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Juneau Independent

The True Local Newspaper of Alaska's Capital City

August 4, 2025

ALASKA LEGISLATURE'S 2025 SPECIAL SESSION

Education funds restored

Lawmakers override veto of \$200 BSA hike by 45-14 vote, recess until Aug. 19 as governor issues warning

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

The Alaska Legislature overrode two vetoes by Gov. Mike Dunleavy, including a cut to education funding, and rejected his executive order

forming a state Department of Agriculture during the opening day of a special session on Saturday.

But the session will extend beyond the single day that many legislators expected, with the House and Senate recessing until Aug. 19 after Dunleavy told leaders of both chambers he would implement

an executive order establishing the agriculture department if they adjourned.

What legislators will consider when they reconvene is unknown, said Senate President Gary Stevens, R-Kodiak, and House Speaker Bryce
See SESSION, page 7



JASZ GARRETT / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Educators and community members applaud following the vote to override on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025.

Ralliers rejoice after override

Protesters, legislators and governor agree: An increase to the BSA is not enough for Alaska

By **NATALIE BUTTNER**
and **JASZ GARRETT**
Juneau Independent

Demonstrators greeted lawmakers leaving the House Chamber on Saturday with applause for their decision to override cuts to increased education funding. The celebration came after a tense wait, during which more than 100 people rallied outside the Alaska State Capitol in support of the override.

However, educators and community members acknowledged the need for more funding.

See RALLY, page 9

Violent moment during arrest becomes lynchpin for what residents call wider patterns of racism

Protest focuses on police, man who filmed video focuses on suspects

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

A brief confrontation between a Black man and two Alaska Natives that resulted in one of the latter being hospitalized when he was thrown to the ground by a police officer is turning into a broader

clash over people connected to the incident are calling historical patterns of racism.

Police mistreating Natives was an oft-voiced theme at a protest Saturday by about 75 people at the Juneau Police Department station in Lemon

See PROTEST, page 10



MARK SABBATINI / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Protesters gather outside the Juneau Police Department station on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025,

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Police blotter

This report contains public information available from local emergency response and law enforcement organizations. This report includes arrest and citation information, not conviction information. Therefore, those listed in this report are presumed innocent. Information about these incidents can be reported anonymously at juneaucrimeline.com.

Tuesday, July 29

Attempt to Serve

At 10:31 a.m. on Tuesday, Jesse Rodriguez, 46, was arrested on Glacier Highway on a \$100 warrant for failure to appear on an original charge of driving while license suspended or revoked. He was taken to Lemon Creek Correctional Center.

Child Abuse or Neglect

At 6:18 p.m. on Tuesday, the Juneau Police Department received a confidential report of child abuse.

Domestic Dispute

At 2:56 a.m. on Tuesday, Scott Curtis Stephens, 61, was arrested on Valley Boulevard for domestic violence assault. He was taken to LCCC.

At 11:22 p.m. on Tuesday, Aaron Ettinger, 31, was arrested on Renninger Street for domestic violence assault. He was taken to LCCC. Alcohol was a factor.

Wednesday, July 30

Attempt to Serve

At 9:25 a.m. on Wednesday, Creadence Papa, 22, was arrested on Teal Street on a \$25 warrant for failure to appear on the original charge of trespass and taken to Lemon Creek Correctional Center.

Assault

At 7:38 p.m. on Wednesday, Lester Santiago, 33, was arrested for second-degree assault. He was taken to LCCC.

Disturbance

At 7:32 p.m. on Wednesday, JPD responded to a report of a female fighting with a male in front of the Douglas Library. JPD arrested Maris Didrickson, 47, for disorderly conduct. JPD also attempted to arrest a 49-year-old male. During the arrest, the 49-year-old was thrown to the ground by a JPD officer and sustained a head injury. Capital City Fire/Rescue transported the 49-year-old male to Bartlett Regional Hospital, where he was medevaced to Seattle.

At 11:05 p.m. on Wednesday, Megan Flora, 28,

was arrested for misuse of emergency services on Shell Simmons Drive.

Motor Vehicle Collision With Injury

At 11:29 a.m. on Wednesday, JPD and CCFR responded to an accident where an SUV, driven by a 59-year-old male, struck multiple parked cars.

Thursday, July 31

Disturbance

At 4:47 p.m. on Thursday, Malcolm Tullis, 42, was arrested at Sealaska Plaza for harassment. Alcohol was a factor.

Domestic Dispute

At 10:49 a.m. on Thursday, Floyd Rapp, 42, was arrested for domestic violence assault on Douglas Highway. He was taken to Lemon Creek Correctional Center.

Motor Vehicle Collision Without Injury

At 9:25 a.m. on Thursday, Charles Clasby, 44, was arrested for assault and reckless endangerment. He was taken to LCCC.

Out With Subject or Situation

At 10:55 p.m. on Thursday, Thomas Bell, 64, was arrested on Front Street on an outstanding \$250 Alaska State Troopers warrant. He was taken to LCCC. Alcohol was a factor.

Theft

At 11:17 p.m. on Thursday, Christopher Waterhouse, 39, was cited and released on Vintage Boulevard for larceny.

Friday, Aug. 1

Assault

At 12:02 a.m. on Friday, the Juneau Police Department received a report of a vehicle driving recklessly in a parking lot on Teal Street.

Camping Complaint

At 8:16 a.m. on Friday, 62-year-old Mark Albrecht was arrested on Glacier Highway for harassment. He was taken to Lemon Creek Correctional Center.

Death Investigation

At 4:25 p.m. on Friday, JPD began an investigation into the death of a 71-year-old male. The circumstances are not considered suspicious and next of kin has been notified.

Vandalism or Graffiti

At 11:30 p.m. on Friday, JPD began an investigation into a reported vandalism at a business on Glacier Avenue.

JDHS football players help prepare for flood

Elimination of top salary tier and job protections, less prep time cited as issues in contract talks

By LAURIE CRAIG
Special Correspondent

Nineteen members of the Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé football team devoted a few hours of volunteer labor on Saturday filling and delivering sandbags for Mendenhall Valley homeowners hoping to protect their property from the next glacial lake outburst flood, which could occur at any time as Suicide Basin nears its filling point.

Defensive line coach Zach Starbard oversaw the Dimond Park sandpile operation, while other students and their coach were delivering full bags to residents needing extra help. Both varsity and junior varsity players participated Saturday, Starbard said.

Valley resident Tim Kissner was joined by JDHS “Chorebusters” football players Jonah Mahle and Noah Ault as the trio worked together to fill, tie and load vinyl sandbags into a truck.

“These guys work fast. They filled 15 bags in 51 minutes,” Kissner said. “I live close to the river,” he added.

Starbard said Chorebusters is a football organization that gives players the chance to exchange their service for team fundraising purposes. The sandbag effort was a volunteer project, however.

