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Sullivan spars w/ legislators

Senator focuses on partisan attacks during annual speech, some lawmakers respond in kind with questions

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, issued a barrage of attacks against former President Joe Biden and other Democrats during the senator's annual address to the Alaska Legislature on Wednesday.

Sullivan, who is seeking reelection to a third term this fall, reiterated a range of talking points from previous speeches in recent months while touting Alaska's "comeback" since President Donald

Trump began his second term 13 months ago. The senator mentioned Biden by name 11 times during the 90-minute joint session, while using Trump's name three times.

"Alaska has lived under a pendulum," Sullivan said during remarks referencing Trump's first term that began in 2017. "One administration encouraging development of our economy and resources, then another administration

coming in and saying 'no, through executive orders, we're going to shut it down.'"

Highlights revisited by the senator included Trump's executive order mandating the repeal of regulations that inhibit resource development in Alaska, a major expansion of U.S. Coast Guard ships and facilities, and passing tax cut measures. Many of the specific projects he referred to such as a natural gas pipeline, new oil fields, data centers and Coast Guard icebreakers are years away.



Kelly Parise hugs her friend Adriana Hurtte on Thursday, Aug. 14, 2025. Parise brought Hurtt lunch and offered help on View Drive in the wake of the flood.



JASZ GARRETT / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Home insecurity

Assembly asks flood victims on View Drive to help pay for their buyout

By JASZ GARRETT
Managing Editor

View Drive residents say they are facing an "impossible question" in an informal poll received by the City and Borough of Juneau.

A couple who brought the idea of a federal disaster buyout to CBJ say a lack of transparency isn't allowing them to make an informed decision about whether or not to help pay a 25% local cost

share for the project. Some people in the neighborhood previously expressed similar concerns about a lack of information clouding their judgment on preparations before a record flood occurred for a third straight year last August.

There are 18 homes on View Drive and, if every property participated in the program, there could be a \$6 million local cost share, according to City Manager Katie Koester.

GOP candidates for governor take on AI, Greenland at Juneau forum

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

There's general — not unanimous — agreement about keeping the capital in Juneau, not annexing Greenland and cutting state spending. There's a wider range of opinions about uses of AI, whether judges should be elected or appointed, and how Abraham Lincoln would decide on an appropriate Permanent Fund Dividend.

Ten of the 12 GOP candidates for governor answered an array of conventional and unorthodox questions during an 80-minute forum in Juneau at the Capital City Republicans' annual Lincoln Day dinner on Wednesday. While Abraham Lincoln as the first Republican U.S. president was referenced in many of the questions, the topics and responses frequently were about levels of support for current President Donald Trump's agenda.

Eight of the 10 candidates answered Trump when asked to name their favorite president other than Lincoln and Ronald Reagan. Five said or suggested Trump is the best president ever.



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End unsustainable halibut policy

By BONNY MILLARD

I would like to begin by stating that Alaska’s halibut resource is currently at an all-time low — approximately a 40-year low — and is approaching an endangered state as a result of irresponsible management decisions.

For more than 40 years, I have commercial fished for halibut in Area 2C, primarily in Cross Sound, Icy Strait, Lynn Canal and the adjacent ocean corridor. I currently participate in the commercial longline fishery and operate under of the most highly monitored regulatory frameworks in the state. My vessel is equipped with cameras that operate 24 hours a day throughout the duration of each fishing trip, documenting all activity. In addition, NOAA enforcement is present at the conclusion of each trip to verify compliance, ensuring there are no violations and, critically, that my landings do not exceed my allocated poundage. My logbook entries must match both camera footage and offload weights. This data is accurate, verifiable and enforceable.

Given this level of accountability, it is reasonable to ask why the halibut resource is nevertheless at a 40-year low.

In my view, the answer lies in the lack of accountability within the sectors engaged in near-total resource extraction without enforceable monitoring. The honor system reporting structure applied to the unguided recreational sector is not sufficient, and the data derived from it is therefore unreliable. Inaccurate data leads directly to flawed management decisions.

