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Juneau Independent

The True Local Newspaper of Alaska's Capital City November 22, 2026

Lingít activists ask those opposing Cascade Point to stand in solidarity, defend sacred sites

Defend Daxanâak coalition raises voices to protect sovereignty, food security; second STIP comment period closed earlier this month

By JASZ GARRETT, Managing Editor

Clan members of the Wooshkeetaan, whose homeland is Daxanâak (Berners Bay), urged a crowd protesting the proposed Cascade Point Ferry Terminal to stand with them at the Dimond Courthouse Plaza.

Lingít activists told more than 150 attendees the project is near sacred burial sites in the last untouched village for the Áak'w Kwáan people. Cascade Point is on property owned by Goldbelt Inc., an Alaska Native corporation that states the village and burial

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Fran Seikooni Houston, the Áak'w Kwáan spokesperson, paints black tears onto Keeyeés Tláa Moriah Hayes' cheeks in a grief ceremony for Berners Bay outside the Alaska State Capitol on Friday, Nov. 13, 2026. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

He's been repairing Juneau's instruments for 50 years; final notes are now sounding

'I would like to give somebody else a chance before I'm too old to train them,' says Bill Paulick, who will close Juneau Brass and Winds on Dec. 31

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

A framed news clipping at the entrance of Bill Paulick's music shop notes he once dealt with a damaged French horn by having it run over by a steamroller. While working on a damaged cello at his workshop on Monday, a pencil was a key tool.

Using the pencil to scratch markings in the wood notches where the strings pass through provides a layer of graphite that protects the bridge from the friction, he explained. It's among the innumerable skills and tricks he's learned while spending the past 50 years repairing a wide range of instruments played by students and other local residents.

But Paulick, 75, announced pub-

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Juneau is late getting snow – and so is much of the US

Usually at least a trace arrives in Alaska's capital by Nov. 4, according to NWS; extended forecast shows none may fall until after Thanksgiving weekend

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

There's a good chance Thanksgiving will come and go with no snow in Juneau, which is among a long list of other communities across the U.S. that are way late in seeing their first flake. Usually at least a trace arrives in

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Suicide Basin can hold a little less water now

UAS researchers give flood update at evening talk, look to future

By ELLIE RUEL, Reporter

After an unexpectedly low annual glacial lake outburst flood hit the Mendenhall Valley this summer, researchers studying Suicide Basin said it has gotten a little smaller, but are still working on refining their models.

At an "Evening at Egan" lecture at the University of Alaska Southeast late last month, glaciology researchers Jason Amundson and Eran Hood gave an update on the status of the basin and where their research is heading.

This year, Hood said the basin decreased in volume by 4% — but that doesn't mean the flood volume will continue to get smaller.

"That's not to imply that we've turned the corner and it's only going to go down from here," he said. "There's some variability in time, and so you can expect that it may go up or down a little."

Suicide Basin is an ice-dammed lake located a few miles from the face of Mendenhall Glacier, formed when the tributary Suicide Glacier retreated.

"It left this over-deepened void space along the margin of the main glacier, and then that over-deepened space can fill with water, and it's sealed off at one end by the main Mendenhall Glacier," Hood explained.

As the basin fills with water from rain and melt over the summer, its buoyant pressure tries to lift the glacier.

"So when you get enough pressure and the basin fills to the top, the water starts to force its way under the glacier," Hood said.

The Mendenhall River crested at 14.7 feet on Aug. 13, which was the lowest peak in four years from an August glacial lake outburst flood. The first unprecedented flood was in 2023 when the basin drained to the bottom for the first time. The flood in

*See **Flood** on Page 4*

State sued by Juneau parent for the death of a disabled child placed in Anchorage foster care



The Alaska Office of Children's Services in Juneau on Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

Lawsuit asserts 11-year-old boy died due to negligence during more than a year of placements in multiple foster families

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

A Juneau mother whose 11-year-old disabled son died in August is suing the state and an Anchorage foster parent, alleging the child suffered months of negligent care before his death.

The civil lawsuit filed by the mother in state superior court on Nov. 2 asserts her son was placed in a Juneau foster home in July 2025 by the state Office of Children's Services (OCS) due to concerns about her ability to care for his disabilities.

The child was moved in December to a foster home in Anchorage, but concerns about abuse and neglect there resulted in placement a few months later with yet another family also accused of neglect before he died.

A key accusation in the lawsuit is that the mother, during a video visit with her son when he was with the latter family, saw him being fed corndogs that contained wooden sticks and she told the foster mother "that accidental ingestion of wooden sticks could result in damage to a child's stomach/intestines."

"It was well established that, due to (the child's) disability, he lacked the discernment necessary to avoid eating non-food items like wooden sticks, and required constant supervision by his care providers," the lawsuit asserts.

The lawsuit claims the child died Aug. 30 "due to sepsis brought on by a perforated intestine" after the foster mother found him unconscious and brought him to an Anchorage hospital.

No hearings have been scheduled yet in the case.

Named as defendants in the lawsuit are the State of Alaska, the Department of Family and Community Services (the parent agency of OCS), and the foster mother whose care the child was in when he died. State officials at DFCS and the Department of Law declined to comment on the case.

"For privacy and legal reasons, the Department of Family and Community Services does not comment on pending litigation," Brian Studstill, a spokesperson for the department, wrote in an email to the Juneau Independent on Wednesday.

Investigations by multiple state agencies occur when a foster child dies. Chris Peloso, the attorney representing the mother filing the civil lawsuit, told the Juneau Independent on Wednesday he is aware an autopsy of the child has been performed, but has not been provided with its findings. He said no findings of fault have yet been issued from those investigations.

Attempts by the Juneau Independent to locate and contact the foster mother listed as the defendant in the case were unsuccessful. Her name is not being published by the Independent because she has no criminal charges or convictions listed against her related to this case or any other in the Alaska Court System's online database.

The names of the mother filing the lawsuit and her son are also not being published since it isn't a criminal legal matter and to protect the identities of her minor children.

Pesco said the mother has multiple children, and they were removed from her custody by OCS when she was in an abusive relationship about four or five years ago.

She obtained a protective order against the abuser and took other actions to regain custody, and continued raising her kids without incident until health concerns about her disabled son were raised by officials during the July 2025 hospital visit.

The mother is still staying at a women's shelter with her other kids, which OCS doesn't have unfettered

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FOSTER

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access to and was the cause of the agency's concern about monitoring her disabled son's condition there, Peloso said. The lawsuit notes she has been trying to obtain other housing unsuccessfully.

The relocation of the disabled child to Anchorage occurred because there were no other foster families in Juneau able to care for him, according to the lawsuit. The filing also notes "OCS assured the court that they had previously actively investigated and licensed (the Anchorage) family to provide foster services to disabled children to a standard of reasonable care."

However, two months later on Feb. 26, 2026, "(the child's mother) was informed that (her son) was being removed from his Anchorage foster family due to concerns about his treatment and allegations of neglect," the lawsuit asserts. He was placed in temporary emergency foster care with an OCS contractor in a hotel room for about a month before being transferred again to the foster family where he died.

"Again, OCS assured the court that they had previously actively investigated and licensed this family to provide foster services to disabled children to a standard of reasonable care," the lawsuit notes.

"The child was taken to a hospital May 6 with a fever and severe weight loss," but remained in the foster family's care, according to the lawsuit.

Peloso said he did not know specifically when his client allegedly saw her son eating corn dogs with sticks on them, but the observation and her warning to the foster mother occurred weeks before the child's death.

The lawsuit is seeking compensatory, punitive and incidental damages for expenses such as healthcare and funeral costs, as well as pain and suffering.

Peloso said he primarily works as a public defender for cases involving OCS, so he is familiar with the agency's operations and struggles.

"They are perennially understaffed, and one of the problems with that is that because of their understaffing, they have lowered the requirements for employment there," he said.

A multi-year audit published in 2024 by the Division of Legislative Audit found OCS was failing to make progress on caseworker shortages despite lawmakers appropriating additional funds for that purpose.

OCS was targeted in a 2022 class-action federal lawsuit by a New York-based child welfare advocacy group that alleged widespread misconduct by the state's foster care system. The group dropped the lawsuit in July of this year after a judge dismissed it, stating the plaintiffs didn't prove that the foster youth whose stories were presented at trial were actually harmed or at serious risk of harm.

Another lawsuit was filed at the beginning of this year by a group in Alaska alleging that the state isn't providing sufficient funding for older foster children and is awaiting trial in state court.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or 907-*

FLOOD

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2024 damaged about 300 homes, resulting in HESCO barriers being placed along the Mendenhall River that have largely protected properties over the past two years.

Hood said basin releases were more erratic and not full drainage during the years before the record floods began. UAS research on the basin and its floods began in 2012, after the first outburst in 2011.

"We had the first roughly decade of this where the floods were relatively small," he said. "Generally, the floods weren't large enough to do a lot of damage, and then all of that changed in 2023 when we found for the first time that the basin could drain all the way to the bottom."

Hood said that might be the result of ice cover in the basin melting, freeing up drainage conduits. When the research team first started to study the basin, Hood said they could walk across the bottom of the basin, but now it's covered in ice chunks.

"Most of the remnant ice that was in there has disintegrated and broken up to the point where it's pretty small icebergs, and there's not a lot of volume," he said.

Iceberg volume is one of three main factors that can change the basin's water storage capacity, which can be used to predict downstream flood severity. The other two, ice dam thinning with glacial melt and ice dam migration, are tracked with drone surveys and GPS monitoring.

"Over the last 25 years we've had pretty steady thinning rates. Not seeing a reason that that's going to change," said Amundson, a glaciologist at UAS. "That leaves us with the ice dam migration. We've seen some modest changes happening there. This is a pretty complex 3D ice flow problem and so it's been hard to really make a lot of progress on that."

Hood noted the volume in the basin doesn't necessarily determine the peak of a flood downstream. Amundson explained how fast the water drains is dependent on a complex subglacial channel system, parts of which can change seasonally. The parts of this drainage system that remain consistent throughout the year are called the distributed system, Amundson said.

"What we think happens in the summertime is you start putting water into

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FLOOD

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the glacier and it overwhelms that distributed system," Amundson said. "The water starts to channelize, and it's carving these channels into the glacier upward into the ice, and then the water is basically coalescing, forming this sort of tree-like network."

He said that water flowing through the glacier can cause channel formation and the amount of water flowing through the system ultimately controls the development. According to Amundson, the 2025 release may have been faster since the subglacial system was already primed after an atmospheric river.