Freshman Hendrik Van Kirk loaded bulging burlap sacks into the bed of another pickup truck



LAURIE CRAIG / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Football players at Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé and other people fill sandbags at Dimond Park on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025, in preparation for a glacial lake outburst flood from Suidice Basin expected to occur this month.

after securing the bags with black ties. He is a running back on the team. Although his family doesn't live in the flood zone, Van Kirk has extended family members who do.

“I'm trying to stay out and help the community

because the community has helped me a lot,” Van Kirk added. The team was scheduled to be on site from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

• Contact Laurie Craig at lauriec@juneauindependent.com.



LAURIE CRAIG / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Football players at Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé and other people fill sandbags at Dimond Park on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025.

Obituaries

Peggy J. Chaplin

Peggy J. Chaplin, aged 83, passed away peacefully on July 25, 2025, in Auburn, California. Born on April 25, 1942, Peggy was known for her quiet, thoughtful demeanor, always quick to smile and savor the simple joys of life.

Peggy attended Moses Lake High School in Washington before pursuing higher education later in life at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. After her marriage, she and her husband moved to Juneau, Alaska. It was to be her forever home. She built a notable career, both with the State of Alaska and the local Juneau law firm of Baxter, Bruce & Sullivan. As an executive assistant, she excelled in managing personal trusts, demonstrating a keen aptitude for office organization and administrative tasks.

Beyond her professional life, Peggy was deeply engaged in her personal interests and hobbies. She was an excellent host, known for her de-



casual romance novels and was a regular participant in the local arts scene, appreciating theatre and music. Her artistic talents extended to wheel-thrown pottery, creating both functional and deco-

lectable Sunday brunches featuring authentic Alaska Sourdough pancakes and mimosas. A passionate baker, her holiday candies, especially homemade caramels and coveted chocolate truffles, were renowned. An avid reader of murder mysteries, Peggy also enjoyed oc-

casional romance novels and was a regular participant in the local arts scene, appreciating theatre and music. Her artistic talents extended to wheel-thrown pottery, creating both functional and deco-

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Clark Sanders Gruening

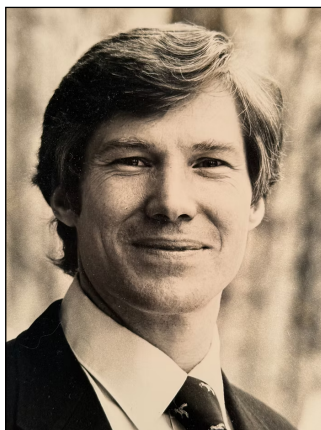
Clark Sanders Gruening passed away peacefully on June 17, 2025, in the community he loved, at age 82.

Clark was raised in Juneau and, from an early age, had a love of the outdoors and the people around him. He grew up an avid hunter, fisherman, and hiker, a dedicated member of the Juneau Ski Club, as well as an active participant in the community and local civic organizations; all passions he would retain for the rest of his life.

Clark graduated from Juneau Douglas High School in 1961, received a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Oregon in 1965, and earned a J.D. with honors from George Washington University in 1969. After law school, he returned to Alaska, settling in Anchorage.

As the grandson of former territorial Governor and U.S. Senator and "father of Alaska statehood," Ernest Gruening, Clark felt a call to public service and would soon follow in his grandfather's political footsteps.

Clark served two terms in the Alaska State House from 1974-1978, where he played a critical role in the creation of the Permanent Fund. As Chair of the Special Committee on the Permanent Fund, Clark was one of the key lawmakers that envisioned and facilitated the Fund's enabling the legislation. Later in life (1995-2003), Clark would continue that work by serving eight years on the Board of Trustees for the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation, including one term as Chair. The im-



pact he had on shaping our state's hallmark financial institution was significant and long-lasting.

In 1981, Clark moved back to Juneau to raise a family, where he practiced law as a founding partner of Gruening & Spitzfaden and

lobbied for a diverse cross-section of clients across the state, including 25 years as the legislative liaison for the City and Borough of Juneau. He loved advocating for this community and was particularly proud of his role in securing the state funding for the Father Kashevaroff State Library Archives and Museum Building before his retirement.

As a policy maker and lobbyist, Clark was known around the Capitol Building for his approachable demeanor, quick wit, and ability to work across the aisle to find solutions for Alaskans.

Moreover, Clark had a tremendous heart for the underdog and a calling to help others; nothing made him happier than making a difference in someone's life. He was a long-time member and frequent volunteer with the Juneau Lions Club, particularly the ski program at Eaglecrest and loved volunteering with Southeast Alaska Independent Living. Additionally, he was a founding member of the Juneau Community Foundation and the John

and Deena Hale Ski Foundation and was a Past-President of the downtown Juneau Rotary Club. His favorite pastimes were reading a good book, skiing, tennis, and paragliding off Mount Roberts and other local peaks. He greatly appreciated the arts, other cultures, and traveling. Most of all, Clark loved his family and friends and was always willing to lend them a helping hand.

Those of us who were lucky enough to know Clark will remember his warm eyes and smile, his kind and generous nature, his passion for service, and his calm and thoughtful intellect.

Statesman and community leader; cherished husband, father, brother, and grandfather; Clark left an indelible, positive mark in the lives of those around him, the community of Juneau, and the State of Alaska. Gone in flesh but never in spirit; his memory and legacy will live on in the hearts of family and friends, and in the state and community he loved and served.

Clark is survived by his beloved wife, Rosemary; his sons, Matthew and Nathan (Selena); grandsons Lincoln and Elias, brothers Win (Anne) and Brad (Bonnie), all who reside in Juneau; brother Peter; sisters Kimberley (Steve) and Tiffany; and stepsons Jim and John.

State flags will be flown at half-staff on Friday, August 8, in honor of Clark's legacy and passing.

In accordance with his beliefs, a traditional Episcopal service will be held for Clark Gruening in Juneau on Saturday, September 6, at the Church of the Holy Trinity at 2 p.m. A reception will be held onsite following the service.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Juneau Pioneers Home Foundation.

Voices

Juneau's best under difficult circumstances

By KATE TROLL

As many readers may know, I recently fell, broke my ankle and had to get helicopter out of Granite Basin.

Because of the location it made for a very tricky landing or more accurately a hovering with one skid on the ground. After dropping off the paramedics the helicopter flew back up on the ridge in order to shut down and wait for when the paramedics had me ready for a pickup.

In a tremendous amount of pain, I was very relieved when the CCFR paramedics arrived. They first gave me an IV of fentanyl, set at level to keep me cognizant while taking the edge off the severe pain. Then they applied a splint to my ankle. Next came figuring out how to get me down a steep bouldery slope. I got to listen in on their decision-making every step of the way. I was so impressed and reassured by their professionalism. They told me I was lucky to get one of the best helicopter pilots in Southeast. It was only through their confidence did I dare hop onto a hovering helicopter.

Once onboard and watching the pilot maneuver out of a tight spot, I could tell the paramedics were right about this highly skilled Temsco pilot. It was



CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

Grante Creek Basin.

a short trip to the airport where the CCFR ambulance crew was standing by. They took my vitals and whisked me into Bartlett ER.

