law is not a choice; and honoring the subsistence culture and Alaska Natives as a people is, similarly, something I must do. We focus at Alaska Department of Fish and Game on abundance of fish and game. With abundant fish and game, all Alaskans have enough to share. Abundance means an active predator control program, which we have under Commissioner Cora Campbell, and I would continue to improve and fund these efforts. I will also continue to pursue access to subsistence opportunities. My door is always open for conversation and productive engagement on an issue as important as subsistence, whether it is [Editor's Note: This response exceeded the 150 word limit].

Do you believe the present dual (federal-state) management system for subsistence hunting and fishing should remain or do you think it should be changed? Why or why not? What solution(s) would you pursue in office?

PARNELL: I believe in a state-managed system for subsistence hunting and fishing that complies with the law, although I am open to considering recommended improvements.

and Game and seek ways to grow more fish and game to abundant levels so that user groups are not squared off against one another.

I clearly see the needs of those living in parts of Alaska where there is a greater need and dependence on fish and game just to survive. Moose are at a 50 year low statewide, but those managing our big game in Alaska are fisheries experts. I am committed to science based management of all of our fish and game resources by those knowledgeable in the applicable resource.

Would you support a federal/tribal/state co-management system on tribal lands? Why or why not?

PARNELL: No. The state cannot legally delegate its authority to manage fish and game. There may be ways all parties can cooperate that result in better management of fish and game, such as gathering research and information, but I cannot agree to delegate away the state's authority. Alaskans are best equipped to make the decisions that are best for Alaskans. Working together, we can come to agreement on how to manage our resources in accordance with our state Constitution.

WALKER: This is a promising option that must be discussed as we find solutions that work for Alaskans. I think that this certainly a step forward and is already occurring in some areas.

After some 20 years of litigation, the Katie John Subsistence Rights Case was concluded when the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the state's appeal. In your opinion, why or why not was this the correct ruling?

PARNELL: Where the Supreme Court has ruled, we abide by its ruling.

WALKER: I am still examining details of this ruling. I certainly do not like the "us vs them" position it has placed between Alaska and Alaska Natives. As I continue to learn more about the ruling and the legal positions of each side I will be able to provide a more qualified response. However, perhaps the overriding significance of the decision is the importance of setting aside a strategy of litigation and working to find a common solution.

Rosita of Juneau asks: Do you support a rural subsistence priority on all Alaskan lands and waters? Do you support a Native preference for subsistence?

PARNELL: I support abundance of fish and game first, and a subsistence preference in times of shortage in accordance with the Alaska Constitution, which I am sworn by oath to uphold.

WALKER: The reason for a subsistence priority in Alaska was to ensure that Alaska Native subsistence needs would be protected as part of the land claims settlement.

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PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Protecting women, children, and vulnerable citizens from violence and abuse is a key ingredient in ensuring rural Alaskans are safe in their home communities. Following release of the Indian Law & Order Commission’s “Roadmap for Making Native America Safer,” new opportunities are available for community members, leaders, and lawmakers to work together to increase public safety in Alaska. An entire chapter of the Report is dedicated to reforming justice in Alaska, which receives special attention due to its vastness, Nativeness, and continued exemption from national policy changes.

Gerad from Anchorage asks: What is your proposed course of action to address these findings?

PARNELL: I believe in Alaska solutions and in partnering with local communities to resolve problems. I will continue funding more VPSOs to better protect the communities and will require the federal government to stand up to its public safety funding obligations. As a state, we have made a good-faith effort to partner with tribal courts on alcohol and domestic violence related issues, but once again appear to be stymied by outside groups trying to influence Alaska tribes and tribal entities.

WALKER: First and foremost we all must take personal responsibility of zero tolerance and not allow anyone under the influence to enter and remain in our homes when children, women and Elders are home to ensure the safety of all. We will look to local community members and leadership that will help find solutions and provide the necessary tools for the solutions to be successful.