"Our thinking is that the drainage system was already pretty efficient in 2025, and so when Suicide Basin started to drain it connected to this efficient system, and it was able to release the water really quickly," he said. "Whereas in '26, the drainage would have been less efficient, had a slower release of water, and therefore the Mendenhall River didn't rise as fast as it had in the previous year."

Amundson said they're continuing to work on discovering if these releases have a "speed limit" through statistical and theoretical modelling work.

After the talk, Hood said the research team is also focusing on processing results of an ice-penetrating radar survey that indicates relative ice thickness along the glacier, and processing data from newly placed GPS sensors to update the existing forecasting models.

"That will help to spin it forward in time," he said.

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Begich reelected to US House

Republican congressman tops independent challenger Bill Hill 51.35% to 48.65% in ranked choice runoff; inmate Eric Hafner gets 8.36% before being eliminated



Rep. Nick Begich III, R-Alaska, sign-waves with supporters at the edge of Midtown Mall on Nov. 2, 2026, in Anchorage. (AP Photo/Lindsey Wasson)

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Republican U.S. Rep. Nick Begich III has won a second term as Alaska's lone U.S. member, defeating independent challenger Bill Hill by a 2.7% margin in a ranked choice runoff conducted Wednesday evening by the Alaska Division of Elections.

Begich received 47.56% of first-choice votes, Hill 41.82%, Democratic federal prison inmate Eric Hafner 7.96% and Libertarian Jim McDermott 2.66%. The final ranked choice tally after the lower-ranked candidates and write-in votes was Begich with 51.35% and Hill 48.65%.

The results are not official until the state certifies them, which is scheduled Nov. 25. Division of Elections Director Carol Beecher said after Wednesday's ranked choice tabulations that "we plan to certify the election as per the law." She confirmed that includes the U.S. Senate race won by Democratic challenger Mary Peltola, after Gov. Mike Dunleavy and other Republican officials said the race might not be certified due to allegations her campaign recruited spoiler candidates.

Begich's win, while expected based on polls and prediction websites, was nonetheless among the bright spots for Republicans who saw larger-than-expected losses in Alaska and nationwide during the midterm elections. He was a strong supporter of President Donald Trump, who is largely blamed for his party's losses, but was also able to cite unprecedented success for a freshman House member with 10 pieces of legislation passed.

"To the hundreds of thousands of Alaskans who made your voice heard this month, thank you for engaging in this important process," Begich said in

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BEGICH

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a prepared statement. “Serving as Alaska’s sole representative in the U.S. House is an honor that my team and I take seriously. We work hard for the people of our state, and I look forward to serving all Alaskans: young and old; rural and urban; Republican, Independent, Libertarian, and Democrat alike. We’ve had success these past two years for our state, and we will endeavor to continue to build on that momentum as I serve you in the 120th Congress.”

Hill, a commercial fisherman and business owner making his first run for public office, emerged as the main challenger to Begich after Democrat Matt Schultz dropped out a month before the Aug. 18 primary and endorsed Hill. The Alaska Democratic Party also endorsed Hill — but he in turn repeatedly declined to say which party he would caucus with if elected to Congress.

Both Hill and Democratic officials expressed concern about Hafner, who isn’t scheduled for release from prison until 2036 and would be ineligible to serve if elected, with some questioning if his presence was a ploy to help Begich’s campaign. But Hill, in a prepared statement Wednesday night, accepted the results and conceded the race.

"Tonight, I called Nick Begich to congratulate him on his victory. I wished him well as he continues representing Alaska in Congress, because all Alaskans have a stake in his success," Hill said. "This campaign has always been about taking power back from the DC elites and putting it in the hands of the hardworking people of Alaska. While we did not prevail in this election, we will continue that fight together."

The ranked choice tallies involving votes for Hafner can at a glance appear as if his absence might have allowed Hill to defeat Begich. But the full statistical picture is more complex and cannot provide a definitive answer to that scenario because about half of the people voting for Hafner as their first choice did not rank another candidate on the ballot.

So in the first ranked choice round the field of Begich (47.56%), Hill (41.82%), Hafner (7.96%) and McDermott (2.66%) resulted in the elimination of McDermott, leaving a new field of Begich (48.71%), Hill (42.93%) and Hafner (8.26%) after McDermott's second-choice votes were distributed.

In the next and final round, the 23,816 votes for Hafner were distributed to the next-ranked candidates on his ballots. Of those, 10,693 went to Hill and 1,627 to Begich and 11,465 were exhausted because there were no further rankings on them. That means Hill was able to close a 5.78% gap with Begich to 2.7% with the 9,066 net votes gained from Hafner, but was still 7,385 votes short of Begich’s total.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

PROTEST

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grounds are not where the terminal is planned. But the Áak’w Kwáan are still concerned about disruption.

The Defend Daxanâak coalition and Southeast Alaska Conservation Council organized the Nov. 13 event to raise awareness about the terminal sought by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and its potential cultural impacts.

“Our elders are calling on all of us to come together with love to protect our lands, to spread this message that we will not stand for our ancestors being buried up, no matter where it is,” said Keeyeés Tláa Moriah Hayes, who is Wooshkeetaan. “Starting with Berners Bay, and starting with coming together and making sure that this doesn’t happen anymore.”

Black tears were painted across her face to symbolize grief.

“Our ancestors mean much more to us than this, and these lands are here to sustain us, our people, the hunters, the fishermen, and we need these lands so we can come together to be on the land and be together and continue our way of life,” she said. “That’s what’s at stake. It’s us, and we will not stand down.”

Shaagunastaa Bob Sam said it had been a long time since a ceremony like this was held to mourn.

“Berners Bay is a living entity. It’s human being just like us and it deserves to live just like us,” Sam, who is of the L’eeneidí clan, said. “And if

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Juneau Independent

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we lose Berners Bay — Juneau — you're going to go hungry. You're going to struggle. You're going to suffer if we lose Berners Bay — the halibut, all the food, the fresh air — we're going to lose it."

Signs being held by attendees read "ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT NEEDS YOU!" and "Clean Water Healthy Fish."

"I wanted to do it in public. It has more meaning," he told those witnessing the grief ceremony. "Ceremony is the most important thing. We never forget ceremony and we can feel the importance."

He said it was significant the L'eeneidí, the Wooshkeetaan's opposite clan, put regalia on them during the ceremony.

"It shows how much we're going to support them to catch their tears, to pray, to protect Berners Bay," he explained.

Fran Seikooni Houston, the Áak'w Kwáan spokesperson, said efforts to protect Berners Bay have been ongoing for 40 years. She is L'eeneidí from the Big Dipper House.

"We're not talking about my mother's time and we're not talking about my grandmother's time, because no matter whatever came up, they had to go through as to what I'm stepping in and filling their shoes, their moccasins, to protect Berners Bay," she said.

She said the last time the Áak'w Kwáan spoke about Berners Bay was when the state proposed the Juneau Access Road 25 years ago. It would have crossed Berners Bay to connect Skagway and Juneau.

"This is the last beautiful place that we have left because this gives me an idea as to what our ancestors went through when we first had the first contact. Things have been taken away, and Berners Bay — they do this and it gets destroyed. That's why I got tears trying to protect it," she said. "There were seven villages, means seven grave sites. And if they build, what's going to happen to all that? What's going to happen to the wildlife that lives in Berners Bay?"



People gather at the Dimond Courthouse Plaza for a protest against the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal project on Friday, Nov. 13, 2026. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

Houston said every time she visits Berners Bay she feels her ancestors around her — and she could feel them while speaking to protesters.

The state has said the proposed ferry terminal aims to make a shorter trip to Haines or Skagway.

Houston, like others opposing the project, said Cascade Point is meant to accommodate expanded mining and logging. Many critics say the project's primary purpose is to benefit the New Amalga Gold Mine, which plans to ship ore from Cascade Point. The Canadian mining company, Grande Portage Resources Ltd., has stated it will assess building an ore terminal in Berners Bay even if DOT does not move forward.

A state-published economic analysis of the project asserts the project will benefit Goldbelt Inc. as the property owner and Grand Portage. The state report acknowledges "culturally significant sites near Cascade Point require supervision and may offer archaeological learning opportunities during planned excavation."

Goldbelt CEO McHugh Pierre, during a livestream with company shareholders Nov. 13, said his company and the U.S. Forest Service have surveyed the area since the early 1990s, and there are no burial or other sacred sites on the property where the terminal is proposed.

Initial surveys by archeologists on Goldbelt land found what appeared to be harvesting sites for clams, mussels, tree bark and other necessities, Pierre said. A subsequent Forest Service assessment in 2005 revealed no new cultural materials, he said.

"It's now been sitting for 21 years (and) there has been no documentation of new sites, and there's no history of that in this area," he said. "Now there is history of it in other areas around Berners Bay, but not at this location."

"And so I want to be very clear to everybody that Goldbelt will not des-

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ecrate any type of culturally significant sites," Pierre added. "We have not. We will not in the future…We will respect our land with the utmost dignity and care."

But Houston expressed concern about further development, which some ferry terminal supporters have said they see as an opportunity. She added ferries are needed in Southeast Alaska, not another terminal. Signs held by protesters echoed this thought.

"I would like to thank each and every one of you for being here," she said. "It shows that you care, and you're showing the support as to what's happening."

Stacy Unzicker, SEACC's mining campaigner, condemned DOT and its contracted construction company for staging equipment at the site in late October. She said SEACC is prepared to take legal action if groundbreaking occurs, as outlined in the organization's Oct. 30 cease-and-desist letter.

Justin Sherman, acting communications manager for DOT, told the Independent the department plans to complete Alaska Historic Preservation Act consultations with tribal entities and receive Section 106 clearance from the State's Office of History and Archeology before construction begins.

"This is anticipated to take several months," he wrote in an email on Nov. 10. "Once we have a better idea of the timeline, and before construction begins, the department will be providing a public update with information on anticipated activities, schedules, and potential impacts."



Fran Seikooni Houston, the Áak'w Ḵwáan spokesperson, and Shaagunastaa Bob Sam hold up a robe made to honor Berners Bay outside the Alaska State Capitol on Friday, Nov. 13, 2026. "We're here to catch your tears and wrap our robes around you, comfort you and stand with you," Sam told all Wooshkeetaan attendees. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

Sherman said the department "is following all applicable laws and regulations in advancing the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal project. There is no attempt at the unlawful practice of improper segmentation."

About 92% of more than 600 people surveyed oppose the terminal. In an interview, Mallory LeBlanc said the reason she attended Friday's protest was to say no again.