While I got my own examination room and saw the ER doc, the ER started filling up fast. Soon the time in between getting a procedure done and waiting for the ER doc to review the results got longer and longer. Essentially, with a sunny day activating a lot of outdoor activities and having and five cruise ships in, the ER was getting slammed.

For longer than I wanted to I watched nurses and medical technicians buzz around the ER addressing needs and communicating with each other. The upside of waiting for the ER doc to return, was that I had a very informative visit with the orthopedic surgeon that reviewed my x-rays. I also had time to get a pre-surgery CT scan done. Eventually the ER doc came by to apply a cast for my departure. He got halfway into constructing the cast before he got called out for a new arrival. He returned about 40 minutes later, apologetic and re-focused on finishing my cast.

Although I was in the ER way too long, I did get to see the crew at Bartlett in high-stress action. And most importantly for me, from the ER doc to the x-ray technician, I was comforted by the professionalism and kind attention I encountered throughout the evening.

We as a community are fortunate to have the highly skilled rescue services of CCFR which is supported by top-of-the-line helicopter pilots. We're equally fortunate to have the competent medical services of Bartlett ER. This is something I now know on a deep personal level and eternally

See TROLL, page 6

Blending meetings w/ personal travel — trend toward 'bleisure'

By LIZ PERRY

Anyone who's attended a conference, convention, or large meeting knows the scene: after registering and picking up your badge and other information, you look around the foyer to see small groups of colleagues greeting each other, setting appointments, and making plans. Networking, sharing information, and the business of business has already begun.

Business travel has just begun to recover from the pandemic, and while technology like Zoom makes exchanging information more accessible, face-to-face engagement provides the greatest benefits and value for all types of organizations. Heather Collins, event and group sales manager for Travel Juneau, explains that meeting planners "will be navigating complexities such as government budget cuts, tariffs, and other economic uncertainties. Given that our largest meeting market segment is government, the full effects of these factors are yet to be seen." Collins is also seeing some meet-

ings with shorter lead times, a result of market uncertainty and planners waiting on board approvals and budget confirmations.

Planning events has indeed become more complicated, as attendee needs and wants have shifted to "bleisure" travel. For example, planners are striking a new balance between time spent directly with the business sessions and networking or downtime spent casually with friends, colleagues, and vendors. Further, attendees now often bring family with them, giving a destination opportunities to provide experiences before, during, and after the event.

Collins notes this and other trends that attendees want in their conference or convention:

- Authentic, historic, or Indigenous offsite experiences — Planners are looking for unique and culturally rich experiences outside of traditional meeting spaces.

- Wellness-based retreats, activities, and offsites — There's growing interest in incorporating

wellness into meeting agendas.

- More downtime for attendees — Planners are requesting tour options or working in longer breaks to allow attendees to explore and relax.

- More included offerings — Planners are seeking packages with more amenities and activities included to attract attendees.

- Attendee Safety — This remains a top priority for all event planning.

Travel Juneau is focused on securing smaller events for the summer and larger events in the shoulder season to help keep local hotels full year-round.

In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, the organization secured 20 meetings and events, bringing in over 3,500 attendees. Starting the new fiscal, Travel Juneau has already secured 11 meetings with approximately 1,700 attendees; several others are awaiting confirmation. Planners are now working on events for 2028. Average meeting size is

See PERRY, page 6

Voices

Tongass needs exemption from Roadless Rule

By **FRANK H. MURKOWSKI**

When one mentions the application of the 2001 Roadless Rule to the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska the listener thinks of large-scale timber cutting. But the Tongass was created near ancient volcanoes and consequently is one of the richest Volcanic Massive Sulfide (VMS) districts in North America.

As pointed out in Patricia Roppel's books "Fortunes from the Earth" and "Striking it Rich! - Gold Mining in Southern Southeast Alaska," the Tongass contains numerous areas mined in the 1900s for copper, zinc, and gold. At the turn of the 20th century the AJ and Treadwell mines in Juneau were the largest in the state. Douglas, adjacent to the Treadwell Mine, was then the largest town in Alaska. Today Greens Creek, Kensington and Dawson Mines are now operating mines in the Tongass.

The 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) Amendment estimated the values of discovered (page 3-356) and undiscovered minerals (page 3-358 – 3-359) on the Tongass as follows:

A. Discovered Minerals: \$37.1 billion (expressed as 1988 dollars) in the U.S. Bureau of Mines study (Caldwell 1990).

B. Undiscovered Minerals: In 1990, this value was \$28.3 billion (expressed as 1988 dollars). Highest among the individual minerals were copper (\$6.8 billion), iron (\$4.6 billion), molybdenum (\$4.9 billion), and tin (\$3.4 billion).

The value of these critical and precious metals is far higher today and the technical ability to recover more minerals from the same amount of ore has vastly improved.

This should make the Tongass the most immediately accessible mining district in Alaska. But access for drill rigs and other large equipment needed for exploration is uncertain because road access has been prohibited and other forms of access restricted. While the Preamble to the 2001 Roadless



U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Rule recognizes the right of access to locatable mining claims, it reserves the right to approve access:

In some cases, access other than roads may be adequate for mineral activities. This access may include, but is not limited to, helicopter, road construction or reconstruction, or non-motorized transport. Determination of access requirements for exploration or development of locatable minerals is governed by the provisions of 36 CFR part 228. Fed. Reg. Vol. 66 January 12, 2001, 3244 at 3253 (middle column).

In other words, what is "reasonable" access is up to the District Ranger or Forest Supervisor. That in turn will depend on whether the federal administration supports or does not support development in Alaska. In short, there are no guidelines for determining what form of access is "reasonable."

For example, in 1977 the Forest Service denied a special-use permit to U.S. Borax to construct a road for a bulk sample of 5,000 tons of ore at the Quartz Hill Project, requiring access by helicopter. *SEACC v. Watson*, 697 F.2d 1305 (9th Cir. 1983). As the opinion shows, six years later Borax still did not have a permit to build the road needed to move that volume of ore.

Larger core and underground drilling equipment requires roads to move across beaches to the mining exploration area. Expensive helicopters are incapable of slinging such loads. If road access is denied it means that access may be completely denied to large mining equipment that cannot be

"slung" to a mining exploration site by helicopter.

Another hindrance is the prohibition on the cutting of trees in mineralized Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs). Mining exploration requires the drilling of multiple exploratory holes to determine the subsurface characteristics and extent of the mineral resource. If exploration establishes there are viable deposits, mine development normally requires the substantial cutting of trees for site clearing for buildings, tailings piles, mills, and other facilities.

While "reasonable access" is technically permitted in IRAs, cutting trees associated with mining exploration and development does not appear to be allowed. 36 C.F.R. § 294.13 (b) (2) authorizes the cutting of timber "incidental to implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited by this subpart." However, there is no mention of mining in the examples of what this section authorizes provided in the 2001 Rule and ROD. Moreover, in describing this section the 2001 Rule and ROD provides: "Such management activities are expected to be rare and to focus on small diameter trees."

