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Juneau Independent

The True Local Newspaper of Alaska's Capital City

August 30, 2026

JKT set to face three Republicans in governor's race

Tom Begich quits after finishing second in primary, Wilson ahead of Bronson among Republicans

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Republicans are likely to fill three of the four spots in Alaska's ranked-choice vote for governor in November. What's less certain is who the three will be and how much they will compete against each other as well as the lone Democrat on the ballot.

Two Democrats topped the Aug. 18 primary results, with Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins at 22.52% and Tom Begich at 20.8%, but Begich on Friday said he is withdrawing and endorsing Kreiss-Tomkins.

That means the Republicans who finished third through fifth in the primary are set to advance to the general election.

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State Review Board officials review voting records at the Alaska Division of Elections office in Juneau on Thursday, Aug. 27, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

Post-flood meeting breaks
down science, flood stories
*Residents share experiences, ask
about future flood outlook*

By ELLIE RUEL, Reporter

This year's glacial lake outburst flood may have peaked lower than expected and released more slowly than previous years due to a cool, dry summer, according to University of Alaska Southeast hydrologist Eran Hood during a Juneau Flood Solution Advocates meeting at the Mendenhall Valley Public Library last Thursday.

See **Flood** on Page 9

Former Juneau principal convicted of assault after taking 60-day plea deal

Mother of victim says 'I would've rather gone to trial' and 'he got off easy'

By JASZ GARRETT, Managing Editor

John Paul, 57, a former Juneau school principal, was convicted Tuesday at the Dimond Courthouse for assaulting an autistic seventh-grade student at the Dzantik'i Héeni campus in March.

Paul changed his plea from "not guilty" to "no contest," agreeing to serve the minimum sentence for fourth-degree assault, a Class A mis-

demeanor. He is expected to serve 60 days in Lemon Creek Correctional Center — or an electronic monitoring program if approved by the Alaska Department of Corrections.

His attorney, John Roberson III, said Paul "wishes he had handled the situation differently and regrets that it escalated as it did."

"At the same time, the resolution

See **Plea Deal** on Page 6

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Mendenhall Valley location replaces Ron's Apothecary

Compounding services return to Juneau as SEARHC opens new pharmacy

By ELLIE RUEL, Reporter

A new Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium pharmacy in the Mendenhall Mall will offer compounding services to Juneau for the first time since Ron's Apothecary closed in 2023, occupying the same space.

"We are excited to have a new offering in the Mendenhall Valley," said Mike Dow, SEARHC's director of pharmacy. "That is kind of the largest area of growth for Juneau and, prior to this store, we didn't have pharmacy services in the Valley. So this offers convenience and accessibility to everybody that works, lives, and shops within that area."

The facility operated by the Alaska Native nonprofit is an Indian Health Service (IHS) pharmacy. That means "SEARHC patients can find expanded access to medications at the new Mendenhall Valley Pharmacy, with retail products available to the general public," according to the organization's website.

"People that are worried about getting from work to getting to the pharmacy closer to downtown," Dow said. "Sometimes that becomes a challenge or a barrier to getting the meds that they need, so we wanted to meet patients where they're at."

The new pharmacy adds to the consortium's non-compounding pharmacy at the Ethel Lund Medical Center. The new location is scheduled to begin offering non-sterile compounding services in early September, meaning it will be able to make custom medications on-site for customers.

"We have hormone therapies that we'll make in various formulations, ointments, creams, and we have capsules

*See **Pharmacy** on Page 4*

Both sides in Telephone Hill lawsuit ask judge to decide case before a jury trial occurs

Former residents say CBJ is illegally demolishing neighborhood; city's attorney says accusations are based on emotion rather than law



Boarded-up homes on Telephone Hill on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Attempts to resolve a civil lawsuit about the future of Telephone Hill without a jury trial were made in a Juneau courtroom Tuesday, with attorneys for both sides asking the judge for rulings that would decide the case in their favor.

The lawsuit filed last October by former residents of the downtown neighborhood seeks to halt the city's plans to demolish seven existing residential structures there and build new higher-density apartments. City attorneys argue the lawsuit full of legal flaws and the residents are making largely emotional appeals to preserve the properties on city-owned land.

A jury trial scheduled to start Monday was postponed and motions by both sides for a direct ruling from Superior Court Judge Amanda Browning were argued on Tuesday. She said

while she will try to issue a decision—including whether there are unresolved issues that need to be addressed by a trial — "I don't want the parties to expect an order in the next week or two."

Telephone Hill is one of Juneau's oldest neighborhoods and the site of the city's oldest continually occupied home. Residents for decades have rented the homes on land that was owned by state from the mid-1980s until it was turned over to the city in 2022, with both state and city officials stating their intent was to redevelop the property.

People living in 13 residences in seven structures were served eviction notices last fall, with the last of the residents moving out in February. The next major step for the city may occur in October, when information from prospective developers can be assessed.

The argument that the city is taking a phased approach to the redevelopment process that doesn't detail the project's cumulative impacts to the area was among those presented Tuesday by Fred Triem, the attorney representing the former residents. He noted, for instance, the city is moving ahead on plans to demolish the homes without knowing if there is a developer who will be willing to build new ones on the properties.

"What we want, what the law requires, is a PowerPoint presentation of A to Z," he said. "But that's not what we have. What the borough has presented is only A to D, where D stands for 'demolition,' and the whole thing stops there. We have to just hope and pray that after the buildings are demolished that someone competent will show up and does not renege."

That argument is an incorrect interpretation of the law as it applies to the Telephone Hill project, said Clinton Mitchell, an assistant attorney for the City and Borough of Juneau.

"If the plaintiff's argument were true that the law requires an A to Z from the very beginning...CBJ wouldn't have been able to install HESCO barriers in the interim while a permanent solution to the glacial outburst flood is determined," he said. "This is just one example of the absurdity of plaintiffs' arguments. We wouldn't be able to start painting a garage until the entire renovation is laid out in clear steps and plans."

Triem is also arguing local leaders are acting against recommendations made by the city's Historic Resources Advisory Committee and the redevelopment would negate a pending application to protect the neighborhood under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. In wrapping up his arguments to the judge, he said, "The ultimate issue here is really the fear over here."

"There's a room full of people behind
See Telephone Hill on Page 4



John Ingalls, a former Telephone Hill resident, visits the neighborhood after a hearing on a lawsuit challenging redevelopment plans for the properties there on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

TELEPHONE HILL

Continued from page 3

me and they're all afraid," he said. "They're afraid that these historic ancient buildings are going to be smashed down and there'll be no replacement for them. Nobody will come to build anything new and we'll have what the city of New London has, and that's a couple of acres of vacant gravel suitable for weeds and feral cats, and we don't want that."

Mitchell, in response to Triem's arguments, said actions by an advisory committee don't bind Juneau's government and the historic preservation arguments are misapplied in the case of Telephone Hill. The city attorney also noted the plaintiff's request for a permanent injunction against redevelopment work in the neighborhood is excessive, arguing a temporary hold on work is the appropriate remedy if the city needs to correct any administrative actions that were illegal.

"I feel like plaintiffs have been unable to support any of their argument by citing any case law, statute, munic-

ipal code, or anything that supports their claims in this case," Mitchell said. "And frankly I feel like the rest of the arguments are more based in feeling and nostalgia, and a desire to preserve historic homes, which I can appreciate. However, these are not legal arguments and should not support their claims made against the defendant."

After the hearing, John Ingalls, one of the six former residents who are plaintiffs in the case, walked back to the Telephone Hill neighborhood a few blocks from the courthouse. He looked at his former home and a separate garage that stored many of his belongings, now boarded up. He said he felt Triem did an exceptional job arguing the case, but also talked to another attorney observing the case who expected a ruling in the city's favor.

"I really don't know," Ingalls said when asked what his expectations are for what occurs next. "If I were in the city's position I'd be pretty worried because it could end up being really a horrible mess up here forever after. It's

very likely that that could happen and I think that it's not going to make the city look very good if that happens."

• Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907)

PHARMACY

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that are for pain management, and as well as liquids for pain management," Dow said.

Dow said all healthcare providers will be able to request the compounding services, provided the pharmacy staff is able to make it. The pharmacy also plans to ship prescriptions to patients when needed.

He noted some of the compounded recipes will be familiar from Ron's Apothecary.

"What was always very popular was Ron's had sort of a diaper cream that was a hot seller," Dow said. "And that one will be available through a prescription with some regulatory changes that happened, but that one we expect to sell like hotcakes."

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The new SEARHC pharmacy in the Mendenhall Mall on Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2026. (Ellie Ruel / Juneau Independent)

Forest Service proposes to rescind Roadless Rule



The Tongass National Forest above Juneau seen from Mount Roberts on Nov. 1, 2022. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

Thirty day comment period for the proposed rule and draft environmental statement ends Sept. 21

By JASZ GARRETT, Managing Editor

The U.S. Forest Service filed a proposal to rescind the national 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule last Tuesday.

The agency is seeking public comment on the rescission and draft of an environmental impact statement until Sept. 21. More information is available on the Forest Service Roadless Areas webpage.