Shelter and crisis programs are the cornerstone of the fight against the violence. However, many of our rural communities are unable to sustain a full shelter program and rape crisis center. We need to include this problem in our strategies. Communities will know what is needed, whether it is strengthening support for safe homes, enhancing supporting ties with the regional programs or other solutions unique to their area. A high priority should be given to improving communication between federal domestic violence and sexual assault funders, [Editor’s Note: This response exceeded the 150 word limit]

Is the state doing an adequate job protecting rural families and in particular Native women and children? Explain why or why not.

PARNELL: The state, working with communities, has made strong inroads in increasing safety for all Alaska families. My administration has prioritized public safety, and I have directed funding accordingly. Under our “Choose Respect” initiative, we have focused on prevention, intervention, and support services. I have increased law enforcement statewide; we doubled the number of Village Public Safety Officers in rural communities, some of which never had a law enforcement presence. I recently signed HB 199, which provides a community option to arm VSPOs. We are making inroads against the epidemic of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking with greater awareness, more support for victims, and greater accountability for perpetrators. I have also championed omnibus crime legislation to protect vulnerable Alaskans, crime victims, and children.

WALKER: Alaska leads the nation in domestic violence and sexual assault. Neither the state, nor federal government are doing a good enough job protecting our women and children throughout the state. This is an area that demands much greater attention and we must work together to find solutions that work.

In the coming four years, how will your administration be part of supporting and empowering the Tribes to effectively provide law enforcement protection for their Tribal members?

PARNELL: I have agreements out to Tribes through DHSS on working with juveniles, and agreements out to Tribes seeking a more active role for tribal courts. I also have prosecutors working on circle sentencing with Tribes. Engaging Tribes in public protection will also require funding which, under my opponents’ 16% budget reduction scenario in his first year, may not be available.

WALKER: I believe that law enforcement in small communities is best handled at the local level, especially for young people and with minor offenses. It would be preferable for these offenses to be handled at the village level when possible thereby keeping offenders accountable to the community and out of the state penal system when possible.

SELF-GOVERNANCE

Tribal nations are America’s first governments and our role in the American family of governments is written into the Constitution, codified in treaties, executive orders, acts of Congress, and court decisions. Like state governments and foreign governments, Indian tribes have the inherent power to govern their people and their lands.

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Jerry of Tanacross asks: How do you plan to use your role to improve government-to-government relationships between my tribe and the state government?

PARNELL: There are so many ways for state government and the tribes to work together. The first step is to break down the silos and stop focusing on the few things that divide us, and focus on what we can agree on. Every Tribal member in Alaska is also an Alaskan, and I care about the things Alaskans need to be successful in life. We should be at the table together, working together. There will be things we disagree on and I accept that, but I will not and do not take it personally, nor would I let those few issues on which we disagree take away from making progress on everything else. We have to talk to and respect each other. It works. Just look at the work done by DHSS with Tribes and the MOU we signed with the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of [Editor's Note: This response exceeded the 150 word limit]

WALKER: Generally I support empowering local communities to govern and police themselves, be that in the form of municipal governments or tribes. However, in order to fully understand the issues, we first need to have a discussion about the issues and the needs. That is how I will begin and will move forward with specifics after that dialogue. In starting that process my administration will review the work of several commissions that have examined state-tribal relations, including the Alaska Natives Report and the Alaska Commission on Rural Governance and Empowerment. I believe that the 2001 Millennium Agreement, calling for regular consultations, is a model to be emulated.

Should tribal court's powers be expanded, kept the same, or reduced? Please explain.

PARNELL: Tribal court roles, and the role of tribes in general, can be expanded in prevention; management of some misdemeanor crimes; and rehabilitating offenders. I look forward to working with tribal leaders on this relationship. Frankly, I am waiting on the Tribes to sign agreements with the Attorney General that they negotiated together.