A permanent exemption of the Tongass from the 2001 Roadless Rule is necessary to ensure road access to locatable minerals for operators that can meet the rigorous environmental standards of 36 C.F.R. Part 228 and the associated National Environmental Policy Act review. An exemption is also needed in the Tongass to authorize the cutting of trees needed to support mineral exploration and development.

In sum, this exemption must be by legislation to eliminate the uncertainty created by the "ping pong" effect of exemption followed by rescission of the exemption we have recently witnessed. Exemption of the Tongass by rulemaking is insufficient as evidenced by recent history.

• *Frank H. Murkowski is a former U.S. Senator and governor for Alaska.*

Emergency workers show skills, compassion

TROLL, from page 1

grateful for.

• *Kate Troll, a longtime Alaskan, has more*

than 25 years of experience in coastal management, fisheries and energy policy and is a former executive director for United Fishermen of

Alaska and the Alaska Conservation Voters. She's been elected to local office twice, written two books and resides in Juneau.

What's trending in Juneau's convention tourism

PERRY, from page 1

175 attendees, with the largest events being Celebration with about 3,000 attendees and the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) with 650.

Looking into the near-term, Collins notes that

"Juneau will continue to attract conferences because it offers a unique 'bucket list' experience. Its appeal lies in being a safe, walkable city with excellent restaurants, vibrant local businesses, and its significant role as an Indigenous hub rich in au-

thentic history and culture."

• *Liz Perry is the president and CEO of Travel Juneau, a private nonprofit organization dedicated to the visitor industry and its economic benefit to Juneau.*



MARK SABBATINI / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT



JASZ GARRETT / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson, D-Anchorage, left, answers a question during a press conference by House and Senate members who voted to override two vetoes by Gov. Mike Dunleavy during a special legislative session at the Alaska State Capitol on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025. Gov. Mike Dunleavy answers a question during a press conference on the opening day of a special legislative session at the Alaska State Capitol.

Legislature overrides two vetoes by governor

SESSION, from page 1

Edgmon, I-Dillingham. The special session can last for up to 30 days.

The main focus of both Dunleavy and legislators on Saturday was his line-item budget veto of \$200 of a \$700 increase to the \$5,960 Base Student Allocation for public schools. The Legislature passed the increase by a 46-14 vote during the regular session and 45 votes are necessary to override a budget veto.

The vote to override was 45-14, with Senate Minority Leader Mike Shower, R-Wasilla, an excused absence. After the joint session adjourned, lawmakers received applause from demonstrators lining the hallways. Some wiped away their tears. A sign that previously asked to override the veto was exchanged with a "thank you."

"This is a pretty exciting day," Stevens said during a press conference afterward with other House and Senate members voting for the override. "It's the first time I understand in 37 years that the Legislature has overridden an appropriation veto of the governor. I heard someone on the floor of the House today thank the governor for calling us in. I, too, want to thank him for convening us. If we had not had this opportunity to override we would have to wait until January, so at least we've been able to take care of that."

Dunleavy's intent in calling the special session was to thwart overrides of his vetoes. He scheduled it when a key legislator was on military service abroad and asked Republicans to stay away for the first days when override votes take place. While the tactic failed, he said ordering the special session wasn't a mistake.

"No, it wasn't because this gives the people of Alaska (a chance) to see where people stand on these votes," he said during a press conference im-

mediately after the one by legislators.

He said the question for legislators supporting the override is, "Now that you have the money, do you think that will take care of things? And if you say no, then when are you going to schedule the meetings to get some stuff done? What are your big educational initiatives besides money?"

The only change in vote by members present was House Minority Leader Mia Costello, R-Anchorage, switching her yeas vote during the regular session to a nay on the override Saturday. In an interview after floor sessions, she said conversations with her constituents and the governor were the reasons she voted to sustain his veto.

"I literally went door to door knocking on doors of my constituents' homes and talking to them," she said. "And there is a concern that we spend a tremendous amount of money — around \$23,000 per child in the Anchorage School District and they would like to see better results...I also listened to the governor saying that our fiscal situation is pretty challenging right now."

The other veto override was on SB 183, which requires the state Department of Revenue to provide data to lawmakers about oil tax settlements, which arose from concerns the state is settling such disputes for much less than their stated value. The vote to override was 43-16, three more than necessary, and completed what Stevens said were his top two priorities of the special session.

Dunleavy, however, had a different and longer list of priorities, including a multitude of education policy measures and his executive order for an agriculture department. Three education policy bills of his were formally introduced, but legislative leaders said no action on them was planned until January, and his executive order was also shelved.

An official letter by Stevens and House Speak-

er Bryce Edgmon, I-Dillingham, rejected the governor's request to establish the department was read in both chambers during their respective floor sessions Saturday.

It states an "introduction of an executive order during a special session is unprecedented," and the Legislature already voted during the regular session to overturn a similar executive order.

"We encourage you to submit the matter to the Legislature, in the form of a bill, for introduction by the respective Rules Committees next session, where such a measure would receive consideration in each house and go through the normal legislative process," the letter states.

Letters from Dunleavy to Stevens and Edgmon responded to the Legislature's refusal to accept his executive order establishing the agriculture department.

Dunleavy wrote he would treat "this attempt by the Legislature to circumvent the constitutionally mandated process to be legally ineffective." The letter adds if the Legislature convenes in joint session to disapprove the executive order, he will consider the Department of Agriculture to have become law and "proceed accordingly."

The Senate and the House, partially in response, both passed a resolution for a recess of longer than three days. The Senate's 19-0 vote occurred before the joint override session, while the House's vote after that session was 21-19 along majority-minority caucus lines.

The resolution allows the Legislature to postpone its next session until Aug. 19 — and that could be a "technical session" where only a few necessary lawmakers show up to do a quick gavel-in, gavel-out meeting where no action takes place since a quorum isn't present.

See SESSION, page 8



MARK SABBATINI / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Aren Buchhei, a guest legislative page, offers an invocation to open a floor session of the Alaska State Senate on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025.

Legislators uncertain of remaining agenda

SESSION, from page 7

Much of the discussion that did take place Saturday was sparked by the all-Republican House minority caucus, which is largely supportive of Dunleavy's education policy goals, expressing displeasure with the majority's effort to speed through the process and limit the special session to a single day.

The letter to Dunleavy rejecting the agriculture department, for instance, was by two leaders presuming to speak on behalf of the full Legislature, said Rep. Kevin McCabe, a Big Lake Republican, during floor debate.

"I think it's highly unusual that you would make that unilateral decision without input from us, without discussing the legal memos, without at least putting this on the floor so that we all have an opportunity to weigh in on it," he said.

Legislators in the mostly Democratic House majority said the joint House and Senate vote earlier this year overturning a similar executive order made the will of most of the Legislature clear.

Other minority members — along with Dunleavy — said majority caucus members were avoiding a discussion about education policy by seeking to adjourn quickly. But Rep. Louise Stutes, a Kodiak Republican in the majority caucus, said an education task force scheduled to begin meeting Aug 25 will address policy issues of concern to the governor and other officials.