The 2001 Roadless Rule includes 45 million acres of the 193-million-acre National Forest System — about 9.3 million acres of which is the Tongass National Forest. The rule established broad prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction and timber harvesting within the inventoried roadless areas.

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins stated the restriction "has frustrated land managers and served as a

barrier to wildfire risk reduction work across large swaths of America's national forests."

"Our forests can't afford another decade of inaction. Across the country, we've watched preventable conditions — overgrown stands, insect outbreaks and disease — turn healthy landscapes into tinderboxes," Rollins said in a prepared statement. "For too long, outdated restrictions have kept tens of millions of forested acres off-limits to the very treatments that improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk to our communities."

A press release from the Forest Service states the rescission "is intended to prioritize local agency decision-making over regulatory rules that are the same across the country, regardless of specific land management issues and needs."

The rescission removes national designation of roadless areas, but does not mandate timber cutting or road con-

struction, according to the announcement. It aims to remove "regulatory burden" and send decisions about roadless areas to the local national forest managers.

The Forest Service first published a notice of intent to rescind the Roadless Rule on Aug. 29, 2025. During a 21-day public comment period, the agency received more than 220,000 comment letters on behalf of over 625,000 individuals and organizations, according to the Forest Service.

The agency's proposal to rescind the Roadless Rule follows President Donald Trump's executive orders calling for the expansion of American timber production, unleashing American energy and Alaska's "extraordinary resource potential." The Roadless Rule was most recently repealed during the first Trump administration in 2019 and reinstated in 2023.

"For 25 years, the Roadless Rule has kept our wildest forests intact. The benefits have been incalculable for people, for water, for wildlife, and for the climate," said Earthjustice President Abigail Dillen in a prepared statement. "Now, the Trump administration wants to gut the rule and open up 45 million acres of roadless forest to clear-cutting and other harmful development enabled by roading. Scientists, wildland firefighters, and hundreds of thousands of Americans have fiercely opposed this attack on our public lands."

The rescission filing states returning roadless-area decisions to forest-level land management planning "provides flexibility the national rule did not," and that future land management decisions would be based on natural resource conditions and needs and informed by states, tribes and communities.

"A rollback on the Roadless Rule means cultural genocide for our people. Every part of our culture is intimately intertwined with the Tongass

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ROADLESS

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Forest, our traditional homelands," said Yolanda Fulmer, a Tlingit representative of the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network in a prepared statement. "We have a duty as matriarchs to protect our culture and territories for future generations, and therefore, the Roadless Rule must be upheld and codified for long-term protections. For future generations, for our cultural lifeways, and for our global climate, we must keep these forests standing."

Last spring, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council gathered public comments from communities across the Tongass with plans to submit them when the agency's 30-day comment period opened.

The Forest Service announced Monday it will hold public hearings to evaluate potential impacts on subsistence uses if the Roadless Rule is rescinded. Starting in late September, the agency will take oral testimony, which will be included in the record considered for the final rule and its supporting environmental analysis.

Written comments will not be accepted. More information on the in-person and virtual Alaska subsistence hearings can be found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r10>

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John Paul, 57, attends his arraignment hearing at Juneau's Dimond Courthouse on April 23, 2026. He did not attend in person for the change of plea on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2026. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

PLEA DEAL

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does not mean that Mr. Paul agrees with every allegation, characterization, or statement that has been made about the incident. He does not," Roberson stated in an email to the Juneau Independent.

The charging document states Paul tackled and pinned the student with his body weight, causing the child "to feel crushing pain."

Paul and his attorney denied the use of excessive force on a student when he was first charged in April. He pleaded not guilty on April 23. The student was 12 at the time of the incident and is now 13.

"We do not minimize what occurred. Mr. Paul was the adult and the school administrator. The situation escalated, physical restraint was used, and the student was frightened," Roberson told the judge. "Mr. Paul himself recog-

nized almost immediately that he should have handled the situation differently. But the court is sentencing the whole person and the actual offense, not simply the worst characterization of a short incident."

Judge Kirsten Swanson asked Paul if he understood that by entering the plea, he gave up his right to a jury trial.

"I don't want to put everybody through that," he replied.

Roberson said the 60-day agreement adequately addresses the charge and that Paul wants to move forward rather than continue litigating the incident publicly.

"I would have rather gone to trial," the victim's mother said in an interview following the resolution. "I would have rather had him need to face a jury of his peers. I would have rather a jury see the video. I would have rather had the judge see the video, and

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Sherri Layne, deputy municipal attorney for the City and Borough of Juneau, speaks to the judge during a change of plea hearing on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2026, at the Dimond Courthouse. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

PLEA DEAL

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have him have to answer to every step of his decision-making in grabbing my child by the back of his neck and throwing him onto the concrete.”

“I feel like he got off easy,” Heather said. “I wanted him to have to answer to a jury why he picked him up, drug him probably 20 feet, and slammed his face up against a brick wall, and continued to yell at him. He wasn’t screaming. He wasn’t cussing. He was doing nothing.”

She said since her son would have been expected to take a witness stand, she did not push taking Paul to trial.

“That would have been really difficult, but I feel like he got off easy for what he did to my kid,” she said.

In her victim impact statement, Heather described the trauma her son carries. She said as a parent, she continues to struggle with anger, fear and heartbreak by knowing her child was harmed by someone entrusted with protecting him. She said the emotional impact has been devastating.

“My child went to school expecting to be safe,” she said. “Instead he was assaulted by the person responsible for leading that school — someone who

held a position of authority and trust, and chose to use physical force against a vulnerable child rather than protect him.”

In an interview, Heather said her son was terrified to start school again last week.

In a video shown to the Independent and described in court documents, her son was trapped underneath Paul and then pushed against a brick wall face-first. She said her son struggled to breathe while Paul lay on top of him.

“He believed he was going to die,” she told the judge.

When Paul first approached him, the student was waiting for his mom to pick him up from school. The video shows his hands were in his pockets and he was not speaking.

“What makes this especially difficult to accept is that the assault was completely unprovoked,” Heather said. “My child did not initiate the physical encounter. This was not a mutual altercation, nor was the principal responding to an act of violence from my child.”

“It has affected his sense of safety, his trust in adults and authority figures, and his ability to feel secure in an environment where he should have been protected,” she added.

She said her son is in therapy and struggling with anxiety. Heather said since he is diagnosed with autism, the disruption to safety can be particularly significant. She said this school year, he has a full-time aide.

“I was asking for that all of last year,” she said, adding she was told the Juneau School District did not have the resources to provide additional support for her son’s special needs at the time.

Paul and his attorney attended the court hearing via phone. Heather, who sat crying beside her mother in the courtroom, said this felt like another way he was avoiding accountability.

“I think it was very cowardly,” she said in an interview after the hearing.

Sherri Layne, deputy municipal attorney for the City and Borough of Juneau, said the city’s hope was Paul would take full responsibility, but a plea of no contest was acceptable since it has the same effect.

“When you think about the community condemnation that he has faced and will be facing, I think that this sentence speaks to that,” Layne said.

Heather said she was also frustrated because court hearings were pushed back three times due to ongoing plea negotiations — once while she was waiting to give her victim impact statement last week.

She added Paul asking for electronic monitoring instead of accepting jail time felt like he was further avoiding responsibility.

The judge said she was unaware if someone who committed an assault was eligible for electronic monitoring, but a request could be made.

A DOC spokesperson told the Independent there is no “one-size-fits-all” answer to the question and individuals convicted of assault in the fourth degree may be eligible, provided their offense does not involve domestic violence.

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PLEA DEAL

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“However, factors such as criminal history, the circumstances surrounding the offense, substance abuse history, prior electronic monitoring, and public safety considerations all play a role in the DOC’s decision-making process,” wrote spokesperson Betsy Holley.

In Paul’s statement during Tuesday’s hearing, he said he spent 34 years as an educator. He has no prior criminal history. His attorney said it was a “highly specific, situational event.”

“I recognize that I’m here today because of one poor decision, but I accept that responsibility and hope that my career and my life is not defined by this one moment in time,” Paul said.

Paul was the principal at Montessori Borealis and Yaakoosgé Daakahídi High School for three years before being placed on administrative leave on March 5, the same day the assault occurred. JSD announced Scott Jonsson as the new principal for both schools on April 24.

“I was usually very proud of my record of judgment and conduct. However, I truly wish I could go back and make a different decision in this case,” Paul said. “At the time, I think I believed that restraining the student was in his best interest and was necessary in keeping him safe, given other factors, including the weather. However, I deeply regret this decision and wish I had drawn upon the experience that I had and that I do have to recognize and choose a better course of action.”

Heather said in her victim impact statement that a complete lack of an apology and acknowledgement has made it harder on her family. Paul said he had not previously expressed remorse because his conditions of release mandated no contact with the student or the student’s mother.

“I do apologize to this student and to his family, for they deserved better from me,” he said over the phone during Tuesday’s hearing.

The judge said this conviction impacted his past career and will in the future. Swanson told Heather even if she sentenced Paul for longer, it would not change what happened to her son.

“However, him not having to go to trial, and the fact that there is a conviction of record and there is consequences, hopefully that will help him to regain some trust, whether it’s with the school system or anybody else,” she said.

