

# ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES



## MONTHLY PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### JANUARY 2016

Dear Co-Chairs and Board Members:

First I would like to extend our deepest condolences to the family of longtime AFN staff member and convention coordinator, Alissa Herrman Grohall, who passed away this month at the age of 46. Alissa is survived by her three children, husband and large extended family. She started at AFN when she was 18, and spent more than 20 years working on behalf of Alaska Native people. She is in our thoughts and prayers.

As the 29th Alaska Legislature's 2nd Session commences in January, all eyes are on the state's fiscal crisis. The AFN board at its December meeting created a fiscal committee to ensure our membership has the most up-to-date information on the current situation, to explore the several fiscal plans now on the table and report back to the board. The committee, chaired by Crawford Patkotak, wants AFN's position to remain focused on the long term and the positive and for AFN to contribute to fair and equitable solutions.

The committee heard in-depth presentations from the Walker administration and UAA's Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER). To watch a video of ISER's 1-hour, 20-minute presentation, [click here](#). AFN's Leadership Retreat on the State Fiscal Crisis — in Juneau on February 11 — is an opportunity for the AFN board along with other Native leaders to discuss at length the various plans and opportunities.

2015 Convention resolutions follow-up continues. In addition to specific requests and calls to action, many resolutions are included in state and federal issues packets that are presented to lawmakers and officials at both levels and taken up for further action by AFN committees.

If you have any questions, please let me know. 2016 will be a busy year with fiscal challenges in the state, the final year of the Obama administration, and national and local elections.

Julie Kitka

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## UPCOMING

### CAAN

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

### LEADERSHIP RETREAT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

### AFN BOARD MEETING

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

### SUBSISTENCE ROUNDTABLE

FRIDAY, MARCH 25

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## **WHITE HOUSE**

Mark Brzezinski, former U.S. Ambassador to Sweden and now Executive Director of the U.S. Government's Arctic Executive Steering Committee, visited Alaska in January to meet with Alaskan officials and AFN. He is charged with ensuring that the many Obama administration's arctic commitments move forward.

U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz will join U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, Senate Indian Affairs Committee Chairman John Barrasso, and four other U.S. senators who are members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, on February 15 for a hearing in Bethel. The hearing will focus on the high costs of energy in rural Alaska and innovations going forward.

## **SUBSISTENCE COMMITTEE**

### **ANILCA Testimony**

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on December 3, 2015 on the implementation of ANILCA. AFN submitted written testimony that articulated historical context of subsistence protection in federal law, current challenges and workable solutions. AFN asked for a greater co-management role for Alaska Natives.

### **HJR 20 And Federal Overreach**

First introduced in the first session (2015), HJR 20 urges the U.S. Congress to enact legislation to clarify and recognize each individual state's authority to manage the fish and wildlife within its borders. As originally written, the bill calls on Congress to enact major changes to fish and game management law and policy and if such changes were enacted by Congress, would pose a serious threat to subsistence protections in Alaska. Attorneys representing Native interests are working to add language to the bill that includes subsistence protections.

### **Subsistence and Co-Management Roundtable**

In the ANILCA testimony we submitted, we asked for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to hold field hearings in rural Alaska to learn what is going on with subsistence management. Senator Murkowski committed to participating in a roundtable with AFN on subsistence and co-management. The roundtable will be on March 25 in Anchorage for two hours. We will request increased funding for co-management projects and cooperative agreements. The AFN Subsistence Committee will take the lead in organizing and presenting at the roundtable. All AFN board members are welcome to attend.

## **CAAN**

Please see the attached State Priorities Packet.



## **LEGISLATIVE AND LITIGATION COMMITTEE**

In addition to tracking the numerous fiscal reforms put forward by Governor Walker and members of the Alaska State Legislature, AFN is monitoring two other bills and expects to track several more as the second session of the 29th Alaska State Legislature progresses.

### **HB 200/SB 112, Adoption of Child in State Custody**

HB 200/SB 112, drafted by Governor Walker in collaboration with AFN, proposes to amend the state's adoption laws to bring Alaska into better compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act by: (1) allowing the adoption of a child-in-need-of-aid (CINA) to be filed and heard within the child's CINA case; and (2) defining the meaning of a 'proxy.'

Specifically, confidentiality restrictions in CINA cases limit the participation of Native peoples in adoption cases because — even though the issues are often related — the cases proceed separately under Alaska law, with adoption cases being so far along by the time that Native peoples seek to intervene that state trial court judges tend to favor the child's permanency over the Native family or individual's participation. Moreover, even if participation in the adoption cases is requested early on, Alaska law does not define the meaning of 'proxy' in lieu of a formal petition to adopt, which is how one must signal his or her desire to participate in the adoption case and potentially adopt the child.

AFN strongly supports the bills because they correct both of these limitations, and bring the state into better compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

### **SB 91, Omnibus Criminal Law and Procedure; Corrections**

SB 91, jointly sponsored by Senators Coghill, Ellis, McGuire, Costello, Bishop and Micciche, aims to usher in cost-effective and evidence-based criminal justice reform by enacting 21 recommendations suggested by the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission, including expanding electronic monitoring, reforming probation, and providing incentives for offenders to be law-abiding citizens.

AFN strongly supports the bill because it provides young offenders, many of whom are Native, with a chance of redemption through restitution and personal responsibility. It also proposes to save the state considerable funds over the next few decades, while reducing recidivism.

### **HB 111, Toxic Free Children's Act**

HB 111, sponsored by Senator Bill Wielechowski, seeks to protect Alaskan children from exposures to toxic chemicals, including PCBs and PBDEs — which are found in dangerously high levels in the state, particularly in the Arctic — by: (1) requiring the state to develop a list of priority chemicals that pose unnecessary risk to children's health, which will lead to an eventual phase out of these toxic chemicals in children's products; and (2) end the use of toxic flame retardants in children's products sold in Alaska such as TDCPP, TCEP and TCPP.

AFN strongly supports the bill because these chemicals go virtually unregulated in Alaska, and because they continue to be used in children's products despite the fact that they are highly toxic.