"So it's not like we're just shoving this aside and saying we don't want to deal with it, we won't stay," she said. "We certainly do. Another huge factor that needs to be considered is we talk about



MARK SABBATINI / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Sen. Forrest Dunbar, D-Anchorage, talks to visitors in a hallway of the Alaska State Capitol before the start of a special legislative session on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025. Dunbar returned from military deployment service overseas to attend the session for a single day to cast votes on two veto overrides, including one involving education funding that got the minimum votes needed.

being conservative and the fiscal situation of this state. It costs in excess of \$30,000 a day to be in special session."

The recess by lawmakers means vetoes by Dunleavy on many other bills and budget items will stand. Those include child care and infant learning funds, capping interest rates on payday loans, and a commercial fishing loan program. Stevens said those items were not considered because it was uncertain if enough votes to override them existed.

Dunleavy also has the authority to call the Leg-

islature into another special session immediately after adjourning the current one. He did not rule out that option when asked about lawmakers ending the session without taking up his education policy bills.

"I will always reserve the tools afforded to me by the constitution of Alaska to get policy done and to move the state forward," he said.

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Win for educators after long wait

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Gov. Mike Dunleavy called for changes in education policy rather than a further increase in the education budget.

The special session was originally scheduled to start at 10 a.m., with the joint session to consider overrides at 10:15 a.m.. But the joint session was postponed to after 1 p.m. due to Rep. Robyn Niyuq Burke, D-Utqiagvik, missing her flight to Juneau.

After she arrived, legislators overrode Dunleavy's line-item veto in the state budget, which cut \$200 of a \$700 increase to the Base Student Allocation. The Alaska Legislature also overrode the governor's veto of Senate Bill 183, which aims to make oil tax settlements available to lawmakers in the format they request.

Gwenna Corvez, a parent and teacher at Harborview Elementary School, stood outside the House Chambers after she found out the vote had been rescheduled. She said that she has witnessed the impacts of a smaller education budget in the classroom.

"I think the biggest impact is large class sizes," she said. "They've increased a lot over the past 16 years that I've been teaching, to the point where now we talk about 30 students in a class as if that's normal — in elementary school."

The Base Student Allocation largely controls the salary and benefits package the Juneau School District can offer employees. Contract negotiations between the Juneau School District and the Juneau Education Association have been stalled due to uncertainty about state funding.

"I know that in the midst of negotiations, it's also important to have the funds so that we can back up what everyone needs," Corvez said.

This spring, Carol May retired from the Juneau School District after 28 years of teaching.

"I'd say about 50% of my reasoning for retiring was due to budget cuts, not only for this year, but for prior years," she said.

May said in the district, she mainly saw the impacts of budget cuts in IT support. Teachers' laptops were also taken and replaced with Chromebooks, and the number of photocopies she and other teachers could make for students annually was limited.

"I was not able to teach the way I needed to teach," she said, noting it may have worked for some teachers, but for many, switching to Chromebooks meant no access to files she had used for years.

During a press conference, the governor acknowledged challenges with teacher turnover and retention, and spoke on the advantages of proposed lump sum retention bonuses for teachers to combat this issue, rather than raising the BSA.

Pat Race also waited outside the House Chambers, advocating for overriding both vetoes. He



JASZ GARRETT / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Gwenna Corvez greets the children of Sen. Donny Olson, D-Golovin, while waiting inside the Alaska State Capitol on Saturday, August 2, 2025. His children are her former students at Harborview Elementary School.

drew a connection between them, hoping that increased legislative oversight of the Department of Revenue and oil tax settlements would increase funding to the state.

"My hope is that will be clarified, and that veto will be overridden, and that we'll get to learn whether or not they've been mismanaging our money to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars," Race said. "We wouldn't necessarily even be having this discussion about education if we had an extra few hundred million dollars in our pockets."

At 11 a.m., many of those waiting in the Capitol moved outside to join about a hundred others in a demonstration outside the Capitol building. The demonstration was part of a nationwide protest titled "Rage Against the Regime."

Though speakers and protesters focused on education funding, there were also more general themes of anger about local and nationwide issues.

"I have been an educator for 22 years," cultural educator Lyle James said in his address to the crowd. "I've never felt this press more than I have today, the fear of our educators wondering, 'Will we have a job tomorrow?'"

Rep. Alyse Galvin, I-Anchorage, and Rep. Sara Hannan, D-Juneau, were briefly in attendance.

Speakers also addressed frustration around authoritarianism, defunding of public media, homelessness, glacial lake outburst flooding, and a recent incident in Juneau in which a man was hospitalized after being injured during an arrest.

As recommended by some speakers at the protest, about 10 supporters of the override re-

turned to the hallways outside the House Chambers. The vote in the chambers coincided with a protest regarding police violence.

Some protesters who had arrived Saturday morning returned after the outside protest to watch the veto override proceedings from within the Capitol.

"That's the first time in my gallery, and just very exciting to see all that green show up on the screens and just a lot of smiles," Corvez said. "We're not allowed to make much noise, so we just smiled wide."

However, while those in favor of the overrides see this as a victory, others said there is more to be done.

Terra Stark, a former elementary school teacher who taught for 20 years, attended the override vote with her mother.

"The amount of money that's been allotted to support them through our legislator is not nearly enough," Stark said. "Even with this override, it still isn't enough. There's so much more need in education right now."

Rep. Rebecca Himschoot, I-Sitka, said while she is grateful, the \$700 increase to the Base Student Allocation is still not enough due to the corrosive effects of inflation since 2011.

Before the veto override on Saturday, the current statutory BSA was \$5,960, \$30 higher than in 2017 and \$280 higher than in 2011. Lawmakers have approved one-time increases after attempts at permanent increases failed.

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Governor: Now make policy fixes

SUPPORT, from page 9

"This is a really important and positive step forward, but it's still remarkable to me that in this state, we have to work this hard to provide the schools with less than half the funding that they actually need," Himschoot said.

She said outcomes of school performance are directly tied to funding, which she believes is a policy in itself.

In a press conference immediately after, Dunleavy disagreed.

"Money seems to be the go-to default to fix problems," he said. "We believe it's a policy to fix problems."

Like numerous times earlier this year, he refer-

enced Alaska being 51st in the nation in reading and math scores, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).

He said "we should be moving through the ranks" now that the full \$700 BSA hike has been restored. But he doubts that will be the case without further work on reforming policy. No meetings to discuss education policy have been scheduled for the special session as of Saturday, but a recently formed education task force will meet Aug. 25.

Dunleavy said if the \$700 increase is not enough "the Legislature better work pretty quick on this fiscal approach that we're going to introduce to grow new industries and grow new opportunities for new revenue."

When he vetoed the increase to the BSA in June, Dunleavy cited lower-than-expected oil prices for the line-item vetoes. The same deciding factor influenced legislators when they passed a budget with a \$1,000 Permanent Fund dividend, the lowest in state history when adjusted for inflation.

He said there is plenty of time to work on a plan to grow the economy, producing more tax revenue through new industries in Alaska, such as resource development.