"The comment periods don't seem to be working as much as they could be, so it's nice to just be able to come out here and at least make a physical appearance and everything. The same results might still happen," she said. "The public still says no. We're just doing it in a different way."

A public comment period on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan, which includes the project, was reopened until Friday, Nov. 20.

Tyler Breen, SEACC's environmental policy analyst, said DOT still needs to complete steps to determine

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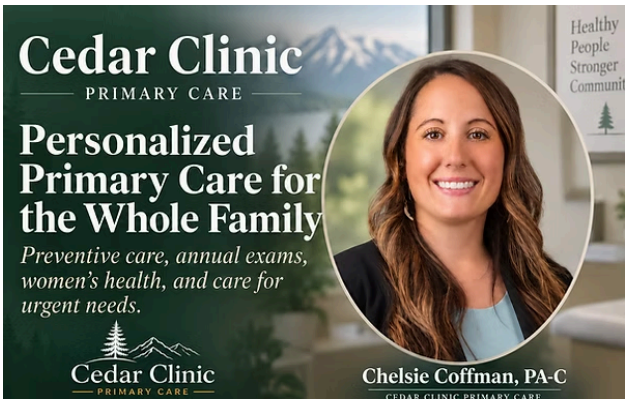

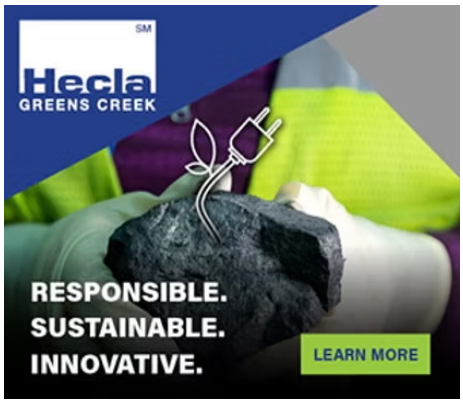



PROTEST

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whether the project is viable and if it should be permitted, part of which is a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Army Corps made a jurisdictional determination on Oct. 16 that Stage 1 work is not within the federal agency's jurisdictional wetlands, so the agency's permit isn't needed at this time.

SEACC criticized the state for not already consulting tribal members.

"You cannot predetermine the outcome of a permit," Breen said. "This shows that DOT is treating the permitting and public process, meaning first and foremost, their voice, their knowledge — also your voice and your knowledge in the public comment period — as performative."

Sam said the Defend Daxanâak coalition's next steps are meeting with Alaska's new governor, Democrat Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, who will be sworn in Dec. 7. He said the coalition is also working closely with other tribal entities. Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy is a strong supporter of the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal. Before the protest ended, Sam addressed the Alaska State Legislature and Dunleavy's administration by turning toward the Alaska State Capitol.

Sam, a cemetery caretaker, emphasized ancient spirituality is still on the land and urged the state to go through the proper permitting process.

"Do the right thing. Be honest. Don't cover up. We elected you," he said. "Berners Bay is much, much more than us modern people can have a concept of."

• Contact Jasz Garrett at jasz@juneauindependent.com or 907-723-9356. Editor Mark Sabbatini contributed to this story.

Peltola's win won't deter DOJ investigation, officials of the Trump administration say

More than 200 subpoenas issued so far in criminal probe of allegations Democrats recruited spoiler candidates for Alaska's Senate race, according to Fox News



This combination of photos shows Alaska Democratic Senate candidate Mary Peltola on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026, in Anchorage, left, and Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, on Monday, Nov. 2, 2026, in Soldotna. (AP Photo/Lindsey Wasson)

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Mary Peltola's unofficial victory in Alaska's U.S. Senate race won't halt a U.S. Department of Justice lawsuit and criminal investigation of her campaign, according to Trump administration officials and media reports.

The lawsuit ordered by President Donald Trump, as well as the criminal probe, are based on allegations Peltola's campaign and Democratic party officials recruited spoiler candidates with the same name as Republican incumbent Dan S. Sullivan in the hope of confusing voters.

Peltola and other accused have denied such efforts. Legal experts have said such tactics have occurred previously in other campaigns and are generally legal.

The Democratic challenger was declared the winner of the Senate race by the Associated Press on Tuesday night, when an updated tally by the Division of Elections showed her with 50.12% of the vote with an estimated 99% of ballots counted. Sullivan trails with 45.8%, a gap larger than the combined votes of two other candidates on the ballot — Republican Gerald Heikes at 2.12% and retired Petersburg teacher Dan J. Sullivan at 1.65%.

The results are scheduled to be certified Nov. 25. A spokesperson for Sen. Sullivan said Monday the senator is waiting for that certification before making any declarations about the race.

The allegations of recruiting spoiler candidates, which circulated for months after Dan J. Sullivan entered the race in May, gained steam on Oct. 28 when The New York Times cited a dozen people plus documents in reporting such efforts occurred. The law-

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DJO

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suit sought, among other actions, to halt certification of the race if Peltola wins by fewer votes than Dan J. Sullivan receives.

U.S. Attorney General Todd Blanche, when asked by reporters last week if DOJ's efforts would continue if Peltola wins by a clear margin, said "the priority of investigating a criminal potential fraud doesn't stop because of the election, no matter who wins or loses." A DOJ spokesperson told the Washington Post on Tuesday night the department stands by those remarks.

Fox News reported Wednesday more than 200 subpoenas have been issued by DOJ as part of its investigation.

Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy has also said a state criminal investigation is occurring alongside DOJ's.

Among those keeping up the fight in the other direction is Alaska attorney David Weber, who on Monday filed a letter asking federal judge Sharon Gleason to sanction three DOJ lawyers for using the lawsuit to interfere in the election for political purposes, according to Newsweek. Gleason dismissed the lawsuit without a hearing just before Election Day, with DOJ now appealing the ruling.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or 907-957-2306.*

'Desperately seeking Santa': Gallery Walk seeking successor after longtime Claus moves to Florida



Dale Hudson, dressed as Santa, poses with holiday helpers and revelers during Gallery Walk in downtown Juneau on Dec. 5, 2025. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

Role is a time of good cheer and quick wits, says departed jolly old elf traveling under the name of Dale Hudson, newly married in October despite objection from the Grinch

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

It won't be a year without a Santa Claus in Juneau. But for some local residents it may be a year without the Santa Claus.

Organizers of Gallery Walk, just over two weeks away, are "desperately seeking Santa" since Dale Hudson, who's appeared as the jolly old elf at the event for more than 15 years, moved to Florida earlier this year. There is a "Plan B" Santa stand-in available should a suitable (and suit-owning) Saint Nick not be found, but the holiday hosts are keeping new applicants on their wish list until at least next Wednesday.

"We would like to have Santa secured before Thanksgiving," said Charla Brown, a member of the Downtown Business Association, which co-hosts the event on the first Friday of December with the Juneau Arts and Humanities Council.

Hudson, in an interview with the Juneau Independent on Wednesday, said being Santa requires quick wit as well as good cheer since some kids may ask for things that won't be under their

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SANTA

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tree on Christmas morning. But he said mostly it's just about embracing the spirit of the season.

"Get in there and act like Santa. Don't be embarrassed," he said. "Most people don't even know it's you. I worked there at the federal building for 25 years as a cook at the daycare and I'd have kids come in that had no clue it was even me."

Santa is sometimes seen walking the streets with his elves and other companions at Gallery Walk, but mostly he's inside the downtown Heritage Coffee getting photos taken with hundreds of kids and parents while hearing their wish lists. Hudson said he has a ready response for kids who ask for a $1,000 phone or a new pet.

"I don't really promise him anything — I tell him that I will do the best I can," he said. "And if they want any live animals I say that Santa cannot haul him in his sleigh anymore. Plus, he has to talk to your parents to make sure that it would be OK. So I kind of throw it back on the parents."

Hudson said his history as Santa began before his Gallery Walk appearances, starting at Valley Lumber many years ago when they hosted holiday open houses and then showing up at the Nugget Mall when it was a seasonal shopping destination. He continued to make appearances around Juneau until his departure.

He said his first Gallery Walk was in 2009, appearing for many years with his first wife, Suzanne, who owned the notorious downtown antique store Nana's Attic until her death in 2023 after they'd been married for 55 years.

"We would walk up and down Seward Street, and on down Front Street and then back, just on our own, dressed as Mr. and Mrs. Claus," Hudson said. "We were always out there and dressed up, and it was kind of fun because they would have other Santas stationed out around the area, and I would like to go and stand by the door, and let the little kids ask their parents 'Why are there two Santa Clauses?'"



The Grinch crashes the wedding of Dale Hudson and Karen Underwood at Sandy Beach on Oct. 3, 2025. (Photo courtesy of Dale Hudson)

Hudson became a more "official" Santa at the event by fulfilling the role for Gallery Walk's co-hosts beginning in 2022. His neighbor, Carolyn Bouvier, filled the role of Mrs. Claus starting in 2023 after his wife's death.

But the role of Mrs. Claus changed this year when Hudson, who moved to Alachua, Florida, in January, returned to Juneau for his Oct. 3 wedding with Karen Underwood. They were dressed as Mr. and Mrs. Claus for the ceremony at Sandy Beach and asked guests to wear suitable holiday attire — and not to bring gifts.

As it turned out, one of those guests was the Grinch.

"(At the part) when 'Does anybody have any reasons these people should not get married?' the Grinch, of course, he objected," Hudson said. "But it was a nice wedding. Everybody told me it was a very different wedding."

Underwood lives and works in Florida, which is why Hudson said he lives there now as well. She drives new cars to buyers who often are in different cities — a career that definitely couldn't exist in Juneau — and Hudson said he's hoping to get a job there as well so he can drive the "chase car" to bring her back after dropoffs.

He said he also plans to return to Juneau next spring to continue working as a seasonal tour guide for the AJ Mine and Gastineau Mill. During summers he's also been a consistent participant as Uncle Sam in Juneau's downtown Fourth of July parade.

Meanwhile, the Gallery Walk hosts are on a shorter deadline to find their new Santa. Brown said there is a husband of an employee willing to stand in, who is their "Plan B," but the hope is to find a faithful Father Christmas.

"Have they done it before? That would be nice to know," she said. "And kind of what their experiences in their life have been. Have they been either a mentor or an example to children, so that we know that they've

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SANTA

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worked in those circles and they work well with children."

"If there's a Mrs. Claus that's awesome. That was always fun to have both of them there," Brown added.