WALKER: I understand that local control is important and the role of tribal courts in rural Alaska is a critical component of that. As Governor I want to explore ways to bring the State of Alaska legal system and the tribal court system closer together and find more areas of common ground and understanding. I do believe there are ways the State of Alaska and Alaska Natives can benefit from a more viable and respected tribal court system. Expanding tribal court powers, in line with Alaska law, is not only consistent with my firm held belief that local government is best, it is economically smart.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Alaska Natives face many barriers to adequate health care and wellness. Terrible statistics demand the attention of our communities and our leaders in all governments, including the nation's highest number of deaths by suicide, and high rates of obesity and diabetes.

Tim of Kotzebue asks: What will you do as governor to improve suicide prevention in my village?

PARNELL: My Suicide Prevention Council is working now to prevent suicides across the state, including in villages. I have supported legislation intended to add to the menu of resources the state and our communities must use in this fight. For example, I signed a bill requiring suicide prevention training for people working in public schools. I am supportive of grass-roots programs for suicide prevention; one example is the Lower Yukon community-driven model. I appreciate the way that this program is truly community-based. I'm encouraged by the positive results to date.

WALKER: Suicide is an unfortunate final decision to a temporary problem that affects families for the rest of their lives. It is not often that we know and hear about the number of attempts that take place but only when it is a completed suicide. The completed number of suicides are just a fraction of the attempts unfortunately. Knowing and understanding those numbers may bring to light the seriousness of the problems, and provide guidance on how to address the totality of the problem. We must also expand economic opportunities. Productive communities with good opportunity for local employment and small business growth foster success and well being.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) included permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which brought the entire IHS system, including tribal and urban program and clinics, into the new system of health care delivery. Successful and seamless implementation of the ACA will increase health care access for Alaska Natives, support the IHS system of care, broaden services provided in rural communities, and strengthen an integral network of providers.

Tim further asks: Do you support the Affordable Care Act?

PARNELL: I do not support the Affordable Care Act, because it is unaffordable for Alaska. Nationally, it is leading us deeper into debt to foreign nations, debt that our children and grandchildren will have to pay. It is raising insurance costs dramatically and forcing those who once had coverage to lose their insurance policies. This federal policy takes away our personal choice in health care. The federal government has a trust responsibility for health care to Alaska Natives, and must follow through on that responsibility by providing and funding Indian Health Services for adequate mental health, substance abuse, and other coverages.

WALKER: The ACA is presently the law of the land and I will follow the law in all areas including the ACA.

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Will you expand Medicaid coverage in Alaska?

PARNELL: Our Medicaid rolls have grown by more than 25,000 people in recent years, so the existing Medicaid program is growing. I declined Medicaid expansion as too costly and too risky to our kids and future generations. I am committed to finding solutions for Alaskans who fall into the Obamacare gaps, but I won't burden future generations of Alaskans with the costs of expanding a program which is already failing. Our nation is more than \$17 trillion in debt right now; I do not want to add to that.

WALKER: I will expand Medicaid so long as the federal government covers the cost. If and when the federal government substantially reduces its share I will need to re-evaluate it at that time based on what is in the best interests of or State, local communities, and individual Alaskans.

EDUCATION

Alaska's public education system is failing Alaska Native children. Alaska Natives constitute 19.5% of the state's population, and 23% of its school population. Alaska Natives students are dropping out of school at a rate of 7.8%, which is twice the rate of other students. Native youth are graduating from high school at a rate of only 47%. These statistics compel us to seek a new approach to education for Alaska Natives. Part of the reason for poor academic achievement among Native students is the lack of culture-based programs and an under representation of Alaska Native teachers.

Rosita of Juneau asks: What policy changes will your administration pursue to improve education for the students of villages like Kake?

PARNELL: We've made tremendous changes that will benefit rural students just this year, continuing my commitment to improving education and school facilities. Along with forward-funding and a significant BSA increase, I cleared hurdles students face, like the high school graduation exit exam, and opened new doors, such as allowing students to test out of classes for credit. We're bringing more digital teaching opportunities to expand the expertise rural students can tap into, and we've put significantly more money into the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program. I would like to continue working with all Alaskans on improving our education system, including finding innovative ways to recruit and train our home-grown Alaska youth as the next generation's teachers.