"If it's not enough, I don't know where you're gonna get it," Dunleavy said.

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Arrest, video spark differing racism accusations

RALLY, from page 1

Creek, three days after Christopher Williams Jr., 49, was flown to an Anchorage hospital with head injuries received when he was being arrested.

At the same time, accusations of racist actions against Blacks in Juneau — but not by police — are being voiced by Ibn Bailey, 52, who filmed a video of the encounter widely shared on social media, stating he was facing a threat from Williams and a companion.

Police and court records state the incident began with Marisa Didrickson, 47, an Alaska Native, yelling racist slurs at Bailey in front of the Douglas Public Library. Williams then became aggressive toward an officer when ordered not to intervene on the woman's behalf, and "resisted and was taken to the ground," according to a JPD statement.

The officer, whose name has not been released publicly, has been placed on administrative leave. An external investigation of the incident has been requested by JPD.

Several of Williams' family members were at Saturday's protest. Christina Austin, a cousin, said he is still being treated at the hospital.

"At this time we know that he is up and knows he's in the hospital, and he is aware where he is at this moment," she said. "They are going to keep him in the hospital for a period time right now. That's all we have right now."

Another cousin, Pamela James, echoed assertions of other speakers who said the incident is indicative of a broader pattern of actions by law enforcement toward Alaska Natives in Juneau.

"We're not all here just for what happened to Chris, but this has happened multiple times in our town and none of us don't seem to be feeling safe," she said.

"Our community needs to feel safe. These people need to be trained over on how they arrest people when they're under the influence. So I thank you again for all being here, not just for my family



MARK SABBATINI / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Drummers perform a song during a protest outside the Juneau Police Department station on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025, in response to the arrest of a man three days earlier who was hospitalized with a head injury sustained while being arrested.

but for our community. We need to make our community safe again."

A more formal declaration of concern occurred Friday when the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, noting Williams is a tribal citizen, asked JPD Chief Derek Bos and Juneau Mayor Beth Weldon for an independent review of the incident, a meeting with tribal leadership, "transparency in findings and outcomes," and "a renewed commitment to culturally respectful public safety."

"Based on what has been shared by witnesses and community members, the level of force used during the arrest raises serious questions and demands a full, transparent investigation," the tribe's statement notes.

City Manager Katie Koester, in a prepared statement Friday, wrote "CBJ understands the deep community concern over this tragic injury. We rec-

ognize that the incident and associated video footage may be deeply upsetting, confusing, and overwhelming."

"We appreciate our community's outreach and shared concerns, and are taking steps to review our own policies, procedures, and practices to ensure they are consistent with JPD values to preserve human life while meeting its mission to protect public safety," she stated.

Much of the community's reaction was in response to the video shared by Bailey. But in an interview Friday he said he hasn't experienced racial mistreatment by police during his 30 years in Juneau, including incidents where he has faced accusations. He also defended the officer arresting Williams and said the purpose of releasing the video was to show racism that is being directed at Juneau's Black population by some residents.

"According to the US Census, there's less than 300 Black families that live in Juneau, in a place that's 31,000," he said. "So we're a minority within a minority within a minority — we're a micro ethnic group here in this town. For us to actually grow and thrive, and live here and be part of the community, we have to be extra careful."

"We tell our kids to make sure that they're behaving themselves. Make sure to say 'yes sir' or 'no ma'am,' to have respect for authority, (and) have respect for other people because we can't afford to have any misunderstandings or mishaps."

Bailey, a business owner and former Juneau Board of Education candidate, said he hopes he can be involved in the discussions tribal leaders are seeking with the city. He also said that despite what happened during the encounter with Williams, "I hope that he has a speedy recovery."

"I hope that all of us can go away from this unfortunate occurrence with a better understanding of each other," Bailey said.

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Sports

Coleman, Hertberg top Aukeman

*Out-of-staters win long course;
Garger, Falberg win Olympic;
Schumacher, Hughes win sprint*

By KLAS STOLPE
Sports Editor

South Carolina's Will Coleman trailed coming out of the water and off the bike but found a surge five miles into his run to overtake Juneau's John Bursell and win the men's Aukeman Long Distance Course on Sunday in a time of four hours 56 minutes and seven seconds.

"Overcoming adversity was key," Coleman said. "There wasn't as many people as there is in a 70.3 usually, so I had to sight more and I'm not good at sighting. So I probably swam more distance than I should have or needed to. And then I got on the bike and my aero bars were loose, so they were shaking all 56 miles, and I had to be careful so I wouldn't crash. And the run, it went better. I took a wrong turn out of transition but I just stuck with it."

"So overcoming adversity was the key for today... It's a real small, fun, grassroots event. And I don't think it's intimidating for first timers, so I'd encourage everybody to jump in and just enjoy triathlon...I did forget how rainy and brutal Juneau could be. It was just like Ironman Alaska, and that was tough."

A misty swim (1.9 kilometer/1.2 mile) start gave way to a rainy bike (90K/56 mile) and partially rainy run (20K/13.1 mile) that ended with the sun appearing.

"The run was the most difficult part," Bursell said. "I came out of the water ahead of Will and at the turnaround at the glacier I calculated I had about five minutes on him. I figured he would catch me by the halfway point, but he didn't, so I kept riding harder and wanted to see if I could hold him off and I did, but I think I paid for it the second half of the run."

Coleman took the lead 5.3 miles into the run portion.

"I couldn't see him when we came off of the Brotherhood Bridge Trail," Bursell said. "I looked back and I couldn't see him, so I had this hope, maybe I had a big gap and I could hold it. But less than a mile later I could hear his footsteps and he just went flying by. There was no hope anymore."

Bursell's advice for those thinking of doing the sport is, "They should just do it. Start swimming and get a bike and start running, maybe find a coach or somebody to help guide them. It's just a blast, a fun thing to do."

Bursell, a physician at and a founder of the



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Will Coleman wins the 2025 Aukeman Triathlon half ironman course on Sunday, Aug. 3, 2025.

Juneau Bone and Joint Center, donated the Aukeman's raffle prize of a full-body MRI scan as part of their proactive healthcare.

Washington's Emily Hertberg, 27, won the women's long course despite a timing chip malfunction as she crossed the finish.

She said the key was "just keeping the mentality of, 'if it was easy then everyone would do it. We're already here, we might as well get it done.' I've been training for this about four months. I did open water swim, and then pool swimming, and just biking around the farm roads where I'm from."

Hertberg is a nurse working 12-hour shifts and said, "Making time for training and work and a social life is hard. It's how bad you really want it to take the time out of your schedule to sacrifice those

things to swim, bike and run...I made a list of '30 by 30' — 30 things I wanted to do by the time I turned 30. I want to do a full Ironman so I was like, well, our friends live in Juneau. Juneau's a beautiful place. You could bike past the glacier, so I might as well do the half, see how it goes, and really enjoy my surroundings while I'm doing it... It's really not that bad. Pain is mental. A lot of it is just a mental aspect. If you train, your body is capable of doing it. Just like mentally ... reminding yourself you're capable of doing it and trusting your body."