Swanson accepted the deal after hearing both of their statements, stating even if it is a no contest plea, Paul is still taking responsibility. She said all he can do is go forward and do the best he can to prove it was not his usual character.

“I wish we could fix it. Very little that we can do,” Swanson told the victim’s mother.

Heather said 60 days does not represent the impact, but she agreed with the judge no amount of time could make up for the trauma her child lives with.

“My child does not have that same ability to simply serve his trauma and walk away from it,” she said.

Heather said she was upset at Paul and his attorney for using the word “restraint” to describe the assault.

“My child was not running away. He knew I was coming. He was waiting for me,” she said.

She added she was sincerely grateful for the Juneau Police Department and city attorney’s office for treating what happened with care.

“At a time when our trust in adults and institutions had been profoundly shaken, your professionalism helped restore some of that trust,” she said.

Paul is expected to surrender to authorities by Oct. 30, a date chosen to give him adequate time to apply to the electronic monitoring program and for DOC to review the request, according to his attorney. The judge had originally suggested the remand date be a month earlier.

“My child has already paid the price for something that was not his fault,” Heather said. “As his parent, I will continue to advocate for him and help him heal from something he never should have experienced. I cannot undo what happened, but I can make sure that this experience is not minimized, forgotten, or reduced to a number of days on a sentencing order.”

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FLOOD

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Hood said based on preliminary observations, his best guess is that a sub-glacial network of channels wasn't as well primed or centralized before the release began on Aug. 11. The Mendenhall River crested at 14.7 feet on Aug. 13, the lowest level seen during a full Suicide Basin release in the past four years.

"When that water starts coming in from the basin and it's forcing its way under the glacier, it has to do the work through the friction to create the drainage pattern," Hood said.

Those systems normally transport glacial melt through the system daily, and friction from the water moving over ice helps to widen and centralize channels, he said. Typical base flow for the river in mid-August is usually around 2,500 cubic feet per second (cfs), but was lower this year at closer to 1,700-1,800 cfs.

"That means there's less water moving under the glacier, and so my guess is that the system was not very well primed," he said.

According to Hood, initial analysis shows there was about 48,000 acre-feet of water in the basin this year, down 4% from last year. More ice was in the basin from a few calving events leading up to the release, he said as he pointed to a photo of blue icebergs in an empty basin.

"Just the calving itself, although it expands the extent of the basin, it doesn't really increase the volume until you melt the ice that capped off there," Hood explained. "So that I think at this point is the one wild card. It's just the potential for (lateral) expansion."

He noted the ice difference likely didn't contribute to changing conditions.

"I don't think that it had to do with the amount of ice because the amount of ice is not that much different per-



People listen to Debbie Penrose-Fischer speak at a Juneau Flood Solution Advocates meeting on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026. (Ellie Ruel / Juneau Independent)

centage-wise," he said.

The research team will continue to analyze data and plans to present it to the public at some point this fall. A smaller fall release is predicted, similar to last year.

Hood cautioned the audience against reading into trendlines about future flood outlook based on a small amount of data. Suicide Basin has caused outburst floods since 2011, but they were small compared to the full-basin releases that began in 2023. Hood said the science team is still trying to understand why the releases transitioned from partial to fully emptying the basin.

"One issue I had with the messaging last year after last year's flood was we had three data points and they were going upward, and it's like the message was that the flood gets bigger every year," he said. "Now we have a fourth data point. It didn't get bigger, right? So we know it doesn't get bigger every year. Does that mean it can't get bigger in the future? It doesn't mean that. So there's just a lot of variability." Before Hood's presentation, more than 20 residents shared their feelings before and after the flood. Words like anxious, tired, prepared and relief echoed around the room.

"It's kind of frustrating. It felt like we

were packing up and moving before the flood. Three or four weeks doing that, and then a couple weeks after the flood, unpacking again," said Mark Miller, a Long Run Drive resident. "I was optimistic before the GLOF, and pleased it went as well as it did."

Debbie Penrose-Fischer, the leader of the neighborhood advocacy group, thanked community volunteers for their work that she said went unthanked by officials, righting what she called a "misstep."

"When I listened to the Assembly meeting, I was crushed that I didn't hear one mention of the community," she said. "I saw a group of people with perseverance, teamwork, and facing each other (to) face one more year of adversity, invasion into your property, stress, fear, financial loss, preparation that's too hard physically to do."

She listed contributions to the "Eyes on the River" livestream and gift baskets delivered to View Drive residents as examples.

Malachi Thorington, a View Drive resident who stayed during the flood, said the package was appreciated. He said his household has experienced one to two feet of water over the last three years.

"With this year being kind of a grace
See Flood on Page 10

FLOOD

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period, we’ve been relieved for a change,” Thorington said. “This year I was running solo, so it was a breath of fresh air to have some even knocking, especially as we were just kind of watching with bated breath.”

Lori Stedmen, a Marion Drive resident, said her family has lived by rivers for generations. She said she’s hopeful about a long-term solution after years of stress from the flood.

“I think it’s gonna be really beneficial for a lot of folks that are having life-changing situations happening, that’s affecting their health, that have affected their everyday life right now,” she said. “I’ve got a financial situation here, and I built my house here on the river, but not knowing what was going on in the future. So I can’t just get up and move.”

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Eran Hood, a hydrologist at the University of Alaska Southeast, presents at a Juneau Flood Solution Advocates meeting on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026. (Ellie Ruel / Juneau Independent)

State approves New Amalga mine access road after major opposition

Controversial road moves forward in two phases; supporters reference economic growth, opposers raise concern for public lands



A drone oblique shows a gathering by local conservation groups at the Eagle Beach Picnic Shelter (lower left) on July 18, 2026. The Herbert Glacier is seen in the distance. (Photo courtesy of Richard Carstensen)

By JASZ GARRETT, Managing Editor

The state has approved the first segment of a mining road requested by Grand Portage Resources Ltd., a Canadian mining company. Nearly 90% of 196 public comments received earlier this year opposed the road.

“Alaska’s public lands and transportation systems exist to serve Alaskans — not to subsidize private industrial expansion at public expense,” wrote Juneau resident Brooks Horan.

The private non-exclusive easement includes a 15-foot-wide gravel road and two one-acre helicopter pads on

state land off Glacier Highway. The road will stretch for approximately 1.3 miles between the Herbert Glacier and Eagle Glacier trail and does not directly intersect any of the existing recreation trails.

For this reason, the state acknowledges that while the road and staging areas will impact recreation in the area, it “does not agree that the wild and scenic nature of the area will be irreversibly damaged by approving this easement.”

“This is a small total footprint within the entire Eagle-Herbert River valley. Due to the non-exclusivity of the easement,”
See Mine on Page 11

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MINE

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ment, public access will not be restricted within the area, therefore even though the experience may change, the public will still be able to recreate within the corridor,” the state’s public notice issued last Tuesday states.

In July, local conservation nonprofits gathered community members concerned about the road and proposed mining project. Attendee Riley Moser said even though public access will not be restricted, it would be severely disrupted by safety hazards and noise.

Among other attendee reasons for opposition were that profits from the mine benefit a private, foreign corporation and its investors.

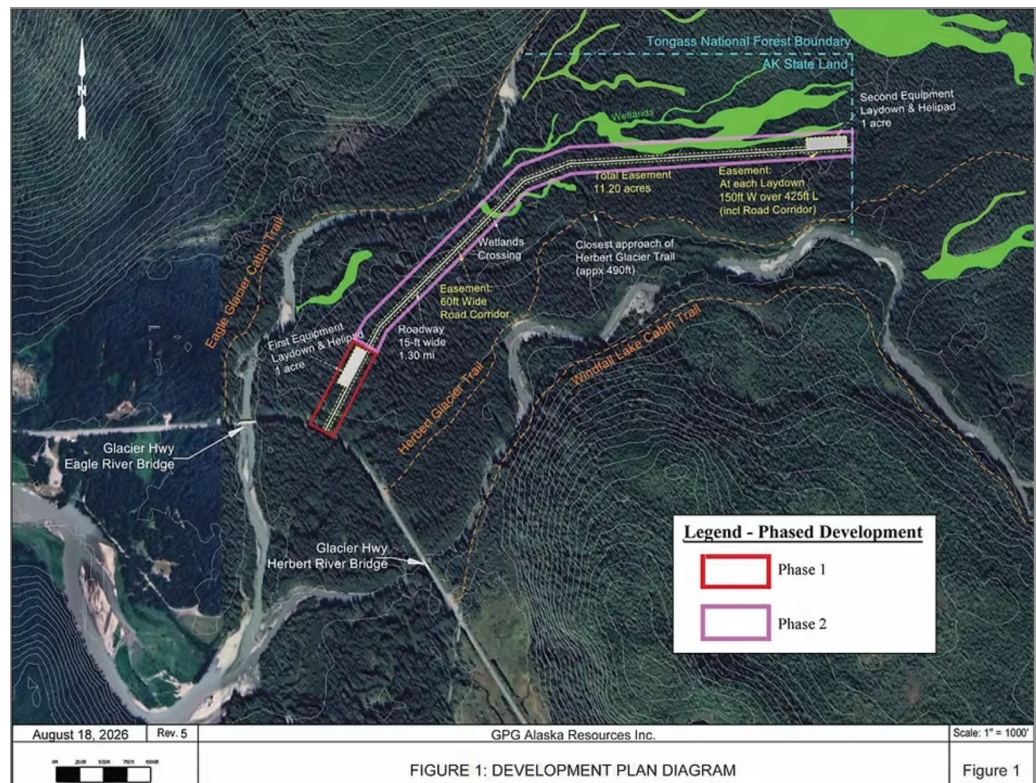
“The adjudication process does not evaluate or distinguish applicants based on nationality, corporate structure, or location of incorporation,” the state’s approval says.