It's a paid job from 4-8 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 4, and the co-hosts are asking "that he arrive in his own red suit, with a good-natured 'ho ho ho' ready to go," according to a DBA Facebook post on Tuesday seeking Santa applicants. People interested can contact downtownjuneau@gmail.com or 907-523-2324.

Volunteers are again being sought as elves. Brown said donations from this year's Santa's visit are on behalf of the nonprofit mental health support organization NAMI Juneau.

Hudson, while encouraging people interested in being Santa at Gallery Walk to "just do it," said he's not sure he'll be appearing as St. Nick in his new hometown this year

"I understand they pay just about twice as much as what I was getting up there, but I've got so many things to do with my new bride and a new house," he said.

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Kreiss-Tomkins selects new budget director

Legislative finance director Alexei Painter will oversee governor-elect's budget; former Republican state senator and gubernatorial candidate Click Bishop will assist transition



The Alaska State Capitol on Jan. 19, 2026. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Text A three-person transition team that includes a former Republican competitor was announced by Democratic Gov.-elect Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins on Tuesday, with a new budget director announced separately.

The transition team includes former Republican state Sen. Click Bishop, who failed to advance beyond the primary in his run for governor this year; Democrat Ana Hoffman, president and CEO of the Bethel Native Corp.; and independent Carol Gore, former president and CEO of Cook Inlet Housing Authority, according to a press release by Kreiss-Tomkins' campaign.

The incoming governor also has selected Alexei Painter as the director of the Office of Management and Budget. He has been the director of the Alaska Legislative Finance Division since 2020, overseeing analysis of the state budget and other fiscal matters for legislators. His departure from that job was announced in a press release Tuesday by the Senate's legislative majority.

"That service has been marked by exceptional professionalism, rigor, and nonpartisan integrity," said Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, D-Anchorage,

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JKT

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chair of the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee, said in a prepared statement Tuesday. "Members of both bodies and both parties have relied on his clear, careful fiscal analysis, and his work has strengthened the Legislature's ability to make informed decisions on behalf of Alaskans. I am grateful for his dedication and for the many contributions he has made to this institution. I wish him every success in his future endeavors."

Painter, in a message to "legislative friends and colleagues" first reported by the Alaska Landmine, stated he is joining the new administration.

The OMB director, who oversees the drafting of the governor's proposed budget, can be a position of significant political influence. Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy's first budget director was Donna Arduin, a highly controversial figure at the center of an initial budget by the governor that seeking drastic spending cuts to public school funding, the Alaska Marine Highway System, Medicaid and other programs. That fueled an unsuccessful recall attempt against Dunleavy and Arduin was let go by the governor's office after less than a year.

Arduin was replaced by Neil Steininger, who was fired in August of 2023 and replaced by current OMB Director Lacey Sanders. Steininger, now a Juneau Assembly member, told the Juneau Independent on Tuesday he considers Painter a strong choice for the position.

"That's such a good get for them," Steininger said. "He's going to be awesome in that job…He knows the work that needs to be done and understands all the technical details and all the relationships that you need to be successful in that role."

Kreiss-Tomkins' first proposed budget is due Dec. 15 — eight days after he will be sworn in, so it will essentially be a draft created by the Dunleavy administration. The new governor's actual spending plan will likely be submitted by the deadline for budget amendments by him for legislators to consider, which is 30 days after the session begins — Feb. 17 for the coming year.

Brief profiles of the three transition team members, according to the press release by the governor-elect's campaign:

• Bishop: "A Republican and former Alaska State Senator from Fairbanks, Bishop served in the legislature from 2013 to 2025, including in Senate leadership and as co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee. He previously served as Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and brings extensive experience in workforce development, infrastructure, and state budgeting."

• Hoffman: "A longtime Alaska Native leader and President and CEO of the Bethel Native Corporation. She has served in leadership roles with the Alaska Federation of Natives and brings decades of experience advocating for rural Alaska, Alaska Native communities, and economic development."

• Gore: "A longtime Anchorage community leader and nonprofit executive who served as President and CEO of Cook Inlet Housing Authority. She brings decades of experience in housing development, organizational leadership, and building partnerships among businesses, government, and community organizations to address Alaska's housing needs."

The three-member transition team "will continue announcing key appointments, policy priorities, and additional opportunities for public engagement in the coming weeks," according to the governor-elect's press release.

The release also announced the launch of rebuildalaska.com, "a central hub for Alaskans interested in serving in the incoming administration, contributing policy ideas, and following the transition process."

"Through the website, Alaskans can submit resumes for positions in state government, express interest in serving on boards and commissions, share recommendations on policy priorities, and receive updates as the new administration takes shape," the release notes.

Kreiss-Tomkins, a former Sitka state legislator, is scheduled to be sworn in Dec. 7 after defeating three Republican opponents in the Nov. 3 election. All three candidates have conceded, with the last of them — Anchorage business owner Bernadette Wilson — doing so on Monday when updated results from the Alaska Division of Elections showed Kreiss-Tomkins with 50.93% of the vote with an estimated 98% of ballots counted.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or 907-957-2306.*

MUSIC

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licly this week that he's closing Juneau Brass and Winds on Dec. 31 after operating it for the past 50 years out of his Back Loop neighborhood home. The last day he will accept instruments for repair is Dec. 15.

"I think it's probably time I try something else and it's been fun as hell," he told the Juneau Independent on Monday. "But I would like to give somebody else a chance before I'm too old to train them."

In addition to repairs, Paulick has sold and rented instruments for decades, with the variety expanding from horns to string and other types of instruments over time. He said he had about 450 rental instruments circulating each school year during a peak period that ended about 15 years ago, and still is involved with 11 school districts in Southeast Alaska plus other musicians elsewhere.

"My band directors are great customers; there's like 20 of them," he said. "But I don't have an easy solution for them. I just can't keep doing this until my 90s — and it's really a physical limitation because my eyesight, even with glasses, you've got these little oboe screws that are a millimeter in diameter and the slots are like microns wide. You get to a point in life when it's just like a lot easier and faster if you get a younger guy, an apprentice, who can still see these bloody things."



Bill Paulick tests placement of a bridge for a cello at his workshop on Monday, Nov. 16, 2026. He is closing his business, Juneau Brass and Winds, on Dec. 31, 2026, after 50 years of repairing, renting and selling instruments. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

Paulick has multiple workshop areas throughout his main home and a few smaller surrounding buildings, with piles of junked horns, saxophones, flutes and bows in various spots. He says those are handy for parts — and also has a large multifunction metalworking machine in his main workshop that can make custom or obsolete parts, along with a variety of other uses.

A few instruments for sale are still hanging on the wall of his retail shop at the entrance to his business, along with a much larger collection of reeds, sheet music and other accessories. On shelves just past the front shop are a few instruments in cases awaiting either repairs or pickup.

In a detached garage where a wall of greenhouse plants coexists with yet more surplus musical parts, the second floor is an acoustically equipped performance space where he meets regularly with groups and individual musicians for lessons and rehearsals.

"I lean toward French horns because that's my thing," Paulick said, adding he played with the Juneau Symphony for 42 years before "a bit of a parting of the ways" and joining Juneau Community Bands.

Paulick, who grew up in Los Angeles and was part of an all-state student honors band, arrived in Juneau in his early 20s when he was commanding a U.S. Coast Guard cutter. He said, "I

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MUSIC

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just fell in love with a place I did not want to leave" and started taking odd jobs to remain until landing a long-term position with the state.

Early in his state career, at the age of 25, came a conversation with a music teacher at what was then Juneau-Douglas High School that would alter his fate and that of countless local musicians.

"Stan Sells, the then-high school band director, said, 'God, I wish I had some way to fix all these bloody trombones' and the light bulb went off," Paulick said. He offered to repair the instruments if the school purchased the necessary cleaning rods — and allowed him to keep them.



Bill Paulick shows a portion of his inventory of saxophones, horns and other non-working instruments in a storage space at Juneau Brass and Winds on Monday, Nov. 16, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

Next came more requests for repairs to more types of instruments, and with those earnings he started buying more parts and supplies he sold out of the shop. By the end of the 1980s — retired from the Coast Guard and at the midpoint of his state career — "I had a full inventory of almost every tool I could possibly need through retained earnings."

"And then I started buying instruments," he said.

That included hundreds of instruments rented to students, with about 150 coming in every year during the next couple of decades for an instrument most would play for the next few years. Paulick said the time he spent repairing those instruments during and after those rentals was comparatively small because of the time he spent with the students at the beginning.

"When I would rent an instrument I wouldn't just pop it out the door," he said. "I would pull a kid aside and say, 'Look, here is how you put it together.' 'Here's how you play it.' 'Now let's get a sound out of it — make sure you can play it.' 'Let's do a scale.'"

Most repairs were for instruments from elsewhere brought in — and Paulick said the work became much more difficult during the early 2000s as parents increasingly went online to buy inexpensive instruments made abroad that were of poor quality.

"If an offshore saxophone or clarinet or flute breaks it's toast. You got to throw it away," Paulick said, noting the metals and fixtures are fragile. "And more and more people were demanding junk because they couldn't afford the expensive stuff."

"The educators, by and large, were smart enough and savvy enough to tell their kids, 'Don't buy it,'" he added. "And the parents were going along with it until the economy was such that they just, if their kid wanted a horn, he was going to have to have something that the parents could afford. It's gotten a lot worse since."

Paulick said his rentals suddenly dropped to about 15 instruments a year around 2012, which he saw as the writing on the wall for that portion of his business.

"I started selling them at deep discount and I continued that for about 10 years," he said, adding only a few playable instruments are left for sale as he prepares to close next month.

The stock of unplayable instruments, parts, tools and other items is considerably larger, which Paulick is seeking to sell as a collection to somebody wanting to establish a repair business in Juneau. He said a person generally knowledgeable about repairs should be able to apply those skills to musical instruments within a period of months via training in-person and online.

"Anybody that gets the business is going to need to be a tinkering engineer, too," Paulick said. "But to me it's fun to do that. You look at a problem, you find a solution — and in my case I actually fabricate the solution."

"I could spend weekends or evenings with them, and show them stuff, and in six months they'd be up and running, and doing so much of their repairs themselves," he said. "And then they could learn stuff on the internet, how-to videos."

The more nuanced skills — such as the pencil trick for preventing wood

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wear — come with experience, Paulick said. He said he learned how to repair cellos, violins and such when the Juneau String Shop closed many years ago. Among the items in a corner of his garage workshop is a collection of horsehair for repairing bows.