Over time, as the commercial quota has been reduced, I have purchased additional quota in order to remain viable. Like many commercial fishermen, I have always believed that stewardship of the resource requires restraint—you cannot sustainably catch more fish when the biomass is declining.

Unfortunately, this principle is not being applied consistently across all user groups.



Keep Eaglecrest’s empowered board

Contributors to this opinion essay include long-time Eaglecrest Ski Area supporters Deborah Craig, Robert Marshall, Bruce Griggs, Mary Frances Griggs, Katie Bausler, Betsy Fischer, Dave Hanna and Rick Harris.

Eaglecrest is in the news again, with clouds clearing but storm potential. The good news is the Eaglecrest Board of Directors (EBD) recently re-formed under new leadership and new members have extensive Eaglecrest and leadership experience — the “A Team.” Also, Eaglecrest’s General Manager (GM) Craig Simmons resigned after 14 tumultuous months on the job.

The storm ahead: Mayor Beth Weldon proposed an Ordinance to demote the EBD from “empowered” to “advisory” status to give the City and Borough of Juneau manager’s of-

fice control over Eaglecrest. Many in the ski community have already expressed that they overwhelmingly do not support this change and the Assembly has the power to vote no.

During the last two ski seasons, almost everything on the mountain broke despite hiring more people with better pay than ever before. It became evident during several EBD meetings that routine maintenance was not performed and correct procedures per established policy were not followed. The GM’s appointment is a cautionary tale to ensure competence before handing over the keys to the equipment. While Mr. Simmons publicly laid blame on the last GM, the weather and now the EBD, this was a failure of his leadership.



It will come down to sales vs. income tax

By LARRY PERSILY

This is a tax tutorial for gubernatorial candidates, for legislators who will report to work next year and for the Alaska public.

Think of it as homework, with more than eight months to complete the assignment which is not due until the November election.

The homework is intended to inform, not settle the debate over a state sales tax or a state income tax — or neither, which is the preferred option for many Alaskans.

But for those Alaskans willing to consider a tax as a personal responsibility to help fund schools, roads, public safety, child care, state troopers, prisons, public health nurses, foster care and everything else necessary for healthy and productive lives, someday they will need to decide on a state income tax or state sales tax to end the fantasy of pretending savings will

last forever.

This homework assignment is intended to get people thinking with the facts, not emotions. Electing the right candidates will be the first test.

Alaskans have until the next election because nothing will change this year. It will take a new political alignment led by a reality-based governor to organize support in the Legislature and among the public.

But next year, maybe, with the right elected leadership, Alaskans can debate a state sales tax or personal income tax. Plus, of course, corporate taxes and oil production taxes, but those are for another school day.

One of the biggest arguments in favor of a state sales tax is that visitors would pay it. Yes, they would, but not as much as many Alaskans think.



Dunleavy seeks \$3,650 PFD. The House's is \$0. Neither is close to reality. So why do it?

Lawmakers say proposals are part of a complex budget process — but residents take them seriously

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Alaskans aren't getting a \$3,650 Permanent Fund Dividend this year, nor one of \$0, even if those are the amounts in competing draft budgets by the governor and Legislature.

The prevailing wisdom inside the Capitol is the budget for the coming year will look a lot like this one, including a PFD similar to the \$1,000 paid out last year.

"As I've said repeatedly, there will be a dividend," Rep. Andy Josephson, D-Anchorage, said in an interview Monday. "It's probably going to be in the \$750 to \$1,400 range."

But House majority members stirred up plenty of unrest last week by setting the PFD at \$0 in its



MARK SABBATINI / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Juneau Mayor Beth Weldon, left, testifies before the House Finance Committee at the Alaska State Capitol on Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026.

draft budget. The move is akin to Gov. Mike Dunleavy submitting a proposed budget with a PFD of \$3,650 last December, in the sense nobody voting on the budget expects either to be the actual divi-

dend amount.