Steve Garger was the top Olympic Distance male finisher, covering the 1.5K (0.9-mile) swim, 40K (24-mile) bike and 10K (6.2-mile run) in 2:54:54.

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Emily Hertberg, left, finishes as the top female in the 2025 Aukeman Triathlon half ironman course on Sunday, Aug. 3, 2025. At right, John Bursell exits the swim portion of the 2025 Aukeman Triathlon long course.

Rain adds to Aukeman's challenge

AUKEMAN, from page 11

"I felt pretty good on the bike and I just kind of got in a good groove," Garger said. "It was my first triathlon so I didn't really know what to expect. My friend Sydney, who was the first female sprint finisher, did it last year, and I said I was going to do it last year, and then I flaked out at the very end. I promised her I'd do it this year, so we were kind of training together and kept ourselves accountable. My advice to others is just do it. Give it a go. It's fun to train all summer, especially when the weather's nice, get out on the lake and swim. It is a fun experience. I would say like halfway through the run, all those trails and the twists and the turns on the tired legs was kind of tough, but it was still nice to be running through the trail system."

Alisha Falberg was the top Olympic female finisher and third overall individual, in 3:01:27.

Mitchell Schumacher, 38, was the top Sprint Distance male, covering the 0.75K (0.47-mile) swim, 19K (12-mile) bike and 5K (3.1-mile) run in 1:17:31.

"This is my third year doing it," he said. "I'm in the Coast Guard and we just had a kid on July 9. One of the reasons we stayed so long before we moved — was to have the baby here because we've heard such great things about Juneau and then I was like, 'Well, if we're going to stay that long we might as well stay long enough for me to do the Aukeman one last time.' Every year it is a whole bunch of fun. This one was a little more soggy than years past, but it was still great, and it's just so cool to see so many people come together and put this

on, all the sponsors, all the people. It's such a strong community, and it just makes Juneau so much better."

His advice is, "Just get out there and try it. I would say if the barrier is doing all three, try and find two other people to do a relay. I think that's a very great way to get into the sport if you are a little hesitant to swim or you're a really good biker but you aren't as strong of a runner. Find two other friends who have those skill sets and get after it and then I'm sure they'll catch the bug. I swam for the Coast Guard at the Coast Guard Academy and I've tried to keep up with it, and now that I've gotten a little older I'm trying to branch out into some of the biking and the running a little bit more. Those are my weak sports, but yeah, it's a whole lot of fun."

Sydney Hughes, 28, was the top Sprint Distance female and third overall, in 1:22:56.

"It's fun and it's great and they do a really good job," she said. "Best triathlon ever. Anyone can do one, you can do it. It's all in your head. Your body knows what to do, and you can and it's fun. The hardest part today was probably the run because it's the last thing, and my legs are a little dead, but heck yeah, people were cheering and it was awesome."

Sprint relay winners were Team Tri-ing Times (Emily Haskell, Chelsea Steffy, Camille Jones) in 1:31:30.

Olympic Relay winners — setting the Olympic relay course record of 2:47:11 — were the Dimond Park Divas (Caitlin Sanders and Jenna Wiersma)

Long Distance relay winners were Team Secon (Isaiah Campos and Bryce Iverson) in 5:31:00.

"It was a little rainy out on the bike and run, but it felt really great doing a course that's close to home," Wiersma, 39, said. "I'm on the Aukeman Race Board so it's a race I'm really passionate about so it was awesome to race it today."

She said her advice for future triathletes is, "Go for it. I come from a long-distance running background and tried triathlon. It's really fun to do three sports instead of just one. So if you like any of the three try the other two, you might like it... The hardest part today was probably the bike. We hit a little bit of a headwind and hard rain coming back, but honestly, the whole course was great."

Dino Vivanco, 27, is working remotely for two-month stays in various cities across the United States. He placed fourth overall in the sprint with 1:25:56.

"This is my seventh triathlon," he said. "Honestly, I grew up a runner, but like running every day is just hard because you put so much miles on your feet. You just get a lot of injuries. So I like triathlons because you do a lot of cross training. I mean, it's just like you're not doing the same event every day. You get to mix it up as you're training."

Robert Langer, 36, had to drop from the Olympic distance to sprint due to sciatic pain, but continued through the event as he tries to do a triathlon in every state. He finished in 1:46:40.

"I at least wanted to get the 49th race done," he said. "So I just still did the run, even though it was ugly, but it was beautiful out. Wyoming's my last one. I started because I just enjoyed traveling and just really wanted to do something unique, and I

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Ria Smyke and Soren Thompson, left, swim the 2025 Aukeman Triathlon Sprint course on Sunday, Aug. 3, 2025. At right, Sydney Hughes cycles the bike portion during her win in the 2025 Aukeman Triathlon Sprint course

Doctor gets Red Lantern Award

AUKEMAN, from page 13

figured, why not try to do one in all 50 states? Alaska has this special atmosphere, just the peace and beauty of the entire state is really so inviting and welcoming and feeds the soul...The hardest part is starting it. Once you start it, it's all downhill from there. The training is more mind-boggling than the actual race itself and that's kind of where you just get to finally relax and enjoy it. It's something I think everyone should at least try once because you never know if you'll like it or not."

Claire Geldhof, 36, finished the sprint distance in 1:29:13.

"I really enjoy being outside and the community," she said. "It's a really nice combination of trying different things — swim, bike, run — and you get to try out all three of those activities. If you get tired of running you can always swim. It's a nice way to find balance with activities and being in your body."

Geldhof recently finished her doctorate in nursing, training for the triathlon and studying full time.

"You train early mornings or just you squeak it in when you can," she said. "But it's a nice blend of kind of quiet your brain... It's like a meditative balance between working and doing school full time and then just finding time on the bike or out swimming or running. It's a good blend."

Richard Olson, 50, entered the Olympic distance with daughter Aspen, 20, and son Hunter, 21. Richard hit 3:26:26, Aspen 3:26:32 and Hunter 5:18:27.

"Aspen and I did it last year," Richard said. "We did the sprint and we just wanted to up it up and do the Olympic this year and then Hunter's like, I'll do it, so we just all jumped on it."

Said Hunter, "It was my first one and,

honestly, it's pretty brutal. The swimming is pretty tough. When I got in I started to hyperventilate and had to calm down. Once I got out of the swim, I was already tired but I was like, 'you got this.' I just kept telling myself I could do it. Once I got to the run, I ran with another person, which is pretty cool. Just running and talking with them and then the last mile I just did the home stretch run. My opinion of my dad has changed a bit."

Said Aspen, "It was just so much fun to go and compete and it's really cool because there's more women than men who compete. I'm not hating on men, but it's really fun and I enjoyed every second of it. The bike was very rough today with all the rain, but it was so much fun and I just think it's a great way to just be part of the community and to have fun and to challenge yourself."

The family has bragging rights at home.