WALKER: We must keep control of our children's learning as local as possible and seek ways to strengthen support for both parents and teachers. We need to use problem solving methods that target root causes to identified problems within our learning environments and stop chasing symptoms from Juneau. Promoting stronger families and more parental involvement, especially from fathers which evidence shows can significantly impact the success or failure of your child in school. Designing an education system that can prepare our children for the lives they want to live and enjoy and that includes skills and knowledge to be successful in their home communities. Not all students choose college as their next step in life beyond high school, but the system is structured to do just that. We need to incorporate more trade and technical opportunities into the entire curriculum statewide.

What measures will you take to reduce the drop-out rates of Alaska Native students in cities like Anchorage, the largest Native "village" in the state?

PARNELL: Reducing drop-out rates will take a team effort between the larger Native community in Anchorage, which can provide cultural and personal support, and state government, where I am working to grow opportunity. More students will remain engaged in their education if they understand and see opportunity. My Alaska Performance Scholarships, earned so far by more than 3,000 Alaskans, extend the opportunity of job training to all Alaskans, regardless of family financial support. The same scholarships offer an avenue from high school to higher education. These are available to any Alaska student who wants to work hard. My Alaska's Education Opportunity Act, which passed the Legislature this year, sought to inspire students with more options, dual-credit paths for high school students pursuing a career certification, and the ability to test out of classes for credit.

WALKER: Addressing high dropout rates of Alaska Native students in urban Alaska is challenging. There are multiple steps that can be taken. Among them: 1) increased cultural awareness training for all educators having contact with students; 2) peer and counseling support strategies; 3) connecting vocational education with opportunities for employment; 4) creation of a climate that welcomes increased parental involvement; 5) active recruitment and retention efforts for Alaska Native teachers as role-models; and 6) support for academic student advocacy programs. My appointments to the state board of education will reflect my concern for these steps. We must maintain high standards and expectations for our children driven by local educators familiar with the practical reality of our communities.

What is your view of the current formula and method for funding Alaska's schools?

PARNELL: We have significantly increased education funding. I am open to discussing increases, but I want to see that any increases will produce results that parents, students and the public can measure. In short, I want to be sure that more funding actually means more opportunity for Alaska's children.

WALKER: Providing education in Alaska is a constitutional requirement. Therefore we must fulfill the constitutional obligation to fund education. As budgets tighten and state revenue experiences sharp declines we will be forced to make sacrifices everywhere. Education must continue to be a top priority and we should do what we can to ensure that we fund education the best that we can afford. I support inflation proofing future funding formulas to ensure that we don't fall behind, thus causing unnecessary hardships.

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What solutions would you pursue to ensure that school funding is fair and equitable?

PARNELL: I have a track record of ensuring more equitable funding for rural Alaska in school construction. I also resolved the Moore litigation to provide more equity in curriculum opportunities. Every Alaskan child, whether living in a rural community or urban city, deserves a shot at their future through a great education.

WALKER: Current cost of living evaluations must be done in as many areas of Alaska as possible to ensure that an equitable per student calculation is being made. We must seek out solutions to the high cost of energy (utilities) that consumes so much of the resources of many rural schools. If we can find ways to produce local energy through resource development or alternative sources it could be a benefit to the community as well as a reduced cost burden on the State of Alaska budget.

Do you support a school voucher system? Why or why not?

PARNELL: Yes. I support more school choice for parents. Why should only the wealthy be able to afford the best schools for their kids? A lower income parent should be able to use public money for their child at the school the parent thinks is best for their child.

WALKER: I don't support vouchers. We are struggling to fully fund the schools we have, so I do not support putting private schools in competition for those resources.

How do you propose to make higher education affordable for more Alaskans?

PARNELL: Higher education is more affordable to Alaskans than when I took office, because of my leadership in creating the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) plan and expanding the Alaska Advantage grant program (a needs-based opportunity). APS is a tremendous opportunity that rewards students willing to work hard, no matter their family financial background. Now, any student who earns this scholarship can pursue higher education or vocational training.