The approval also notes the requested road will provide direct economic benefit to the state through the Entry Authorization and Annual Use Fee. If the proposed mining project is approved, the state would receive further direct economic benefits through tax revenues.

Supporters also recognized local contractors and businesses will be used to construct the road. Also, if the mining project is approved it will provide indirect economic benefits to the state through municipal property tax revenues, more business for local vendors, and job opportunities in the construction, mining and industry sectors.

A company representative said earlier this year the mine is expected to create 277 jobs and a pre-tax net present value of nearly \$1 billion during an initial seven-year production cycle.

“As an avid outdoorsman and a local business owner of Juneau I would like to express my support for this road and the project,” wrote Colter Boehm of



An updated Grand Portage Resources Ltd. diagram shows the Eagle Herbert River easement. (Screenshot)

Bobcat Juneau and Ketchikan. He added the local jobs offered by both would be excellent and long-term.

The easement application was first submitted last August and public notice took place from February to March. The road was approved Aug. 18 and will provide Grand Portage access for the unapproved New Amalga Gold Project near the face of Herbert Glacier on U.S. Forest Service land.

Public comments also included concerns about noise and visual impacts associated with construction, heavy equipment use, helicopter operations, ore hauling, and potential future blasting if mineral extraction occurs.

If the project moves forward, the road will lead to an approximate 30-acre surface facilities site, which is expected to host equipment shops, electrical generation, water treatment plants, ore sorting facilities and temporary rock staging pads.

The state intends to authorize the requested road in two phases.

The first phase authorizes the immediate development of the 0.17-mile segment of road closest to Glacier

Highway and the first one-acre helicopter staging area. The second phase authorizes the development of the remaining 1.13-mile road segment and staging area, once Grand Portage receives Forest Service approval to begin mineral extraction production.

The Alaska Division of Mining, Land and Water says the phased approach is a mitigation measure that enables better-controlled construction of the easement and ensures “it will serve its purpose and not unnecessarily disrupt the recreational area.”

“Although recreation is not the primary reason DMLW is implementing a phased approach, it does potentially lessen any negative impacts to recreation should the mining project not be approved on the adjoining federal lands.”

The decision follows the approval of a faster federal permitting process earlier this month, which officials said doesn’t mean the New Amalga Gold Project can skip any regulatory steps or is more likely to gain approval.

Grand Portage applied for an ease-

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MINE

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ment term of 35 years. DMLW issues it for 25 years, stating it's the standard term length.

"This will allow the state to better manage and re-evaluate the easement at a sooner date, while still providing the applicant with a long-term authorization," the notice states.

A driveway or approach road permit for the turnout from Glacier Highway is expected to be obtained from the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities before development.

Grand Portage stated since the mining project is currently only accessible via helicopter, the road development and staging areas will reduce the distance of supply shuttles and reduce noise impacts to residential areas in the Mendenhall Valley.

"The helicopter shuttle distance for slinging equipment and supplies will be reduced by approximately 60% for each cycle compared to the previous staging area located in the Juneau Mendenhall Valley suburbs," a company press release on Aug. 20 states.

The state received comments claiming authorization was not in the public interest because of conflicts with existing land uses and the state's responsibility to manage resources for multiple use.

"Under the State's multiple-use

mandate, long-term land stewardship does not mean restricting state land to preservation-only uses; it requires balancing environmental, recreational, economic, and access needs in a way that serves the broader public interest," the state's approval responds. "In this case, the proposed use, supporting mineral exploration and potential resource development, is a recognized, allowable use of state land."

And since mining is an allowable designated use "it is reasonable to infer that development of mining roads, staging areas, and similar support infrastructure are an allowable designated use as well," according to the state's approval.

In addition, DMLW states public road access would conflict with the easement's purpose, and allowing unrestricted vehicular access along the easement "would inevitably pose unnecessary hazards and safety risks."

It adds that existing public access to state-owned land in the area of the proposed easement will remain open, although the applicant will be allowed to install a gate at the easement's entrance to control vehicular access along the roadway for safety measures. A chain-link fence will be installed around the perimeter of each staging area, as well as solar-powered security cameras.

No public comments are being sought on the public notice, but ap-

peals are accepted until Sept. 7.

DMLW states it has considered the fish and wildlife habitat in the easement, and will require a 300-foot-wide buffer along anadromous streams as a mitigation measure. It adds the easement agreement includes terms Grand Portage must follow to minimize the potential for spills and pollution, and a required Environmental Assessment report at the end of the easement term.

"Although contamination incidents from mining operations have occurred in the past, that does not mean it will happen in this instance," the state's approval says. "We cannot deny an authorization on the basis that contamination may occur, especially when proper containment and mitigation measures are in place."

The future facilities at the proposed mining site are envisioned to include a selective underground mining operation, but are not planned to include an ore processing plant or tailings disposal landfill.

Due to the resource location near tidewater and less than four miles from existing paved highway, Grand Portage plans to utilize off-site processing by a third party, according to the company.

The road approval comes after the company reached the midpoint of this year's drilling program at the New Amalga Gold Project, according to a

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MINE

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company press release on Aug. 13.

Crews have completed five of 12 planned drillholes, totaling 1,605 meters out of 3,255 planned, as of Aug 9. Large amounts of critical data have been collected on hydrogeological and geotechnical conditions in key areas of the deposit, along with additional resource definition, according to the release.

The company states the rock mass data will be utilized for the upcoming environmental review and permitting process and will inform mine development plans.

Construction has advanced past drilling for the development of environmental monitoring infrastructure, including the installation of a river-monitoring gauge station and completion of concrete works for the foundation of the first of two planned meteorological towers. The second tower erection is planned for this September.

Wetlands mapping for the project area and wildlife, botanical and geochemical studies are also ongoing, according to the press release.

• *Contact Jasz Garrett at jasz@juneauindependent.com or (907) 723-9356.*



Grand Portage Resources Ltd. drilling operations near the Herbert Glacier. (Photo from Grand Portage Resources Ltd. website)

PRIMARY

Continued from page 1

Anchorage business owner Bernadette Wilson, former Anchorage Mayor Dave Bronson and former Alaska Attorney General Treg Taylor are in line as of Saturday to advance when results of the primary are certified Monday. That is also the deadline for candidates to drop out, but all three are so far indicating they intend to continue rather than consolidate around a single contender as some party officials are urging.

Wilson, who finished first among Republicans with 10.02% of the primary vote, on Saturday announced she has been endorsed by Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who is also a former press secretary for President Donald Trump.

Bronson, who finished second in the primary with 8.13% of the vote, also announced endorsements on Saturday, including from Wally Hickel III, the grandson of the former governor. The former mayor, in a Facebook post Wednesday, stated he will not step aside and support the party's top-finishing candidate.

"We are not backing down, we are not stepping aside, and we are not going anywhere," Bronson wrote. There is too much at stake, too much work still to do, and too many people counting on us."

Taylor is also resisting being removed from the general election ballot, but is facing more than just pressure from party officials to support the top-finishing candidate. The Alaska Public Offices Commission on Thursday recommended Taylor not be certified as a candidate because he failed to complete a required financial disclosure form.

The APOC's finding is Taylor reported more than \$1 million in rental income, but did not disclose the full names of his tenants as required by

Alaska's campaign laws. In response, Taylor issued a written statement that "I complied with the statute."

"I submitted a full list of our tenants with rental amounts," he wrote. "I included the tenants' first name and last initial to protect their privacy — they are not running for political office and don't deserve to have their private information published."

The Alaska Division of Elections will make the final determination whether to accept or reject APOC's recommendation.

If Taylor is rejected, the next-ranked candidate in the primary is also a Republican: former state Sen. Click Bishop. However, he is running as a centrist who during the primary differed with the leading GOP candidates on a number of policy issues. His appearance on the general election ballot might draw some votes from the other Republican candidates, but also lure voters who otherwise would support Kreiss-Tomkins over a conservative Republican.

The race will determine who replaces Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, who cannot run again this year after serving two consecutive terms. The Cook Political Report rates the race as "Likely Republican." The last Democrat to be elected governor in Alaska was Tony Knowles in 1998.

Begich, a prepared statement Friday, said he spoke to Kreiss-Tomkins, a Sitka resident and former legislator, about campaign priorities before announcing his withdrawal. The former senator also praised the Sitka resident's strong fundraising as a reason for endorsing his candidacy.