Both are essentially "placeholders" or "starting points" as lawmakers assess, negotiate and await an abundance of fiscal factors that will affect what the final budget — and PFD — look like.

Right now a \$3,650 PFD would result in a \$1.5 billion deficit in a roughly \$14 billion budget next year, while a \$0 PFD would result in about an \$800 million surplus in a \$12 billion budget. However, a \$1,000 PFD wouldn't necessarily equate to a "balanced" budget since, among other factors, oil prices are expected to be lower next year than this year.

The state has \$3 billion in the Constitutional Budget Reserve to cover shortfalls, but lawmakers already are being asked during the coming weeks to spend \$425 million of that on supplemental costs in the current year's budget.



7 years after Tracy Day disappears, daughter still hopes

Kaelyn Schneider awaits justice for her mom and all MMIP families

By **JASZ GARRETT**
Managing Editor

Tracy Lynn Day, a Lingít woman from the Deisheetaan clan, went missing in Juneau on Valentine's Day in 2019.

She was declared dead by the Juneau court in June of 2025, although she has never been found. Day would be 50 years old now.

Her daughter, Kaelyn Schneider, said she requested the declaration to settle Day's estate. Seven months later, the death is still not legally recognized since Schneider has had trouble obtaining her mother's legal documents from family members, such as Day's birth certificate and Social Security card.

"I'm going to have to just pay for them," Schneider said in an interview. "I've been trying to figure it out, but I did take a break because I'm pregnant and it's just a lot of stress."

But Schneider said the primary goal behind her mother's death declaration was not to settle her family's estate — she was hoping the Juneau Police Department would release evidence about her mother's case.

"They never did," Schneider said. "I asked every possible question of different scenarios and it was very counterproductive answers. They said the case is still ongoing, so we can't release it."

"It just seems like there is less action when it comes to missing Native people compared to other cases," Schneider said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAELYN SCHNEIDER

Tracy Lynn Day is seen pictured with her daughter, Kaelyn Schneider, who said the childhood photo shows how "radiant and loving she was."

Mine company plans road near Herbert Glacier; cabin put on hold

Controversy about New Amalga Gold Project expands to concerns about nearby recreational use

By **JASZ GARRETT** and **MARK SABBATINI**
Juneau Independent

Notice of a proposed access road to a planned gold mine near Herbert Glacier was published by the state Wednesday, following the U.S. Forest Service's cancellation of a recreational cabin near the glacier in a draft decision published last month.

If the road about 21 miles north of Juneau is approved, construction could start this spring, with an

anticipated completion date of fall 2027. The application seeks use of the road until 2061.

The notice for the road was published during a week when the New Amalga Gold Project proposed by Canada-based Grande Portage Resources Ltd. was under intense scrutiny from legislators due to the mine's role in another nearby state project — the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal.

The Dunleavy administration has been rapidly advancing the terminal 30 miles north of Juneau despite strong opposition from regional officials and residents, who have expressed concern a primary intent of the project is providing an ore shipping facility for the mine.

On Friday, a Forest Service spokesperson denied that last month's draft cancellation of the cabin was related to the road proposal. Paul Robbins, a public affairs officer for the Tongass National Forest, added the possibility of Herbert Glacier Cabin being built wasn't eliminated by January's draft decision.

The public comment period to object to the Herbert Glacier project ends March 9. The public comment period on the state's public notice ends March 13.



Sports

Juneau's 18U and 16U skaters team up, earn Sunday championship in OT

By KLAS STOLPE
Sports Editor

It is official. Some of the best hockey players age 18 and younger in the state reside in Juneau.

The Juneau Douglas Ice Association's Capitals 18U "A" team went to an overtime period on the ice Sunday to bring home the 18A Presidents Day Hockey Tournament championship at Anchorage's Ben Boeke Ice Arena.