WALKER: The university system needs to start leveraging the land that it owns to fund some of its annual expenses. Wasteful bonuses for education public servants must be eliminated especially during times of massive budget shortfalls. The construction of palaces that seem to far exceed functional needs must be reined in during times of fiscal difficulty. Out of state students and those from overseas may have to pay higher tuition costs. We should support Alaska scholarship and student loan programs that encourage accessibility to higher education. And we must look to our student leaders and community leaders to identify ways to reduce the cost of education. Not all answers originate from government.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The United States is an Arctic nation, one of eight in the world. The Alaskan Arctic can be described as an “emerging economy” similar to other countries around the world. Though climate change presents great challenges and the continuing need to adapt, it also presents opportunities to responsibly develop natural resources and infrastructure that can benefit Arctic residents. It is a priority of AFN to advocate for a stable Arctic region, where economic and energy resources are developed in a sustainable manner that benefits Arctic residents while respecting the fragile environment and cultures of indigenous peoples.

Melanie of Nome asks: What is your plan to mitigate the disastrous effects of climate change, including erosion and annual flooding that has resulted in both the Governor and President Obama declaring certain regions of Alaska a disaster?

PARNELL: Alaska is not in a position to go it alone in mitigating climate change, but we're making meaningful investments in lower-cost energy that is more reliable and clean. Community safety and preparedness to adapt to a changing environment is one of my top priorities. DCCED-DCRA has the lead in coordinating state agency efforts to support communities facing serious threats from coastal erosion. For villages facing significant imminent threat, such as Kivalina, I have supported investments in planning for and developing evacuation and relocation strategies as the community is able to come to agreement on tough sitting decisions. I have prioritized information needs such as mapping, fish and wildlife assessments, and environmental monitoring to support community planning and adaptive resource management.

WALKER: We begin by acknowledging that climate change is happening and work in concert with local communities and individuals, and other governmental, private sector and non-profit institutions to evaluate the impacts of climate change and develop appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

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What role do you see the State playing as the U.S. assumes the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2015, and how will you ensure that those people who live in the Arctic are represented in policy-making decisions that affect them?

PARNELL: I have several key staff participating in the Arctic Council process and tracking developments in the U.S. Chairmanship. My office hosts a monthly call to connect federal leadership involved with the Arctic Council with Alaskans. Over a year ago, I requested the Department of State to consider four themes for the chairmanship: promoting economic opportunity and job creation for Arctic residents; suicide prevention; developing sustainable and safe sanitation facilities and infrastructure; and promoting safe, secure, reliable shipping. Thus far, our federal counterparts have chosen to focus far too narrowly on only environmental issues. The Department of State is still working to develop their agenda, and I continue to advocate for projects that will support collaboration with and needs of Arctic residents. My office ensured Alaska's Arctic residents are seated at the table on the Arctic Council's Arctic Economic Council and continuously urges more engagement in preparation for the Chairmanship.

WALKER: Alaska is the only reason that the United States is an Arctic country. Alaskans must be involved in every decision that is made impacting the Arctic. Additionally, we must be involved in developing and implementing Arctic policy. Alaska is ground zero of climate change. The residents of Arctic Alaska are a valuable resource for understanding the impact of that change, and their traditional knowledge, life experience and voices will be included in all Arctic and climate change policy development in my administration.

The Alaska Arctic Policy Commission is wrapping up its work and will be issuing its report. What is next?

PARNELL: I will look forward to the report from this commission, which is conducting an investigation of the myriad issues Alaska is facing in relation to the Arctic. The AAPC is inviting public comment through November 15, and is working to finalize its report for delivery to the Legislature in January 2015. I appreciate their ongoing efforts and outreach to Arctic residents.

WALKER: The report will be presented to the 2015 legislature where I expect debate will take place on its proposed policies and action plan.

What economic development opportunities do you see for Alaska with the opening of the Northwest Passage and do you intend to ensure that those affected by increased shipping will benefit economically?