"What matters most is making sure Alaska gets a governor who will move us forward," Begich said in a prepared statement. "We believe the best way to do that now is to bring together the people, energy and momentum we have created and put our strength behind one candidate."

Juneau may have to pay 25% of fast-tracked long-term flood fix, vs 10% for conventional project



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers members from its Emergency Operations team walk near HESCO barriers installed by Brotherhood Bridge on April 15, 2026. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

Higher cost share is because Army Corps is pursuing project under emergency authority, according to city manager; Assembly to discuss flood-cost issues at COW meeting Monday

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

An accelerated long-term flood solution that costs half as much as conventional proposals could end up being more expensive for the city since it might have to pay 25% rather than 10% of the bill, according to a memo being presented to the Juneau Assembly on Monday.

However, efforts are being made to

reduce the cost-share percentage for a fast-tracked project, according to the memo by City Manager Katie Koester. Also, until a permanent flood fix is in place the city faces millions of dollars in annual maintenance and related costs involving HESCO barriers and other short-term flood protection measures.

The cost-share question is part of a range of issues involving flood-related funding the Assembly is scheduled to

consider at its Committee of the Whole meeting at 6 p.m. Monday.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which previously was discussing long-term flood projects that might cost \$1 billion and take more than a decade to complete, is now seeking an industry partner who can design and implement a project faster and cheaper. The intent is to sign an agreement by the end of the year.

Local mining officials have stated they have the expertise to complete a project such as a drainage tunnel from Suicide Basin for hundreds of millions of dollars less than what the Army Corps has proposed. But even if the cost is reduced by half — say to \$500 million instead of \$1 billion — the city could pay more (\$125 million at a 25% cost share compared to \$100 million at a 10% cost share) under the emergency authority provision.

"CBJ needs to be prepared to fund a local cost share for an enduring solution," Koester notes in her memo. "Because USACE is now pursuing this project under emergency authority, the funding cost share is 75/25 instead of 90/10. CBJ is still working with USACE on how to influence that cost share (through named legislation, for example). However, the local ask will be significant."

Koester, in a text message Friday to the Juneau Independent, stated there is a default 65/35 cost share split for conventional Army Corps projects, but the 90/10 ratio for a local flood project is based on it being on tribal lands. She said the tribal land provision does not

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FIX

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apply to emergency authority projects.

Because the city's cost share will be high, regardless of what the percentage is, obtaining funds via means such as a separate property tax or municipal bond will need to be pursued, according to Koester. Moving ahead on such a measure during the coming months will be important as city leaders also appeal to federal and state officials for funding.

"It would be strategic to make this ask with a local commitment from the voters in hand," she wrote. "I suggest a bond/debt question as soon as we have a more reliable total project cost in hand from USACE."

In the meantime, short-term flood mitigation is also proving costly, according to Koester.

"Just under \$50M in federal, state, and local dollars was spent this summer alone to protect the Mendenhall Valley," she wrote.

The levees of HESCO barriers along the Mendenhall River and a network of pumps were effective in controlling this month's glacial outburst flood that peaked at 14.7 feet, with minor damage reported to about a dozen homes. But even though the flood was the lowest in four years, there is still a hefty repair bill, according to Koester.

"Based on our experience with the 2025 GLOF, CBJ anticipates repairs to HESCO barriers and bank armoring to range between \$6M and \$12M," she wrote. She noted the Army Corps conducted the repair work after last year's flood, an essential cost savings since "we simply do not have the resources or capacity to do this work alone," but "CBJ will likely remain responsible for regular maintenance of the barriers (inspection, repairs due to settling, responding to vandalism, and refilling)." • *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

Joel Jackson, president of the Organized Village of Kake and longtime tribal leader, dies at 70



Organized Village of Kake President Joel Jackson speaks to a Juneau crowd about the importance of the Tongass National Forest on Sept. 13, 2025. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

Lifelong Kake resident was a tribal council member for more than 35 years, and advocate for Indigenous rights, environmental protection and cultural healing

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Lifelong Kake resident Joel Jackson, who served as president of the Organized Village of Kake for the past eight years and a tribal council member for more than 35 years, died Saturday at Mount Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka, according to family members and tribal officials.

Jackson, 70, a member of the Kàach. àdi clan and a child of the Tsaagweidi clan, was diagnosed earlier this year with pancreatic cancer. Tributes to him were shared Saturday by tribal leaders and others throughout the region.

"I think the thing when I think about Joel is just he was a fierce advocate," Chalyee Éesh Richard Peterson, president of the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, told the Juneau Independent on Satur-

day evening. "He was often at every kind of consultation and meeting involving our way of life, and he was never afraid to stand up and say what needed to be said."

Laaganaay Tsiits Gitane, Jackson's niece and a Kake resident who sponsored a GoFundMe to help his treatment, stated in a social media post Saturday that "He loved our Native peoples deeply and spent his final night in the Tongass, his homelands where his spirit has always lived."

Jackson during his life worked as a road builder for the Kake Tribal Corporation for 22 years, Kake's chief of police for three years and as a commercial fisherman. His advocacy included protection of the Tongass National Forest, subsistence and other In-

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JACKSON

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indigenous rights, obtaining an apology from the U.S. Navy in 2024 for its 1869 bombardment of Kake, and Alaska Native cultural healing projects.

Peterson, when asked what advocacy by Jackson first comes to mind, said "I think first and foremost was probably trying to protect our lands — he was very staunch on the roadless issue and trying to retain the roadless protections. But he's also very concerned about healing and I know it was one of his goals to see a healing center built."

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

Man convicted of child sex abuse gets 35-year sentence

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

A Juneau man convicted of two counts of sexually abusing a child under 13 in the home he was living at was sentenced Friday to 35 years in prison, with 13 years suspended, according to court records.

Sebastian Leorna, 70, reached a plea agreement with prosecutors on two counts of second-degree aggravated sexual abuse of a minor, according to a press release issued by the Alaska Department of Law. He originally faced six sexual abuse-related charges following his arrest in March of 2025, for incidents that occurred in February and March of that year.

A charging document states that Leorna was brought to the Juneau Police Department by a relative on March 16, 2025, with the relative stating Leorna was molesting a child at the house he lived in. The court file states Leorna admitted touching the child inappropriately.

Skagway ferry bookings blocked until Sept. 14, after the Klondike Road Relay weekend



Block 'reflects the reservation system only, not a projected return to service,' AMHS says Monday; private operators are continuing to provide supplemental service

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Reservations for the Alaska Marine Highway System's terminal in Skagway are blocked through Monday, Sept. 14 due to major structural damage, state transportation officials announced Monday. That means participants in the Klondike Road Relay on Sept. 11 and 12 will need to look at other options.

The terminal has been closed since Aug. 15 after growing cracks were observed in a concrete abutment supporting the vehicle transfer bridge and passenger walkway. Fixing the facility will be a multi-stage process, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities stated in a post on its Facebook page Monday.

"Both the vehicle and pedestrian transfer bridges have been removed and damaged concrete has been cleared so crews could fully assess the condition of the abutment," the post notes. "Engineering work is underway and nearing completion, after which the contractor will begin repairs. Ad-

justments to the float system are also planned to better control movement and reduce the potential for similar damage."

DOT notes that the block on bookings through Sept. 14 "reflects the reservation system only, not a projected return to service, and the block will be adjusted as the repair timeline becomes clearer."

The Skagway Visitor Department is providing alternative vessel and flight options through the weekend of the race. DOT also notes walk-on passengers reaching Haines can travel to Skagway via the Haines Skagway Fast Ferry at <https://www.hainesskagway-fastferry.com/>.

The Skagway terminal office remains open for questions and assistance at 800-642-0066, and additional state ferry information is at <https://ferry.alaska.com>.

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

Voices

Vote 'yes' in October

By MICHELLE BONNET

My career has been in water quality, split between chemistry lab work and field sampling, and water quality management for the state. I also did a stint on the Assembly and at some point I realized that my attraction to working in government was driven by the same curious part of me that led me to a bachelor's degree in chemistry.

I love systems. I love the way that components are put together and the forces of nature, or the laws of physics or the sets of rules and laws spit out the product on the other end. I love the process and I love the products.

Plant a seed in watered soil and its seedling will poke out of the ground and reach for the sun. Leave water pipes unprotected in sub-zero temperatures and by golly, they will burst. (Well, maybe I don't love this one, but I love the physics of it). Put a group of people who want our society to function better in a room, and they will propose and argue and negotiate and come up with a solution that helps solve a problem for people.

Present tribal, local, state and federal governments (and a dedicated cadre of local volunteers) with the huge challenge of an annual glacial outburst flood, and they will all come together to protect homes and hearts and families from a flood tearing through their lives yet again.

Having served on the Assembly for six years and having chosen not to run for a third term, I am the first person to acknowledge that systems of government don't work in the same predictable way that physics or chemistry work.

But they do work. As for our system of government, democracy is messy, but it beats the alternative. As Winston Churchill put it, "democracy is the

worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

Barack Obama said about governing in a democracy, "If you make one person happy, somebody else is unhappy." Paraphrasing, he went on to say that then that person who was happy about something you did becomes unhappy about your next action.