"Last year I beat Aspen by three seconds," Richard said. "She killed me on the swim. I caught her on the bike at, like, mile 21, and then she passed me on a run at, like, mile two, and I don't know where she got it from so I had to chase her down, but I beat her by six seconds today. So it was like everything we had, we were the two sprinting, just racing each other."

Lisa Jones, 65, and son Trevor Jones, 28, entered the sprint distance, finishing in 1:56:43 and 1:36:02, respectively.

"I've never done something like this before, and my mom and my sister have done it a lot," Trevor said. "So I just wanted to try it out one time and I just wanted to do it with her. I haven't swam competitively in a long time, so that was nice to do again."

Said Lisa, "I haven't done it in a while, but want to keep doing it because it is fun and it's local. I was really happy that he went and did train-

ing with me. My advice is for people to just have fun with it, know what the course is beforehand and know that you're not going to know it all in the beginning. That's kind of the fun part of it."

Nicole Linse, 28, finished the sprint in 2:12:19 amidst cheerful signs from her significant other. One referenced her bib number: "#37 on the course, #1 in my heart." The back side read: "Smile if you peed on the swim."

Said Linse, "That's my boyfriend. He stood out on the bike course and got a few laughs out of it, which is great motivation for everybody. This was my first triathlon, and I would tell people to just get out there and start training and go have fun with it. If you walk 75% like I did, you're still going to have a blast and finish. So it's worth it, every second of it."

One athlete enjoyed the course many seconds longer than any other.

John Kirk, a doctor at Bartlett Regional Hospital, earned the Red Lantern Award as the last finisher.

"That was tough," Kirk said. "The bike was hard. It was cold and windy at the turnaround, I couldn't feel my feet. Bless their heart, one of the workers opened my Uncrustable (snack) because I didn't have grip in my hands."

This was Kirk's fourth race equivalent to doing a half Ironman, but first Aukeman aside from doing the Olympic distance last year.

His advice is, "Start with the sprint. Get to know your training, know your pace, do your race. It's fun to get awards, but I don't do it for awards, even if it's a cool one. I do it because I enjoy working hard and enjoying keeping my body healthy. I enjoy the camaraderie, the High Cadence Tri Club team. And at every aid station I heard people

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John Kirk, left, is handed the Red Lantern Award by Jenna Wiersma to carry across the finish line of the 2025 Aukeman Triathlon on Sunday, Aug. 3, 2025. At right, Fans cheer on finishers of the race.

Organizers already looking ahead to next year's Aukeman

RACE, from page 13

yelling, that was super motivating...Keeping yourself healthy and active is good, it's important as you get older. You don't recover as quickly when you're in your 40s versus your 20s, so you've got to keep steady at it, just keep plugging away, but it's better than sitting at home on the couch."

Race director Daniel Wiersma thanked the many volunteers and sponsors.

"I'm absolutely thrilled," he said. "The volunteer support this year was able and beyond. We had organizations like Glacier Swim Club, Juneau Bone and Joint, and Bartlett put together teams to run aid stations pretty much independently, which saved us a ton of work. We had absolutely phenomenal support from our sponsors. There's a long list on the website (<https://aukemantri.com>) you can check out."

"The sunshine that's out right now is a very pleasant way to end it, for sure, so everybody got to kind of experience the full spectrum of Juneau weather, which is fun... I don't have the final numbers yet, but I'm pretty sure our actual show up and participate number is higher."

"We had an eye on the glacial outburst flood because our course would be interrupted on both the bike and the run with any overtopping of the Suicide Basin ice dam, but outside of that I think goals for next year are continued growth. I think if we can pull off more activities at the end for people and families that come out to this event and will bring their kids, definitely the more we can make this an enjoyable event for spectators as well as the racers, I think that's where we're going to be focusing on. And otherwise I think we are offering a really quality product for a local race."

Complete race results and splits are available at <https://aukemantri.com>.

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KLAS STOLPE / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Competitors begin the swim portion of the Aukeman on Sunday, Aug. 3, 2025.



NATALIE BUTTNER / JUNEAU INDEPENDENT

Community members, many of whom were involved in the trail restoration process, gather to celebrate the completion of the Treadwell Ditch Trail at the Blueberry Hill trailhead on August 1, 2025.

Treadwell Ditch Trail completed

Spanning 150 years of history, thousands of hours of volunteer time and 13 miles, the trail is now continuous

**By NATALIE BUTTNER
Reporter**

For the first time in over a century, the Historic Treadwell Ditch Trail spans 13.3 miles, providing a continuous route for hikers and bikers from Eaglecrest to South Douglas.

During a ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday celebrating the completion of the trail, project leaders delivered speeches expressing gratitude and sharing anecdotes from years spent working on the trail. Meghan Tabacek, executive director of Trail Mix Inc., recalled her first time working on the trail in 2020.

"We flew in four bridge trips that day, and my crewmates and I raced along the trail trying to beat the helicopter to the next site to guide the bridge part safely to the ground," Tabacek said.

Tabacek noted that the project has installed 33 bridges, 25 culverts and placed thousands of pounds of gravel over the past five years.

The trail follows the route of an aquifer built in the 1880s that brought water and power to the Treadwell Mine.

"It wasn't a recreational thing in the 1880s," said Wayne Jensen, a member of the Treadwell Historical Society. "It was a very important component of industrial development."

A 1993 City and Borough of Juneau Trails Plan details the possibilities and challenges of maintaining Treadwell Ditch Trail. The report notes the extent of the work needed to turn the mining access road into a trail, as well as the variety of ownerships that the trail passes through.

"As you hike the Treadwell Ditch as a hiker, you cross these invisible boundaries," Tabacek said. "So one mile you're on city land, one mile you're on Forest Service land, the next you're on maybe private or state parks."

The restoration of the Treadwell Ditch Trail also required a collaborative effort, drawing support from six organizations.

"What you see today as you hike on the Treadwell Ditch is the result of an incredible amount of planning, passion and coordination," Tabacek said in her address to the crowd.

The majority of the \$1.2 million needed to restore the trail came from an Alaska Department of Fish and Game grant using funding from the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act. The act provides funding for wildlife restoration, conservation and hunter education programs from federal taxes on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment.

The remainder of funding and service for the

project was supplied by the Juneau Community Foundation, CBJ, U.S. Forest Service, Trail Mix, and community donors.

For many, Friday celebrates decades of work on the trail. In the early 1980s, about 100 years after the construction of the original ditch, Mark Scholten began work on the trail with friends. He became more involved in the early 2000, working with the Volunteer Trail Maintenance Team, a group dedicated to maintaining the Treadwell Ditch Trail.

"It's been a passion of mine for many years now," Scholten said.

After the ceremony, those involved in the maintenance of the trail mingled, reminiscing and discussing future work. Erik Olson approached Scholten to show him pictures of them working in the mud on the Mount Jumbo reroute the day before. Olson joined the Volunteer Trail Maintenance Team after he retired.

"I think it has done more for me than it has for the trail," Olson said. "It's really been important for me. They let me be there, and they help aim me, and it helps me stay fit, and it helps me stay useful, and it's really good."

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