"Horsehair has a grain and you get a different sound if you pull it than if you push it," he said. "So we want to even that sound so that when you're pulling your bow either way you get an even sound. And so when I'm redoing a bow I get 50% of the hairs with a grain each direction and then I marry them together. So it's kind of a unique way of doing it. Again, it's something you don't always see in books."

Paulick said he has tried to teach his skills to other people over the years, with mixed results.

"Regulating an oboe is a real science," he said. "I've had a number of folks over the years come out an apprentice in the shop and they never make it past flutes generally because there's more art than science to repairing most of the musical instruments."

Not everything can be saved. The news clipping at the entrance, published in the Juneau Empire around 1990 when his shop had been open for 15 years, begins by noting Paulick "once sent a damaged French horn to his sister and told her to lay it in front of a steamroller near her California home. She mailed it back in a large envelope."

That instrument ended up being a prop at a Juneau Brass Quintet concert when a fellow musician complained "somebody's playing flat" and Paulick stood to reveal his flattened horn to the audience, according to the article.

Paulick said despite the proliferation of internet commerce and cheap instruments, a dedicated person interested in taking over local music instrument repairs can succeed and find it rewarding. One big reason, he said, is he plans to sell his stock cheaply to whoever is willing to take all of it. Another is that repairpersons are a disappearing profession, but musicians of all ages and their instruments will always be seeking to be in full swing.

"I do it more for instant pleasure because it gives me pleasure when some kid comes in in tears, and his parents want to finish breaking it over his head because they invested money in it and the kid screwed it up, and I can be the hero of the day," he said.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or 907-957-2306.*

SNOW

Continued from page 1

Juneau by Nov. 4 and an average of 11.8 inches falls in November, according to the National Weather Service Juneau, which shared its observations on the unseasonably warm weather in a Facebook post Sunday. There have been only four years when Juneau International Airport has not received at least a trace of snow between Nov. 1 and 21, according to the post.

And, yes, a "very strong" El Niño expected to affect winter weather nationwide may be a reason why.

"We know that the temperature does get a lot warmer during El Niño years," Brooke Sullivan, a NWS Juneau meteorologist, told the Juneau Independent on Sunday. "So in some places we have seen higher snowfall during El Niño winters. Other places we've seen little to no snowfall during El Niño years, so it's hard to say if we're going to be getting a lot of snow this year. All we can really say is that it's going to be a warmer temperature for the season, and then we'll see how that plays out going into the future."

A NWS Juneau climate dashboard shows the city has set two high-temperature records this month, reaching 53 degrees Fahrenheit on Nov. 14 and 15.

The possibility of snow has appeared in a few local forecasts during the past few weeks, but temperatures remained far enough above freezing during periods of precipitation to keep any from falling. A similar forecast by NWS Juneau as of Sunday morning calls for "rain likely with a chance of snow" on Tuesday, and then rain likely through next Saturday.

"For the Juneau area, I would say probably not," Sullivan said when asked about the probability of snow on Tuesday. "Maybe if we were up north, near Haines and Skagway, they could probably see some snow on the ground. But until Thanksgiving, so we're looking about a week out from now. I would say probably not a super high chance."

That may be cause for thanks among those still miserable about the past year's snowmageddon — which saw Juneau set a record with 208.6 inches of snow — and chagrin for those eyeing the slopes at Eaglecrest Ski Area. Folks with strong feelings either way have a lot of company as communities across the U.S. used to seeing snow by now are still without.

The U.S. and Canada had only 5.1% snow cover on Nov. 17, the second-lowest reading in the last 20 years, according to an AccuWeather story on Thursday that cited data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Voices

The targets and costs of deceptive political ads

By RICH MONIAK

The dust has barely settled on last week's humiliating rejection of Donald Trump's Republican Party and pundits across the country are already speculating about who is going to run for president in 2028. And looking over their shoulders is an industry drooling at the prospect of being part of the next round of record-breaking campaign spending.

In a column two weeks ago, Larry Presily aptly blasted political campaigns as being "obscenely expensive, intrusive, insulting and painfully long." And he justifiably complained about the "Outside interests" offering advice voters "don't need or want."

But to understand why the campaigns and public action committees play that dirty game requires looking first at the constant stream of consumer-related advertising that's carefully crafted to be ambiguous without being transparently deceptive.

Most people are aware that federal law prohibits false advertising. It's enforced by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which "has a broad mandate to protect consumers from fraud and deception in the marketplace."

The commission's current policy statement regarding deception was published in 1983. It relies heavily on "the perspective of a reasonable consumer," which excludes people who, "because of ignorance or incomprehension, may be misled by even a scrupulously honest claim."

However, advertisers are expected to recognize that because reasonable consumers "may glance only at the headline," the fine print and disclosures elsewhere in an ad are "insufficient to correct a misleading representation."

But consider this 30-second KIA spot. It's one of thousands of examples that's intended to appeal entirely to a viewer's emotions. The objective is less about promoting the car's performance and features than competing for attention in a marketplace swarming with uninformative ads across multiple mediums that didn't exist when the FTC's policy about deception was established.

During the past 30 years, advertising industry revenue in the U.S. has more than quadrupled. It currently employs approximately 200,000 people. The annual median salary is $94,000. That's a lot of human resources earning a decent wage to tell us almost nothing.

Although FTC regulations don't apply to political campaigns, the same advertising strategies are used in political campaigns. And in really competitive races like one between Sen. Dan Sullivan and Mary Peltola, the spending targets the exact kind of people the FTC regulations aren't intended to protect. Voters whose ignorance of the prominent issues surrounding the election are the easiest to deceive.

That's especially true the closer we get to Election Day. It's when the "loudest, most abusive and frequently dishonest messages" that angered Persily start hitting the airwaves and overloading our mailboxes.

Some of this isn't new. Candidates have been making promises they can't keep, embellishing their resumes and accomplishments, and leveling unsubstantiated accusations against their opponents for decades. Only now the level and nature of deceit is getting rapidly worse with every advance in computer technology.

This year, Vivek Ramasamy, the Republican candidate for governor of Ohio, released one of the most dishonest and disgusting campaign ads ever produced. It drew condemnations across the political spectrum.

President Donald Trump wasn't offended by it, though. Dishonesty that benefits him or members of his party never does. That's why he agreed to create an ad for Sullivan masked as an official White House announcement.

About a month before the election, Gov. Mike Dunleavy, and Rep. Nick Begich III joined them and several cabinet members in the Oval Office to tell the news media that the South Korean government had committed to investing $54 billion in the Alaska LNG pipeline project. Trump said it would immediately create up to 12,000 construction jobs and reduce annual energy costs for Alaska households by $1,500 to $2,200.

Alaskans who routinely get their news from reliable sources would quickly learn it was a hoax. But Trump and Sullivan were only trying to fool the least informed Alaskan voters.

In politics, the most deceptive ads are designed to be effective at the margins. Their creators know they'll never be held accountable. The job pays well, especially for those credited with fooling the most voters. And the blatant lying at the highest levels of our government makes it even easier for them to justify.

Meanwhile, someone has to pay the bill for all the dishonest content they produce. And that means members of Congress will spend a lot of time raising money for their reelection campaigns instead doing the work we elected them to do.

• *Rich Moniak is a Juneau resident and retired civil engineer with more than 25 years of experience working in the public sector.*

Who will stand up to the cruise industry?

By LOGAN MILLER

Everyone knows tourism in Juneau is a hot-button issue.

But not everyone agrees on what, if anything, should be done about it.

The Juneau Visitor Industry Task Force (VITF) has been accepting public comments on this issue for months, and recently adopted a new set of recommendations.

Most of my fellow community members who commented were very diplomatic. They acknowledged the hard work of the VITF members. They used a measured tone to express their concerns. They made well-reasoned suggestions for common-sense limits.

And they were almost entirely ignored.

Very little has changed. Myself and dozens of other fed-up Juneauites have unfortunately wasted our time sending emails and comments to the VITF. The VITF issued hollow recommendations that maintain the status quo.

The VITF is a sham. Although some of its members advocated for real limits, the group as a whole apparently operates under the bogus assumption that we need to balance the profits of cruise ship companies with our quality of life.

This should come as no surprise, because the vice-chair of the VITF is a high-up manager working for Princess Cruises and Holland America who has been described as "the face of the [cruise] industry in Juneau."

For decades, this same person simultaneously served as the director for shore operations for Princess Cruises and as the manager of the initiative that sets Juneau's tourism standards. I can't think of a more obvious example of the fox guarding the henhouse.

The VITF and its useless comment process distract us from the real issue, which is that we need to decrease cruise ship traffic in Juneau because the situation is out of control.

It's like a house party that's gotten way out of hand. What started out as a casual gathering with friends has turned into a rager where unwanted strangers are eating all our food, pissing in the sink, and blasting loud music. We've been politely asking them to tone it down, and they keep ignoring us.

But here's the thing. This is the place we call home. We can tell them to leave any time we want. We don't need to have a polite conversation about minimizing the harm they're causing. We have the right to tell them to get out.

We've been told Juneau can't possibly survive if we so much as attempt to limit cruise ships.

We've been told that our only hope is to mitigate the harm caused by the inevitable and ever-increasing flow of cruise ship traffic.

I don't buy any of that.

The cruise industry has been pushing this narrative for decades, and they've succeeded in convincing many Juneau residents to believe their lies.

But not all of us.

Some of us understand that most of the money from cruise ship passengers goes straight back into corporate bank accounts. We understand that the economic benefits we get from tourists buying a few trinkets at the gift shops do not outweigh the inflated cost of living caused by seasonal employee housing, or the jacked-up rent for genuinely local downtown businesses, or the additional burdens on our city's infrastructure.

We understand that Juneau's economy is diverse and resilient and will not crumble if we limit cruise ships. And we understand that in the long term Juneau's economy may actually improve with fewer cruise ships, as we build high-value, low-volume tourism opportunities for longer-stay travelers.

Despite the cruise ship industry's best efforts to convince us otherwise, many of us know that Juneau does not need 1.7-plus million tourists per year to be a thriving community.

We can stop cruise ship corporations from taking over our community. And we don't need to wait for a task force — or the corporations — to give us permission.

What we need is citizen action. We need a new ballot initiative putting enforceable limits on cruise ship passenger numbers. If sleepy little Bar Harbor, Maine, could limit cruise ships, so can we. Even national news outlets can see that we need to set a boundary.

I suggest we start with a clean 1 million passengers per year.