"The 18Us did exactly what we knew they were capable of," Capitals coach Rich Morris said. "They moved the puck really well and had good pressure on the other teams all weekend."

Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé



COURTESY OF JDIS CAPITALS

Players from the Juneau Douglas Ice Association Capitals 18U and 16U teams pose with their 18A championship banner Sunday, Feb. 15, 2026.

senior Elliot Welch hit a hard Capitals shot that eluded traffic and beat Wasilla's Alaska Avalanche 18A goalie Tess Jorgensen at 0:47 of overtime for

the 2-1 title win.

"The goal was just a shot from the blue line," Capitals captain Welch said. "I saw there was traffic in front of the net, took the shot, and it got deflected off the shins of someone and went five hole. The team played great during the tournament. We kept the pressure on our first three games. The championship game was harder, the team was definitely feeling the fatigue from the game before, but we powered through. Everyone got a big boost of energy when we got the first goal and we kept it up until the end."

The first goal of the game did not come until the third period when the Avalanche's Levi Goff scored at 8:30, assisted by Dean Yeager and Gavin Shafer.

JDHS players get to skate with fellow girls at state tourney

By KLAS STOLPE
Sports Editor

Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé freshmen Winter Osterhout and Brook Taintor swapped their Crimson Bears uniforms for the attire of the Kodiak-Tok girls hockey team to play at the Anchorage Hockey Association's fourth annual Girls High School State Championship Tournament at Anchorage's Ben Boeke Ice Arena.

"What I enjoyed about the coaching Brooke and Winter is that they gave every last effort and were coachable," Kodiak-Tok coach Aubrielle Champagne said. "When I explained the defensive zone structure they followed it to the T. I would take their effort and grit any day as a coach or col-



lege coach over a player that has the skill, but lacks the attitude and effort. They are the type of players I would want on my team."

2023 JDHS graduate Anna Dale, now a junior playing hockey at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pennsylvania, noted their dedication.

"My biggest advice for younger players is to not take anything for granted," Dale said in a text interview. "You only have a certain amount of time playing competitive hockey and to cherish every moment of it is something I will always look back on and feel satisfied about."

Prior AHA girls state hockey tournaments have been held during the Alaska School Activities Association's Division II state championships so JDHS skaters opted to compete with their high school Crimson Bears.



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLIN OSTERHOUT

Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé freshman Winter Osterhout, Kodiak-Tok coach Aubrielle Champagne, and JDHS freshman Brook Taintor pose at the Alaska Hockey Association's high school girls state hockey tournament on Saturday, Feb. 14, 2026.

Features

On The Trails: Auke Bay Harbor in February's rain and wind

By MARY F. WILLSON

The weather was dismal on the day I ventured out onto the floats in Auke Bay — rain with a cold wind. But I went there anyway, with a friend, just for something different from my usual haunts. The one advantage was that the crummy weather kept a lot of other folks away, so our critter-watching was not disturbed. There were rumors that lots of forage fish, maybe mostly juvenile herring, were present,



so we expected a lot of activity. We had fun, watching some marine creatures "doing their things."

We saw a little group of seals moving close to a rocky shore. When their backs came above the water surface, I noticed that some of them appeared to have a broad blackish stripe down their backs—I'd not noticed that on other occasions. It's not clear if that was a figment of my imagination or if it was real...could they have come through an oil slick that smoothed down the fur on their sides or can they ruffle up their back fur upon occasion or ??????

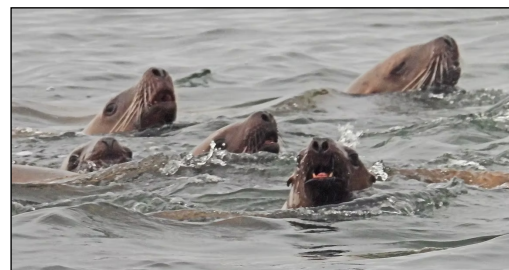


PHOTO BY BOB ARMSTRONG

Sea lions surface near the floats.