You see this a lot at the level of local politics. People who were pleased with the Assembly's response to the COVID crisis later became "single-issue voters" about Telephone Hill or the cruise ship industry. "Vote 'em out" became the slogan. Perhaps, that single-issue voter has said, we should defund city government until they do what we want.

We hear this approach on both sides: Some are unhappy about the city's past support for a new arts and cultural center. Or about moving City Hall. These examples were offered in support of drastic funding cuts that were on the ballot, and passed, last year.

As hard as disagreement can be, if I like every single thing that our government is doing, then there will be a whole swath of voters who hate those decisions. That means that our government is not providing balanced representation.

Unhappy with government, you can cut government funding, which sounds good in the abstract. But money is very specific, as we learned in the 2026 budget process. You can't make the actual budget cuts in the abstract.

If you cut government funding every time someone is unhappy with government, eventually there will be no funding or government left.

Which brings me to the three propositions on the CBJ ballot for Oct. 6, 2026. Proposition A is the recurring and very important measure on the 3%

sales tax. Proposition B, proposed by citizen initiative, restores the property mill rate tax cap to 12%, the cap in place before last year's election. Proposition C, also a citizen initiative, is a proposition for a seasonal sales tax of 1% with revenue intended for indoor and outdoor recreation in Juneau.

I strongly advocate for a Yes vote in October on all three ballot propositions. The combination of these still won't fully restore funding to pre-2025 levels, but it is a big step in that direction.

The Assembly heard Juneau voters. They passed a budget this year under the new funding levels. It was a hard budget process that left many people unhappy with the cuts. It will only get harder if we don't restore funding.

As readers of this column may have noted, I'm quite displeased with our state Division of Elections and its recent decisions around our current state election. I'm also very concerned about national politics. You will not hear me argue that we should defund state or federal government.

We do not need to defund. We need to govern better.

We, the people, do that through elections. We do that through ongoing civic engagement in the system.

We have a system. It is a representative democracy. At its best, it is a beautiful example of how we can co-exist with others who have wildly different philosophies of life. At its best, it can serve as a lesson in how to live life.

Let's make that system work and not continue careening down this wrecking ball path.

• *Michelle Bonnet Hale's roots go deep in Juneau and Southeast Alaska. She and her partner share their household with various relatives and three dogs. She served for six years on the Juneau Assembly.*

The fears unbecoming of a retired Marine colonel

By RICH MONIAK

Unless Sen. Dan Sullivan suddenly finds his political spine, three new White House developments should help convince independent voters that it's time to kick him out of Congress. Two are examples of how President Donald Trump's narcissistic, know-it-all mentality is sabotaging America's national security interests. The other is evidence that the president cares more about money launderers than honest working Americans.

Referencing his "very good relationship with Kim Jong Un, of North Korea," Trump ordered a substantial reduction in U.S. participation in the annual joint military exercises with South Korea. He said it sends "a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile, to a Country that, as long as Donald J. Trump has been President, has been unthreatening and respectful."

Sullivan knows that's pure fiction. "For nearly eight decades, North Korea's brutal communist regime has oppressed its own people, destabilized Northeast Asia, and threatened the United States and our allies — particularly South Korea," he said not quite two months ago.

This wasn't the first time Trump called the joint exercises provocative. He made a similar announcement immediately after his summit with Kim in 2018.

Sullivan disagreed. In a press release issued the same day, he said joint exercises "deter aggression, they do not provoke it."

This time he responded with crickets. Last week, Trump also started messing with the country's fleet of aircraft carriers. He ordered the Navy to develop a plan for replacing their electro-

magnetic launch and advanced weapons elevators with steam and hydraulic systems. Sullivan would have erupted with rage if a Democratic president with absolutely no military or engineering experience made such a decision. But for Trump it was crickets again.

Finally, Trump's Treasury Department completely neutered the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA).

The CTA was included in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) which was passed in the waning days of Trump's first term. It was intended to help law enforcement identify and track shell companies that launder money for drug dealers and other criminal enterprises. Most U.S. businesses were required to report beneficial ownership information to the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Network where it would be stored in a confidential database.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who as a U.S. Senator co-sponsored the CTA, called it "the most significant anti-corruption and money laundering law in decades."

Although he had some reservations about the reporting impact on small businesses, Trump recognized the legislation strengthened national security. And he commended "the bipartisan work undertaken to develop" it.

He wound up vetoing the NDAA. But his official explanation included no objections to the CTA. It became law when Congress overrode his veto.

Now Trump thinks the CTA's reporting requirements are "an absolute disaster" and an "economic menace."

It's conceivable his flip-flop is related to a revelation contained in a Capital One court filing last week. The bank's attorneys stated it closed hundreds of accounts associated with Trump's businesses in 2021 "for anti-money laundering" concerns based on

"months of analysis and a careful review" performed "in accordance with bank policies and regulatory guidance."

In February, the administration announced it would stop enforcing fines and penalties related to the CTA. And last week it formally ended the reporting requirements for U.S. businesses and stated its intent to delete all previous information that had been submitted.

Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley is one Republican unhappy enough with Trump to speak out. He said that the administration's action "undermines the clear intent of the law" and leaves law enforcement without "all available tools to protect Americans and crack down on illicit financial schemes."

Because the Senate never formally voted on including the CTA in the NDAA, it's hard to know exactly where Sullivan stood on the legislation six years ago. But in 2023 he was highly suspicious of the shell companies run by members of President Joe Biden's family. And he wasn't one of the 13 Republican co-sponsors of a Senate bill introduced in April that aligned with the administration's position.

But we also know he wouldn't speak up even if he agrees with Grassley.

His silence regarding Trump's friendly overtures to Korea's dictator and his ignorant meddling with the Navy's aircraft carriers is much more troubling. By betraying his national security principles, he's revealing a fear unbecoming of a retired U.S. Marine colonel. And that's cause for voters to wonder what other convictions he's willing to sacrifice to avoid crossing Trump.

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

Sports

Seconds decide three-day Tour of Juneau finale

Juneau Freewheelers' Ivanowicz tops men's field, Bullick tops women's

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

The three-day, four-event 2026 Tour of Juneau ended Sunday in a 52-mile pedal fight between Brandon Ivanowicz, John Bursell, Liam Thier, Tom Faust, Andrew Ferris and Dave Ringle in the men's race and Jamie Bursell, Corinne Bullick and Janice Sheufelt in the women's race.

Going into Sunday's End of the Road Race, Ivanowicz had established an early tour lead through Friday and Saturday races while the rest of the field whittled away at their deficits. Jamie Bursell had a similar advantage on the women's side going into Sunday's final rolling start. Riders started at the ferry terminal and rode to the end of the pavement and back to the totem pole in the Auke Recreation area.

John Bursell won Sunday's race by a sliver of rubber, hitting two hours 41 minutes and 29 seconds, with Ivanowicz crossing in 2:41:30. Thier and Faust could not be separated at the finish and went across in 2:46:17, Ferris finished in 3:17:43, and Ringle did not finish due to battery issues.

Ivanowicz would keep the final general classification time advantage for the tour title, with a combined 3:32:28. Bursell placed second in 3:32:52, Thier third with 3:41:21 and Faust fourth with 3:41:55.

On the women's side, Jamie Bursell looked to keep her two-minute lead for the tour title but a flat tire took her out of the race. Bullick and Sheufelt had shown they would not be out of contention during the three-day string of races. The two riders went down to the wire with Bullick crossing in 3:39:57 and Sheufelt in 3:39:58.

Bullick won the final general classification for the tour title, with a com-



Juneau Freewheelers, from left, Liam Thier, Tom Faust, Andrew Ferris, John Bursell and Brandon Ivanowicz ride the finale of the Tour of Juneau — the stage four End of the Road Race — on Sunday, Aug. 23, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

bined time of 4:44:44. Sheufelt was second in 4:45:46.

The Tour began Friday with the 2.2-mile Montana Creek Prologue.

Ivanowicz led the men with a time of 5:46. John Bursell placed second in 6:00, followed by Thier in 6:17 and Faust in 6:18.

Jamie Bursell led the women in 6:59, Janice Sheufelt placed second with 7:26 and Corinne Bullick third in 7:32.

Dan Robinson and Rose Welton were acknowledged for their help, and Jamie Bursell for bringing garlic cloves from her garden to share.

The tour's second event was the 4.5-mile Eaglecrest Hill Climb on Saturday morning, starting a half mile up the road to Eaglecrest Ski Area and finishing at the parking lot.

Ivanowicz kept his men's leaderboard credentials with a time of 20:38. John Bursell hit 20:51, Faust and Thier finished in 21:55, Evan Dannhardt in 23:21 and Lucas Le in 26:11 (on a mountain bike and platform pedals). Isaiah Campos did not finish.

Ivanowicz held his men's lead after the hill climb with a total of 26:24, while John Bursell finished in 26:51, Thier

in 28:12 and Faust in 28:13.

Jamie Bursell topped the women on the hill climb with 26:14, and held the two-event lead with 33:13. Bullick placed second in 26:52 for a total of 34:24. Janice Sheufelt finished in 27:02 for a total of 34:28.

Saturday afternoon the tour presented the 10.2-mile North Douglas Time Trial.