PARNELL: My administration initiated work with UAF to understand factors that will drive global shipping routes in the Arctic region. That study will inform the opportunities increased shipping could represent.

WALKER: There are three passages that will impact Alaska, the Northern – near Russia, the Northwest – near Canada, and the polar – across the North Pole, and each of these routes result in increased shipping or general transportation through Alaska's waters. We must advocate for sufficient federal support to ensure that our waterways, wildlife, fisheries, and marine mammals are protected, and that we are involved in the economic opportunities that become available. These opportunities include developing Arctic bases to defend U.S. sovereignty, access to shipping and the commercial opportunities they bring, and general Arctic infrastructure development to enhance shipping, resource development, and access to our resources.

Along the lines of increased shipping, even a minor oil spill in the Arctic could mean disastrous effects to the ecosystem. How can the state safeguard the natural resources through these international waters?

PARNELL: I've testified in favor of a new US ice breaker and strong US Coast Guard resourcing in the region. The state is sponsoring an Arctic deep-draft port study, and we're working to expand the Barrow airport. We need maritime infrastructure and public-private partnerships to invest in building it. Any domestically permitted operations need to bring with them everything they'd need to respond to a spill in order to work in the Arctic. The consistent presence of US activity in the region could be step one. In addition, the State will continue to engage with the U.S. delegation in Polar Code negotiations and implementation to increase the safety of international ships passing northern and western Alaska shores. While the State does not regulate offshore Arctic waters, the state can ensure it continues to be part of the larger dialogue.

WALKER: The state can safeguard our coastal borders with federal actions that include large icebreakers, enhanced Coast Guard support, and one or more Arctic ports that would enable a fast oil spill disaster response. After the Exxon Valdez spill, Alaska enacted the best oil spill laws in the country. Most are still in place. But we face new challenges with increasing offshore and Arctic activity. We can meet the challenge by requiring swifter spill response times and more spill equipment in place, designed for offshore and the Arctic. We can require regular equipment updates to insure that the best available spill technology is always available. Protecting Alaskan communities and resources must come first. The state can better safeguard our coastal borders with federal support that includes large icebreakers, enhanced Coast Guard support, and possibly one or more Arctic ports that would enable a fast oil spill disaster response.

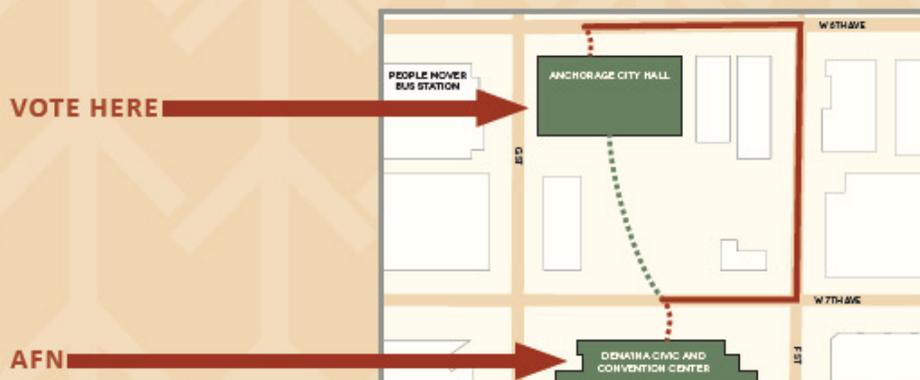
GENERAL ELECTION NOVEMBER 4, 2014

YOU CAN VOTE EARLY

WHERE: ANCHORAGE CITY HALL

WHEN: OCTOBER 20 — NOVEMBER 4

Ballots for all 40 districts are available at Anchorage City Hall.



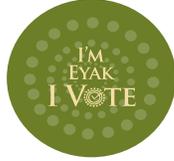
VOTING SITE OPEN

MONDAY – FRIDAY

8AM – 5PM

VOTING SITE CLOSED

SATURDAY – SUNDAY



TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 4

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