One million annual passengers or fewer was plenty to support a thriving Juneau tourism industry for decades (until 2016, when for the first time more than 1 million passengers arrived), but not so much that it overwhelmed our community. We can and should get back to that.

Predictably, the cruise ship industry will again dump boatloads of money into its pro-tourism propaganda and persuade many Juneauites to vote against their own interests.

Don't care.

The half-dozen wealthy locals who own highly lucrative tourism businesses will cry about how you'll be harming your neighbors and destroying small businesses.

Don't care.

We need to try. Again, and again, and again. Until we stop corporate greed from infecting every corner of our lives.

If we don't, we'll watch our community be devoured by multinational corporations. And all we'll have to show for it will be a few strongly-worded emails in our sent folder.

Enough is enough. It's time to take real action.

• *Logan Miller is a lifelong Alaskan who was raised in Juneau and lives on North Douglas. He is an attorney, and has also worked in commercial fishing and mining.*

Sports

JDHS grapplers take down competition at Lancer Smith

Crimson Bears place sixth, girls 12th at Alaska's largest wrestling tournament



Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé Camden Messmer works to pin Soldotna junior Kaiser DesOrmeaux in their 135-pound match during the 2026 Lancer Smith Memorial Wrestling Tournament at Wasilla's Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center, Friday, Nov. 13, 2026. Messmer won by fall at 5:31. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

Only five wrestling teams inside the state of Alaska placed higher than the Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa. at Kalé Crimson Bears grapplers at the prestigious Lancer Smith Memorial Wrestling Tournament at Wasilla's Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center over the weekend.

With 40 varsity boys teams, 42 varsity girls teams, and 36 junior varsity teams attending, the dozen mats in two gymnasium spaces saw close to 1000 athletes competing. JDHS brought 12 wrestlers to the varsity boys tournament, 10 to the girls tournament and five to the junior varsity tournament.

"Being able to wrestle against the best the state has to offer across both divisions is a unique experience," JDHS head coach Adam Messmer said. "We had some kids get knocked out in the blood round - win and you are going to medal, lose and you are out - in some super close matches against last year's division two champions. Every area of the state has their style of wrestling, their moves they use more than others."

South Anchorage topped the varsity boys tournament with 357 points coming from 14 grapplers. Fairbanks' Student Wrestling Development Program placed second with 288.5 (14 grapplers), Soldotna third 282 (14), Colony fourth 230.5 (14) and West Valley fifth 126 (8).

JDHS senior Camden Messmer won four and lost one match at 135 pounds, falling in the championship bout to South Anchorage senior Kaden Costigan by 4-2 decision. Messmer recorded his 100th high school win during the tournament.

"I think I wrestled really well this tournament," C. Messmer said. "I didn't get the outcome I wanted but I left it all on the mat so I can't complain that much."

JDHS So. Landon Hill went 4-1 at 130 pounds for third place; JDHS Fr. Logan Sivertsen went 2-2 at 103 pounds; JDHS So. Matthew Shockley went 3-2 at 125 pounds; JDHS Felix Hesson went 1-2 at 130 pounds; Jack Pegues went 3-2 at 130 pounds; JDHS Joseph Webster 1-2 at 135 pounds; JDHS Sr. Landyn Dunn went 3-2 at 140 pounds; JDHS Jr. Joshua Beedle 2-2 at 140 pounds; JDHS So. William Hulson went 1-2 at 145 pounds; JDHS Sr. Ethan Van Kirk went 3-2 at 160 pounds; and JDHS Jr. Hugo Rank went 1-2 at 189 pounds.

Soldotna topped the girls varsity team standings with 257 points from 14 wrestlers, South 186.5 (13 wrestlers), and North Pole rounding out the team podium with 166.5 (14 wrestlers).

Mt. Edgecumbe was the highest southeast girls team, placing 10th with 100 points from nine wrestlers. JDHS placed 12th with 82 points.

"Our girls continue to improve and were tested at this tournament," coach Messmer said. "For the girls this was their look at what the state has in store for them this December and they seemed very hungry to avenge a few of their close losses."

JDHS junior Nixie Schooler won three matches and lost one at 107 pounds, falling in the championship bout to South Anchorage junior Brooklyn Duelfer by 13-12 sudden victory.

JDHS So. Fiona McFarlin went 1-2 at 100 pounds; JDHS Fr. Minali Reid went 4-2 at 120 pounds; JDHS Jr. Lacie Whitehead 2-2 at 120 pounds; JDHS So. Madelyn Dale went 3-2 at 126 pounds; JDHS Jr. Sunny Dutton

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WRESTLING

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went 1-2 at 132 pounds; JDHS Jr. Sunny Dutton went 1-2 at 132 pounds; JDHS Fr. Feangai Kivalu went 2-2 at 138 pounds; JDHS Jr. Keira Jenkins went 2-2 at 152 pounds; JDHS So. Ciara Dutton went 2-2 at 152 pounds; and JDHS So. Phoebe Martin went 1-2 at 185 pounds.

JDHS placed third in the JV team scoring. JDHS Jr. Carson Kautz went 5-0 at 119 pounds for first place; JDHS Fr. Wyatt Hickok went 5-0 at 130 pounds for first place; JDHS Fr. Andrew Erickson went 5-1 at 140 pounds for third place; JDHS So. Hendrik Van Kirk went 5-1 at 152 pounds for third place; and JDHS So. Jayden Frickey went 1-2 at 119 pounds.

"We are pretty used to traveling as a giant family," coach Messmer said. "Preparation never stops, it can't. We all get Sunday evening to relax a bit, but come Monday it is back to business getting ready for the next weekend."

The Crimson Bears next wrestle at the Petersburg Invitational on Friday and Saturday.



JDHS senior Ethan Van Kirk faces off with Redington junior Marcus Holley in their 160-pound match during the 2026 Lancer Smith Memorial Wrestling Tournament at Wasilla's Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center, Friday, Nov. 13, 2026. Van Kirk won by 5-4 decision. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

LANCER SMITH TOURNAMENT

TEAM SCORES

BOYS

1) South Anchorage 370.5 pts / 14 wrs; 2) SWDP 300 pts / 14 wrs; 3) Soldotna 282 pts / 14 wrs; 4) Colony 235.5 pts / 14 wrs; 5) West Valley 126 pts / 8 wrs; 6) Juneau-Douglas 122 pts / 12 wrs; 7) Eagle River 99.5 pts / 10 wrs; 8) East 92 pts / 9 wrs; 9) Chugiak 79 pts / 9 wrs; 10) West 66.5 pts / 9 wrs; 11) North Pole 65 pts / 10 wrs; 12) Nikiski 58.5 pts / 5 wrs; 13) Haines 53.5 pts / 6 wrs; 14) Wasilla 49 pts / 9 wrs; 15) Seward 48.5 pts / 7 wrs; 16) Dimond 43 pts / 4 wrs; 17) Ketchikan 41.5 pts / 3 wrs; 18) Kodiak 41 pts / 6 wrs; 19) Unalaska 40 pts / 5 wrs; 20) Palmer 39.5 pts / 10 wrs; 21) Wrangell 35 pts / 3 wrs; 22) Dillingham 33.5 pts / 3 wrs; 23) Sitka 31 pts / 4 wrs; 24) Homer 30 pts / 4 wrs; 25) Kenai Central 29 pts / 2 wrs; 26) Bethel 27.5 pts / 4 wrs; 27) Valdez 24.5 pts / 3 wrs; 28) Mt. Edgecumbe 24 pts / 2 wrs; 29) Redington 23.5 pts / 5 wrs; 30) Houston 6 wrs, Barrow 3 wrs / 19 pts (tie); 32) Grace Christian 15 pts / 6 wrs; 33) Nome 13 pts / 2 wrs; 34) Lathrop 12 pts / 3 wrs; 35) New Stuyahok 2 wrs, Hoonah 1 wrs / 10 pts (tie); 37) Mountain City 9 pts / 1 wrs; 38) Ninilchik 8.5 pts / 1 wrs; 39) Tok 8 pts / 2 wrs; 40) Koliganek 7 pts / 1 wrs; 41) Napaskiak 1 wrs, Bartlett 1 wrs / 6 pts (tie); 43) Bristol Bay 4 pts / 1 wrs; 44) Quinhagek 2 pts / 1 wrs.

GIRLS

1) Soldotna 257 pts / 14 wrestlers; 2) South 186.5 pts / 13; 3) North Pole 176.5 pts / 14; 4) Lathrop 163.5 pts / 12 wrs; 5) Colony 162.5 pts / 14 wrs; 6) Wasilla 153.5 pts / 14 wrs; 7) Delta 146.5 pts / 8 wrs; 8) SWDP 105.5 pts / 6 wrs; 9) Bethel 105 pts / 9 wrs; 10) Mt. Edgecumbe 100 pts / 9 wrs; 11) Valdez 93 pts / 7 wrs; 12) Juneau-Douglas 82 pts / 10 wrs; 13) West Valley 80 pts / 8 wrs; 14) Seward 74.5 pts / 3 wrs; 15) Kodiak 67 pts / 5 wrs: 16) Ketchikan 66 pts / 6 wrs; 17) Eagle River 65.5 pts / 6 wrs; 18) Homer 64 pts / 6 wrs; 19) East 59.5 pts / 12 wrs; 20) Chugiak 52 pts / 10 wrs; 21) Kenai Central 51 pts / 6 wrs; 22) Nikiski 48.5 pts / 3 wrs; 23) West 44.5 pts / 3 wrs; 24) Dimond 9 wrs, Palmer 6 wrs / 40 pts (tie); 26) Wrangell 37 pts / 2 wrs; 27) Nome 36 pts / 5 wrs; 28) Barrow 34.5 pts / 3 wrs; 29) Dillingham 32 pts / 3 wrs; 30) Redington 31 pts / 5 wrs; 31) Unalaska 27 pts / 2 wrs; 32) Bartlett 26 pts / 4 wrs; 33) Service 22.5 pts / 4 wrs; 34) Houston 22 pts / 9 wrs; 35) Sitka 1 wrs, Craig 1 wrs / 18 pts (tie); 37) Hutchison 9 pts / 3 wrs; 38) Bristol Bay 6 pts / 1 wrs; 39) Susitna 5 pts / 1 wrs: 40) Hoonah City 4 pts / 1 wrs; 41) Newhalen 2 wrs, Nenana 1 wrs / 2 pts (tie).

CHAMPIONSHIP MATCHES

GIRLS

100 — Hayden Kumfer (18-2) Jr. SWDP def. Bryndi Beck (16-4) So. Valdez by fall 1:14. JDHS So. Fiona McFarlin had 1 win and 2 losses here; KTN So. Brynn Linne went 4-2; MEHS Jr. Ursula Mangrobang 1-2.