John Bursell hit 24:32 to nip Ivanowicz's 24:34 to win the time trial, but Ivanowicz remained atop the leaderboard with a 50:58 three-event total to Bursell's 51:23. Thier hit 26:52 and remained third with a 55:04 total. Faust placed fourth in 27:25 to total 55:38. Dave Ringle hit 27:40 and Andrew Ferris 27:49.

Jamie Bursell topped the women with a 29:09 and stayed atop the standings with 1:02:22. Alisha Falberg placed second in 30:14, Bullick third in 30:23 and Sheufelt fourth in 31:20. Bullick retained the overall second position with a 1:04:47, three-event total and Sheufelt retained third with a 1:05:48.

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JDHS harriers run along Sitka's Totem Park trail



Girls cross country runners from schools across Southeast set off on Lincoln Street Saturday, Aug. 23, 2026, on a course that winds through Sitka National Historical Park. (James Poulson / The Daily Sitka Sentinel)

Crimson Bears chased by Kings, Wolves, Vikings and more in first official race

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

The Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé Crimson Bears cross country running team placed first for girls and fourth for boys at the Sitka Invitational Cross Country meet at Sitka's Totem Park on Saturday.

"We are really proud of this group," JDHS coach Zack Bursell said. "They really showed some resilience with some unfortunate flight delays on our way to Sitka. We were stuck waiting in the Juneau airport for seven hours on a mechanical delay before our flight was cancelled and we got rebooked on a flight the morning of the race. They bounced back and many of them hit personal best times."

Sitka senior Derek Wilson won the boys race in 17 minutes 16.73 seconds and JDHS junior Carson Kautz led the Crimson Bears with a sixth-place finish in 18:16.69.

Wrangell sophomore Jenna Meissner won the girls race in 21:27.58 and JDHS freshman Nayeli Hood was the first Crimson Bears runner across the line, placing ninth with 23:08.99.

The JDHS girls showed that pack running was key in the sport in the

field of 54 runners. Their five scoring athletes all finished in the top 18. Freshman Grace Rumsey was 11th with 23:31.27, senior Ellie Jo Wall 13th in 23:46.10, sophomore Emmalynn LaPlante 16th in 23:58.53 and sophomore Dezeræ Bos 17th in 23:59.55. The two scoring alternates, senior Kaycee Parady, placed 18th in 24:00.49 and sophomore Eliza Albrecht 29th in 26:07.93.

JDHS senior Jillian Levy hit her best time of the season, placing 42nd in 27:51.43.

"I was thinking about how water boils at 212 degrees," Levy said. "So I think about how when you are at 211 degrees and you always give that one more degree to get boiling. I was just thinking go one more degree."

Ketchikan topped the boys team scoring by placing senior Henry Vail second in 17:47.88 and freshman Benjamin Thompson third in 17:52.60 and their next three scorers placing seventh, ninth and 13th.

After Kautz in the top 10, JDHS placed their scoring runners with senior Max Webster 18th in 19:12.87, senior Atagan Hood 23rd in 19:20.20, freshman Luke Miller 29th in

19:41.58, and junior Caleb Schane 31st in 19:51.98. The two scoring alternates were sophomore Brooks Pinney 37th in 20:12.16 and senior Caden Morris 42nd in 21:07.96.

"I am happy I was able to run well today," Morris said. "After a few seasons of not being able to compete with illness and injuries, it was great to be able to run at a full effort today."

Boys Team

1. Ketchikan, 34; 2. Sitka, 59; 3. Wrangell, 89; 4. JDHS, 105; 5. Unalaska, 108; 6. Skagway, 110; 7. Metlakatla, 214

Girls Team

1. JDHS, 37; 2. Sitka, 43; 3. Ketchikan, 49

Individual Results (Top 10 and JDHS runners)

Boys:

1. Derek Wilson, SIT, 17:16.73; 2. Henry Vail, KTN, 17:47.88; 3. Benjamin Thompson, KTN, 17:52.60; 4. Logan Rupprecht, SKG, 17:56.72; 5. Carter Howell, WRG, 18:10.37; 6. Kautz, JDHS, 18:16.69; 7. Maxton Glover, KTN, 18:31.63; 8. Owen Mork, SIT, 18:34.68; 9. Blaine Garkick, KTN, 18:39.03; 10. Zane Coughran, SKG, 18:41.74; 18. Webster, JDHS, 19:12.87; 23. Hood, JDHS, 19:20.20; 29. Miller, JDHS, 19:41.58; 31. Schane, JDHS, 19:51.98; 37. Pinney, JDHS, 20:12.16; 42. Morris, JDHS, 21:07.96; 46. Yakobi Cole, JDHS, 21:18.96; 56. Knox Francis, JDHS, 22:44.38; 64. Craig Thorsteinson, JDHS, 24:12.90; 67. Robert Hickman, JDHS, 24:40.88; 68. Riley Humphrey, JDHS, 25:22.88

Girls:

1. Jenna Meissner, WRG, 21:27.58; 2. Cadence Flint, PSG, 21:39.84; 3.

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RUNNERS

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Alana Harrison, WRG, 21:40.95; 4. Ryan Elerding, KTN, 22:01.24; 5. Novah Schmidt, SIT, 22:04.57; 6. Grace Hall, SIT, 22:08.33; 7. Nadia Whitaker, Unalaska, 22:56.86; 8. Sarah Kleeman, KTN, 23:04.97; 9. Hood, JDHS, 23:08.99; 10. Erika Jabusch, WRG, 23:15.90; 11. Rumsey, JDHS, 23:31.27; 13. Wall, JDHS, 23:46.10; 16. LaPlante, JDHS, 23:58.53; 17. Bos, JDHS, 23:59.55; 18. Parady, JDHS, 24:00.49; 29. Albrecht, JDHS, 26:07.93; 31. Kira English, JDHS, 26:16.38; 32. Cianna Kahl, JDHS, 26:16.72; 33. Katie Rosson, JDHS, 26:21.55; 36. Leighton Zarazua, JDHS, 26:30.84; 40. Eleanor Peterson, JDHS, 27:00.99; 41. Lucy Wall, JDHS, 27:30.60; 42. Jillian Levy, JDHS, 27:51.43; 52. Kara Schrader, JDHS, 30:52.18; 54. Callie Stickel, JDHS, 34:46.17

JDHS will next race at Anchorage's Bartlett High School trails on Saturday, Aug 29.

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Boys cross country runners from schools across Southeast set off on Lincoln Street Saturday, Aug. 22, 2026, for a cross country course through Sitka National Historical Park. (James Poulson / The Daily Sitka Sentinel)

JDHS 'Bear Claw' defense freezes out North Pole in 52-0 home opener

Crimson Bears' offense scores on every first-half possession; visiting Patriots get two first downs in first half, none in second half as running clock rule enacted



Girls cross country runners from schools across Southeast set off on Lincoln Street Saturday, Aug. 23, 2026, on a course that winds through Sitka National Historical Park. (James Poulson / The Daily Sitka Sentinel)

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé junior defensive lineman Logan Womack summed up Saturday's Crimson Bears 52-0 win over the North Pole Patriots at Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park in a short sentence.

"Our defense is called the Bear Claw," Womack said.

The "Bear Claw" held the Patriots to just two first downs in the first half and none in the second.

"It feels good to get our home opener on a win," said Jaxin Jim, a JDHS senior linebacker and running

back. "And it just feels good to be out there with my team and have our defense, you know, our defense was lights out. I mean, I love all our linebackers and our second level. We have just a great chemistry. I can't wait to see us play more in the future."

JDHS scored every time they touched the ball in the first half and on their first possession to start the second half under a running clock — If the score is more than 35 points in the fourth quarter, or if both coaches agree in the third quarter, then the remainder of the game is played with the clock

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- ✓ Registration closes for the November General Election on October 4



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GENERAL ELECTION

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Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé senior Jaxin Jim (20) and junior Caleb Aube (23) tackle North Pole junior Xavier Barnett (5) during the Crimson Bears' 52-0 win over the Patriots at Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park on Saturday, Aug. 29, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

BEARS

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not stopping.

"This win means a lot," junior linebacker Caleb Aube said. "Juneau hasn't had a game like this in a long time. It is good to have, especially on a home opener too. All the fans are watching. It meant a lot to me. My best hit tonight was when I tackled low and, like, gator-rolled the kid. He complained to the ref, but it was just a gator-roll; you do that in football."

Sophomore linebacker Carter Day also noted the home opener meant a lot.

"Especially me, as a sophomore, coming up to play with the varsity," Day said. "Starting on varsity my sophomore year, man, I just feed off the crowd. The crowd puts in the work, I just feed off it. Linebacker is a lot of responsibility, reading the pass and the run."

Added Aube, "A lot of reading the offense."

North Pole received the opening kickoff and took the first hit as Carter

Day crushed a ball carrier at the line of scrimmage. On the next play junior linebacker Jarry Maghinay intercepted a pass.

The Crimson Bears marched from the Patriots 29 yard line with quarterback Krew Ridle running for 21 yards, senior Ethan Van Kirk a couple more and Ridle punching the score in. Senior Sonny Mazon kicked the extra point, his first of six in the first half, plus a field goal. He added another PAT in the second half for a perfect night over the crossbar and between the uprights.