107 — Brooklyn Duelfer (24-1) Jr. South def. Nixie Schooler (12-1) Jr. Juneau by SV 13-12. JDHS' Schooler

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WRESTLING

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JDHS sophomore Madelyn Dale works to pin Soldotna sophomore Avery Loomis in their 126-pound match during the 2026 Lancer Smith Memorial Wrestling Tournament at Wasilla's Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center, Friday, Nov. 13, 2026. Dale won by 17-2 technical fall. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

went 3-1 here; SIT So. Payton Bergman 4-3; MEHS So. Kaija Donath 0-2.

114 — Mia Hannevold (19-0) Sr. Soldotna def. Julia Dunlap (24-3) So. South by fall 3:27. KTN So. Juliet Cockrum went 1-2 here.

120 — Valareie McAnnelly (23-0) Sr. Soldotna def. Kailey Graham (12-4) Fr. Colony by fall 1:51. JDHS Fr. Minali Reid went 4-2 here. JDHS Jr. Lacie Whitehead went 2-2 here; KTN Fr. Kyrene Harney 3-2; CRG Sr. Athena Rayne Fraley 5-2; MEHS Jr. Marykay Evon 2-2; HNH So. Payton Smith 1-2.

126 — Kourtney Barnes (21-1) Jr. Wrangell def. Braelyn Troxell (20-2) Sr. Colony by fall 1:39; WRG Jr. Barnes went 4-0; JDHS So. Madelyn Dale went 3-2 here; MEHS Audrina Dull 5-2; MEHS Jr. Andrea Collins 2-2.

132 — Sobina Clendaniel (14-0) Sr. Seward def. Sienna Mickelson (14-2) Sr. Kodiak by fall 1:52. JDHS Jr. Sunny Dutton went 1-2 here; KTN Jr. Ezrah Harney 3-2; MEHS Sr. Ashlynn Lonewolf 4-2.

138 — Brynlee Lutz (24-0) Sr. West def. Carly Duelfer (19-9) Fr. South by fall 3:08. JDHS Fr. Feangai Kivalu went 2-2 here; KTN Fr. Elizabeth Weyhmiller 3-2; MEHS Sr. Ilana Kalke 3-2.

145 — Eden Morrill (22-3) Sr. Lathrop def. Riley Boney (22-8) Sr. Bethel by fall 4:42. KTN Fr. Kendall Hamilton went 2-3 here.

152 — Jane Douglas (14-0) Jr. Dimond def. Braylynn Young (21-2) Jr. Nikiski by dec. 13-9. JDHS Jr. Keira Jenkins went 2-2 here. JDHS So. Ciara Dutton went 2-2 here; MEHS Sr. Aryah Dybdahl 2-2.

165 — Nyana Tidwell (14-0) Soph. North Pole def. Cora Zeiler (5-2) Fr. Eagle River by fall 1:16

185 — Infinity-Ann Asiata-Higa (11-1) Sr. Soldotna def. Phoebe Lang (9-2) So. Homer by dec. 6-2. JDHS So. Phoebe Martin went 1-2 here.

235 — Lillian Odriscoll (19-1) Fr. North Pole def. Courtney Jones (8-1) Fr. South by fall 5:12; MEHS Sr. Sophie Didrickson went 2-2 here; WRG So. Arabella Nore 0-2.

BOYS

103 — Kanin Kumfer (15-2) Fr. SWDP def. Luke Bell (15-1) Haines by tech fall 16-0 (3:54). JDHS Fr. Logan Sivertsen went 2-2 here; HNS So. Bell 3-1; SIT Fr. William Edwards 0-2.

112 — Colter Campbell (21-0) So. Eagle River def. Kane Bronson (16-4) So. SWDP by tech fall 17-2 (3:50). SIT So. Jene Keith went 3-2 here; WRG So. Ryder Ritchie 0-2.

119 — Manny Novelli (22-0) So. South def. Mason Schilling (16-4) Fr. SWDP by fall 3:20. MEHS Sr. Benjamin Balluta went 4-2 here; HNS Fr. Asher Jimenez 1-2.

125 — Regan Yundt (8-2) So. Colony def. Jacob Driscoll (28-3) So. Eagle River by Maj. Dec. 13-0. JDHS So. Matthew Shockley went 3-2 here; HNS Jr. Finn Crowe 2-2; KTN Jr. Maxton Glover 5-2; WRG Jr. Curtis Harriger 2-2.

130 — Mason Ekle (17-1) So. South def. Hayden May (25-1) Sr. West Valley by maj. dec. 9-1. JDHS Felix Hes-

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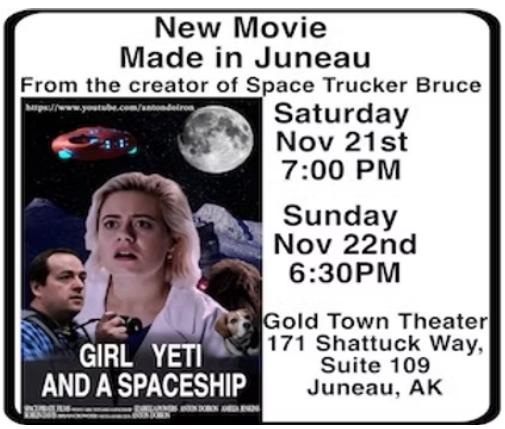

WRESTLING

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son went 1-2 here; JDHS So. Landon Hill went 4-1; Jack Pegues went 3-2.

135 — Kaden Costigan (21-2) Sr. South def. Camden Messmer (19-4) Sr. Juneau by dec. 4-2. Messmer went 4-1 here; JDHS Joseph Webster 1-2; KTN Jr. Mark Angelo Margaja 2-2.

140 — Hudson Morris (20-1) So. Soldotna def. Eli Manns (9-4) So. SWDP by maj. dec. 11-1. JDHS Sr. Landyn Dunn went 3-2 here; JDHS Jr. Joshua Beedle 2-2; HNS Sr. Dalton Monroe 0-2; MEHS Fr. Duke Walcott 0-2.

145 — Shane Ostermiller (17-0) So. South def. Mick Dobbs (26-1) Fr. West Valley by dec. 7-0. JDHS So. William Hulson went 1-2 here.

152 — Keller Jackson (17-2) Sr. Dimond def. Ben Dunlap (17-3) Sr. South by Maj. Dec. 10-2. WRG Sr. Jackson Carney went 5-1 here; HNS Jr. Calvin Bell went 2-2 here.

160 — Levi Shivers (15-0) Sr. South def. Landon Foster (17-5) So. Soldotna by Maj. Dec. 16-3. JDHS Sr. Ethan Van Kirk went 3-2 here; HNH Sr. Lawrence Howland 2-2; SIT Sr. Cooper Wyman 1-2; HNS Jr. Orion Grimes 0-2.

171 — Jacob Morris (4-0) South def. Laramie Gibson (21-1) Sr. Nikiski by tech fall 22-6 (3:14). SIT So. Landon LaDuke went 0-2 here.

189 — Thor Nelson (19-1) Jr. Colony def. Anthony Payne (7-2) Sr. Soldotna by maj. dec. 16-5. JDHS Jr. Hugo Rank went 1-2 here.

215 — Landen Dyson (10-3) Fr. East def. Jason Lopez (8-4) Sr. Hutchison by fall 5:09; KTN Jr. Rocco Piazza went 4-2.

285 — Jaxon Runnels (21-0) Jr. SWDP def. Lyric Wakefield (7-6) So. South by fall (3:39).

• Contact Klas Stolpe at sports@juneauindependent.com

Glacier Swim Club gets busy at Sitka pool

GSC hits best times, first times and good times in season travel opener



Juneau's Glacier Swim Club pose for a photo during last weekend's Dr. J Swim Invitational 2026 meet in Sitka. (Photo courtesy GSC).

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

In their first travel meet of the season Juneau's Glacier Swim Club performed well at the Dr. J Invitational in Sitka from Friday through Sunday.

"This was our first travel meet of the season and the enthusiasm from our athletes was obvious," GSC coach Daemon Vargas said. "Twelve of our 28 athletes were 10-and-unders, including three first-time travelers. We did have one high school athlete attend, Sarah Anderson, who had an excellent performance. For the athletes, this meet was about having fun and racing outside of their normal environment. For the coaches, these early season meets allow us to see our athletes compete outside their comfort zone against swimmers they don't get to practice with. We see how they progress psychologically and physically, which helps us refine our training and goals."

There was a 12-event limit for swimmers attending the three-day meet.

"That is higher than average," Vargas said. "At these local travel meets we encourage athletes to sign up for as many events as they are comfortable with. For the first few meets, times are second to technique. We are looking for consistency in their strokes, turns, dives, etcetera. We are dialing in the specifics. New competitors are learning how much they can handle and experienced ones target certain races."

Following are the GSC swimmers and their event placings. Best times are accentuated by underline.

Alexander Welch (age 10) - 2nd place finishes 200 free 2:43.90, 100 back 1:23.03, 50 breast 42.73, 100 breast 1:44.42; 3rd place 50 free 33.46, 100 free 1:15.17, 50 fly 41.06, 100 IM 1:26.84; 50 free (200 FR) 32.61.

Amos Andreassen (9) - 12th 50 free 56.35; 50 free (200 FR) 57.40.

Anabelle Sullivan (13) - 1st 200 back 2:34.25, 200 fly 3:03.25; 2nd 100 free 1:05.19, 100 back 1:13.09, 100

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SWIM

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breast 1:25.40; 3rd 50 free 28.93, 100 fly 1:19.88, 200 IM 2:44.63; 50 free (200 FR) 28.54, 100 free (400 FR) 1:03.39; and 50 back (200 MR) 31.33.

Aubrey Villa (9) - 4th 100 back 1:35.60, 50 breast 51.72, 100 IM 1:44.58; 5th 100 free 1:32.72, 100 breast 2:00.74; 6th 50 back 45.79, 50 fly 50.40; 50 free (200 FR) 44.58, 50 back (200 MR) 45.32.

Auri Jones (10) - 2nd 500 free 8:41.32, 50 back 42.44, 100 back 1:.8132.65, 50 breast 52.16, 50 fly 42.20, 100 IM 1:37.38, 200 IM 3:33.20; 50 free (200 FR) 37.87, 50 fly (200 MR) 41.47.

Axel Andreassen (13) - 4th 200 breast 3:01.08, 100 fly 1:22.98, fifth 100 breast 1:24.76, 200 IM 2:41.80; 6th 100 free 1:05.76; 8th 50 free 29.34; 50 free (200 FR) 30.00, 100 free (400 FR) 1:05.50.

Brayden Sullivan (10) - 2nd 500 free 7:57.47, 50 back 42.69; 3rd 200 IM 3:37.95; 4th 50 free 34.12, 200 free 3:00.96, 50 fly 43.91; 5th 100 back 1:34.40, 100 IM 1:34.76; 50 free (200 FR) 35.33.

Corbin Hall (10) - 2nd 200 IM 3:23.23; 3rd 50 back 42.80, 50 breast 48.70, 100 breast 1:48.40; 4th 100 free 1:18.43, 100 back 1:30.56, 100 IM 1:32.44; 5th 50 free 34.90; 50 free (200 FR) 36.74.

Elias Ross (12) - 1st 50 free 29.70, 100 free 1:12.60, 200 free 2:31.92, 500 free 7:02.17, 100 back 1:24.38, 200 breast 3:15.78, 200 IM 3:02.83; 2nd 200 fly 4:33.94; 3rd 400 IM 6:43.34; 4th 50 fly 45.14; 6th 50 back 42.04; 50 free (200 FR) 30.59.

Frances Higgins (11) - 2nd 200 free 3:03.36, 200 breast 3:34.79; 4th 100 fly 1:55.29; 6th 500 free 7:59.93; 7th 100 breast 1:39.81, 100 IM 1:43.16; 8th 50 breast 46.81; 50 free (200 FR) 37.79.

Franco Javier Gamete (13) - 1st 200 breast 2:43.32, 200 fly 2:52.46; 2nd 100 breast 1:15.21, 400 IM 5:28.73; 3rd 200 back 2:42.83, 100 fly 1:10.01, 200 IM 2:30.66; 4th 50 free 26.08, 200 free 2:17.21, 100 back 1:15.74; 50 free (200 FR) 25.41, 100 free (400 FR) 58.64.

Grace Propsom (13) - 1st 200 free 2:17.91, 100 back 1:11.83, 200 IM 2:37.57, 400 IM 5:42.02; 2nd 50 free 28.03, 500 free 6:30.26, 200 back 2:36.60, 200 breast 3:06.77, 100 fly 1:15.09; 50 free (200 MR) 26.98, 50 free (200 FR) 27.52, 100 free (400 FR) 1:00.83.

Greta Thompson (10) - 2nd 200 free 3:59.52; 3rd 500 free 11:28.25; 50 free (200 FR) 49.97, 50 breast (200 MR) 56.34.

Hali Hall (8) - 1st 50 breast 1:03.92; 2nd 25 free 21.28, 25 back 22.73, 50 back 51.16, 25 breast 30.49, 25 fly 25.53, 50 fly 57.77; 3rd 50 free 47.43; 4th 200 IM 4:19.90; 8th 50 fly 1:03.85; 12th 50 back 54.63; 50 free (200 FR) 41.63.

Henley Peterson (11) - 3rd 50 fly 42.66, 100 fly 1:44.04, 200 IM 3:19.61; 4th 200 back 3:10.90, 200 breast 3:41.43; 5th 100 IM 1:33.65; 6th 100 free 1:21.12, 50 back 39.88; 7th 50 free 35.49; 8th 100 breast 1:47.05; 9th 50 breast 47.05; 50 free (200 FR) 36.19.

Jared Francis Gaceta (11) - 1st 50 breast 40.82, 100 breast 1:32.00; 2nd 50 back 40.07, 200 breast 3:25.60, 200 IM 3:10.03; 3rd 50 free 33.10, 200 free 2:48.56, 100 back 1:27.49, 100 IM 1:29.84; 4th 1650 free 26:07.86; 5th 50 fly 50.23; 50 free (200 FR) 33.96.

Jefferson Welch (12) - 1st 50 fly 37.98, 100 fly 1:41.70, 200 fly 3:53.13; 2nd 500 free 7:56.03; 3rd 50 breast 46.53; 4th 200 free 2:48.93, 100 breast 1:40.12, 200 breast 3:41.31, 200 IM 3:12.43; 5th 100 IM 1:32.15; 50 free (200 FR) 33.71.

Leif Thompson (12) - 5th 100 free 1:22.09, 50 back 41.84; 7th 50 free 36.53; 50 free (200 FR) 35.73.

Maia Cole-Undurraga (11) - 2nd 200 back 2:48.20, 100 fly 1:37.94, 200 fly 3:35.49; 3rd 50 back 37.24, 100 back 1:16.44; 4th 100 free 1:12.76, 100 breast 1:36.13; 5th 50 free 32.65, 500 free 7:28.14; 6th 50 breast 42.84; 50 free (200 FR) 30.59.

Mateus Suarez (9) - 1st 500 free 7:28.90, 50 breast 42.44, 100 breast 1:34.27, 100 fly 1.36.37, 200 IM 3:02.18; 2nd 50 free 33.21, 100 free 1:14.51, 50 fly 38.79, 100 IM 1:24.98; 3rd 200 free 2:44.04, 100 back 1:23.71; 50 free (200 FR) 33.93.

Matisse Suarez (12) - 1st 200 free 2:30.63, 100 fly 1:20.17, 200 fly 3:00.25; 2nd 50 free 30.87, 1650 free 23:31.76, 50 back 34.73, 100 back 1:16.21, 50 breast 39.10, 50 fly 34.31, 400 IM 5:59.24; 3rd 500 free 6:45.58;

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SWIM

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50 free (200 FR) 31.04.

Olivia McDonnell (9) - 9th 50 free 54.85, 50 fly 1:07.49; 10th 100 free 2:13.94; 13th 50 back 54.73; 50 free (200 MR) 54.42, 50 free (200 FR) 51.96.

Samuel von Rekowski (13) - 4th 200 back 3:22.99; 6th 200 free 3:05.94, 200 IM 3:32.87; 9th 100 free 1:24.01; 11th 50 free 36.48; 50 free (200 FR) 36.12, 100 free (400 FR) 1:20.11.

Sarah Anderson (16) - 1st 100 breast 1:23.88, 200 breast 3:06.58, 100 fly 1:13.81; 2nd 200 IM 2:42.12; 4th 50 free 29.71; 50 free (200 FR) 29.28, 100 free (400 FR) 1:04.26, 50 fly (200 MR) 32.01.

Shelby Jones (13) - 3rd 200 free 2:43.98, 100 breast 1:28.94, 200 breast 3:07.49; 4th 100 back 1:30.50, 200 back 3:13.55; 5th 200 IM 3:01.38; 6th 50 free 31.25; 50 free (200 FR) 32.96, 100 free (400 FR) 1:13.29, 50 breast (200 MR) 40.35.

Simon Ross (10) - 5th 100 breast 2:04.65; 6th 50 breast 56.04; 7th 100 back 1:53.11, 100 IM 1:49.13; 8th 50 free 42.54, 100 free 1:43.41, 50 back 55.62; 50 free (200 FR) 42.01.

Tyler Anderson (13) - 3rd 100 breast 1:17.19, 200 breast 2:50.82; 4th 100 free 58.30, 200 IM 2:30.73; 6th 50 free 26.64; 50 free (200 FR) 26.74, 100 free (400 FR) 56.59.

Will Sullivan (7) - 1st 50 back 48.59, 25 fly 26.38; 2nd 25 free 20.66, 50 free 46.88, 25 breast 31.81; 5th 50 back 49.42; 11th 50 free 45.63; 50 free (200 FR) 45.92.

"We had many great swims but the most exciting was the 13 & Over 400 Free Relay on Saturday morning," GSC coach Vargas said. "It came down to a tight race between our girls' and boys' teams, anchored by Sarah and Tyler Anderson. Their final sprint had the whole house on its feet."

GSC Relays - 1st Girls 13&O 400 FR (G. Propsom, A. Sullivan, S. Jones, S. Anderson) 4:21.77; 1st Boys 13&O 400 FR (F. Gaceta, A. Andreassen, S. von Rekowski, T. Anderson) 4:20.84; 1st Boys 10&U 200 FR (M. Suarez, B. Sullivan, C. Hall, A. Welch) 2:18.61; 1st Boys 11-12 200 FR (E. Ross, J. Gaceta, J. Welch, L. Thompson) 2:13.99; 1st Girls 13&O 200 FR (G. Propsom, S. Jones, A. Sullivan, S. Anderson) 1:58.30; 1st Boys 13&O 200 FR (T. Anderson, A. Andreassen, S. von Reikowski, F. Gaceta) 1:58.27; 1st Girls 13&O 200 MR (A. Sullivan, S. Jones, S. Anderson, G. Propsom) 2:10.67; 2nd Girls 10&U 200 MR (A. Villa, G. Thompson, A. Jones, O. McDonnell) 3:17.55; 2nd Girls 11-12 200 FR (M. Suarez, F. Higgins, H. Peterson, M. Cole-Undurraga) 2:15.61; 2nd Mixed 200 FR (S. Ross, W. Sullivan, O. McDonnell, A. Andreassen) 3:17.29; 3rd Girls 10&U 200 FR (A. Jones, A Villa, G. Thompson, H. Hall) 2:54.05; DQ Boys 10&U 200 MR (A. Welch, C. Hall, B. Sullivan, S. Ross).

Assisting Vargas with the team were coaches Lisa Jones and Devinn Propsom.

"Sitka previously held their meet in October but swapped weekends with Petersburg this year," Vargas said. "The Vikings then had to reschedule to January due to pool issues so I think the kids (and parents) were eager to swim in a different pool. This meet was renamed after the passing of Dr. Tom Jacobsen, who was Sitka's Head official and a lifelong contributor to swimming here in Southeast Alaska. The Community really came together to make this meet happen and honor his memory."

The GSC competes year-round, but break their season into sections. According to Vargas, typically September through December is 'pre-season,' with invitational meets and no qualifying meets. January through May are all championships and qualifying meets. June through August is Long Course / Summer season, a few additional championships and summer league.

Next up for the GSC is their December 6th home Intrasquad Meet and the First City Invitational, December 11-13 at Ketchikan.

• *Contact Klas Stolpe at sports@juneauindependent.com*



Juneau's Glacier Swim Club head coach Daemon Vargas and assistants Lisa Jones and Devinn Propsom pose for a photo during last weekend's Dr. J Swim Invitational 2026 meet in Sitka. (Photo courtesy GSC)