North Pole went four plays and had to punt after JDHS senior linebacker Jake Chambers, junior lineman Leonidas Taualo-Tasi and Jim tackled Patriots for little or no gains.

"This game at home feels like so much," Taualo-Tasi said. "Because we have been waiting for this moment for two weeks, and we got it. We came back home for the win. My favorite play of the game was when we ran the screen, and I blocked so well."

That play came when JDHS took over the ball on the North Pole 47 and

went five plays on a carry by junior running back Sylvion Washington, two runs by Ridle, one from Van Kirk, and a one-yard sweep from Washington. Mazon's second extra point gave JDHS a 14-0 lead.

"That screen was my favorite play," senior offensive lineman Isaiah Galletes-Fale said. "That screen we ran with Sylvion behind us, me and Leonidas. It worked so well. Sylvion went to the inside instead of cutting up. He cut it up for a touchdown play. It was a good game. Their guys were really strong, surprisingly because of their height. They gave good push-back too. Key for me was just trying to hold my line and help out."

North Pole's next possession featured JDHS' Jim on a tackle, Taualo-Tasi on a sack, and tackles by junior lineman Helaman Aitaoto-Tele'a and sophomore linebacker Carter Day and junior defensive back Andrew Sanders deflecting a pass.

With 1:26 left in the first quarter, JDHS started on their own 47-yard line, and Van Kirk and Washington carried for short gains that moved possession into the second quarter where Ridle kept for a 10-yard run. Ridle next threw 28 yards to junior wide receiver Andrew Sanders for a touchdown. Mazon added his third extra point for a 21-0 lead.

"This game meant a lot," Sanders said. "I kind of struggled my first two years to make pass plays happen, make receptions, and I was really worried about touchdowns. But new receiver coach (Danny Izack) showed up and he showed me the way."

North Pole went three plays and had to punt as JDHS' Chambers tackled a runner for a loss, junior linebacker Caleb Aube did the same, and the front line forced an incomplete pass.

In three plays from the North Pole 33-yard line, the Crimson Bears used short runs by Washington and Van

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BEARS

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Kirk to set up a 15-yard scoring scamper by Ridle. Mazon added his fourth extra point for a 28-0 lead.

JDHS' Van Kirk tackled a North Pole kickoff returner on their own 23-yard line, Aitaoto-Tele'a and Taulalo-Tasi tackled runners for no gain, and Maghinay broke up a pass to force another Patriots punt.

"I just want to say thank you to the coaches for helping me," Aitaoto-Tele'a said. "It's my first year playing so I say thank you to the coaches. It is all God, you know. Just God helping me. It means a lot to be on this field with all this action. A lot."

JDHS would put up their farthest march — from their own 32-yard line — and go 11 plays, including two runs from Washington, two from Ridle, one apiece from Aube for 10 yards and Sanders for 18 yards, and four runs from Van Kirk, including a two-yard plunge into the end zone. Mazon added his fifth extra point for a 35-0 lead.

North Pole started on their own 40-yard line with 3:48 remaining in the first half and five plays later — thanks to senior linemen Tyler Oudekerk, Van Kirk and Jim — were forced to punt from their own 35-yard line. The punt was blocked and recovered by Washington on the 31-yard line. Ridle passed 18 yards to Washington for a first down. Jim rambled eight yards and then another five yards for a touchdown, and Mazon hit his sixth extra point for a 42-0 lead.

"Oh man, we just ran that play twice," Jim said of his score. "Just let us keep running it and we just ran it in. I just dived into the end zone and it

was a touchdown."

North Pole fumbled on their next possession with 50 seconds remaining in the first half and JDHS recovered on the 11-yard line. The Crimson Bears could not get any closer and Mazon kicked a field goal with 8.6 seconds remaining for a 45-0 lead.

JDHS had first possession in the second half and in four plays, on second-and-nine on the North Pole 42-yard line, the Crimson Bears' Ridle hit Sanders for his second passing touchdown — and Sanders second receiving touchdown — of the evening. Mazon kicked his seventh extra point for the 52-0 score with 9:28 remaining on the running clock.

"Those two touchdowns meant a lot to me," Sanders said. "That meant a lot to my career, and I feel like I developed and have become a way better player than I have been. Coach Izack has taught me route running, ball tracking, all the fundamental things you need to know. You can be fast, athletic, smart, and all that, but you have to get the fundamentals down to make the plays happen."

Both of Ridle's touchdown throws to Sanders came under hard pressure.

"I found out that throwing through the hit helps a lot," Ridle said of being knocked to the ground on both the scores. "On both of those I got hit pretty good. But I have done lots of reps with Andrew and feel a good connection with him so we can have these plays like this. Neither of the touchdowns did I see him catch, on both of them I was looking up at the sky."

North Pole was stopped on their own 20-yard line on the ensuing kickoff as JDHS' Jim and Day shared a tackle on a Patriots returner.

"All our defense, man, we just love to hit," Jim said. "Our philosophy, our word of the day, is 'hit' from our defensive side. All we want to do is swarm, hit, and if we make a solo tackle we let them know who was there. We will help them up, but we will let them know who hit them."

The JDHS defensive line held for three plays to force a punt. The Crimson Bears would suffer their only turnover on a fumble, but North Pole would last just five plays and have a fourth-and-five pass broken up by JDHS' Sanders as the fourth quarter started.

"On defense I have always had a better head for that," Sanders said. "I feel like I just keep getting better and better... more interceptions, more knockdowns, more stops, more hits... I just want to help shut teams down, make them worried to throw against us, or run against us."

JDHS used nine plays before surrendering the ball on a fourth-and-five that went just four yards. North Pole had four minutes left in the game but used all of them to get just seven yards and the game clock would run out with JDHS taking a knee to end the game.

The most telling sign that the Crimson Bears play with power and professionalism came when the handshake line ended.

As North Pole players walked with heads down across the field, JDHS quarterback Krew Ridle sprinted to them, thanking them for making the trip, commending them for their efforts, and welcoming them with open arms.

"Football means everything to
See BEARS on Page 24

IF YOU DON'T HAVE HEART,
YOU'RE IN THE WRONG BUSINESS.

BEARS

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me,” Ridle said. “It has been life for me. I have been playing since I was six years old in flag football here in Juneau. Growing up it has always just been everything. Chasing the North Pole players down after was, like, I just had a great game with them. They were there with me and I was there with them. We all played hard and I just wanted to let them know that they did great tonight.”

JDHS head coach Rich Sjoroos noted that the Crimson Bears' energy level was key.

“You get a game like that where you jump on a team early, and I have done that in the past, and all of a sudden you start looking at the scoreboard,” Sjoroos said. “And your mind is wandering and you lose your focus. And all of a sudden the team comes back and gets in the ballgame and taking away some of the success you had. We made sure we kept the energy up. We did a great job with that. I was very impressed with the energy level from start to finish. We don't have a lot of depth, not a lot of kids, but the ones we had in there all contributed and kept things rolling in the second half... We were just worried about executing because it still is just week three of the season and you have a lot of things you want to accomplish. You have got to get the reps to get there. I was very pleased. Defensively, again, the tackling, the communication, flying around the field... we put our offense on a short field several times to start the game and that helped us get that cushion.”

The Crimson Bears host the CIC Service Cougars on Saturday, Sept. 5, at 7 p.m. Service defeated Eagle River 44-0 on Friday. The Cougars are 2-1, including a 14-8 win over East Anchorage and a 26-10 loss to Colony.

“We jump back into league play next week,” Sjoroos said. “Every week is a reset. If you sit there and



Members of the Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé "Bear Claw" defense tackle North Pole senior Billy Duke (7) during the Crimson Bears' 52-0 win over the Patriots at Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park on Saturday, Aug. 29, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

dwelling on what happened the week before, good or bad, you are not going to get where you want to be. I know Service is going to come down with a lot on their agenda. And we need to get ready to go and it will take a lot of work to get there. They are very talented and a super well-coached team. They are trending in the right direction also. I think each one of us has had a tough loss so pretty comparable to this point. Just two teams that are going to go at it on Saturday night.”

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SCORE BY QUARTER

Juneau 14 - 31 - 7 - 0 = 52
Bartlett 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 = 00

HOW THEY SCORED

1ST QTR

8:58 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 3-yard

run. Mazon PAT good. 7-0.

4:20 - Crimson Bears - Washington 1-yard run. Mazon PAT good. 14-0.

2ND QTR

11:41 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 28-yard pass to Sanders. Mazon PAT good. 21-0.

8:49 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 15-yard run. Mazon PAT good. 28-0.

3:48 - Crimson Bears - Van Kirk 4-yard run. Mazon PAT good. 35-0.

:59 - Crimson Bears - Jim 5-yard run. Mazon PAT good. 42-0.

:8.6 - Crimson Bears - Mazon 14-yard FG. 45-0.

3RD QTR

9:28 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 42-yard pass to Sanders. Mazon PAT good. 52-0.

4TH QTR

No scoring.



Same-day game coverage and previews of upcoming events available at:

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