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Juneau Independent

The True Local Newspaper of Alaska's Capital City November 8, 2026

Voting a family, friendly affair for Juneau voters considering change for education and economy



Luke Ermold high-fives his mom after casting his ballot at the Auke Bay Ferry Terminal on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026. "I'm just excited to vote with you," Christine Ermold told him. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

By JASZ GARRETT, Managing Editor

Local residents, like national voters, tended to favor Democrats in races for governor, Congress

Juneau voters largely said supporting education was a top priority for them when choosing candidates on Tuesday, echoing thoughts expressed by residents in the Alaska primary election.

Lily Hope accompanied her son for his first time voting in a general election at the Douglas Public Library at about 4 p.m. She said she voted for gubernatorial candidate Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins.

"I believe he's going to do the best job to get us back on track," she said.

*See **Voting** on Page 14*

Assembly OKs seeking Telephone Hill developers

Up to 155 residential units still sought, but CBJ notice will clarify that companies can build housing on all or some of the properties in the historic downtown neighborhood

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

The Juneau Assembly revived stalled plans for redeveloping Telephone Hill on Monday by allowing the city manager to see what companies are interested in the project, while also making

*See **Telephone Hill** on Page 8*

DOT stages equipment at Cascade Point in anticipation of ferry terminal's first phase

Environmental organization raises alarm on possible fast-tracking of project, demands state stop until permits secured

By JASZ GARRETT, Managing Editor

Equipment is being staged at the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal site, but the project hasn't officially broken ground, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities announced Monday.

Work was originally set to begin this past summer. But due to permitting concerns raised by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, work on the proposed terminal was delayed in March, with a new target date in 2027. The proposed terminal is about 30 miles north of the Auke Bay Ferry Terminal.

According to DOT, a recent Army Corps decision states the area for

*See **DOT** on Page 9*

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Assembly moves toward rounding transactions to nearest nickel

City government will adjust cash transactions up or down by a penny or two if proposed resolution gets final passage, but people can still pay exact amount

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

It appears cynics can stop worrying about the city trying to take every last penny.

The Juneau Assembly's Finance Committee on Wednesday advanced a resolution to round all cash transactions to the nearest nickel, a policy being widely adopted by municipalities, businesses and others due to the U.S. Mint halting production of pennies almost exactly a year ago. The cost of producing each penny has risen from 1.42 cents to 3.69 cents during the past decade, according to the mint.

As a result, the number of copper-colored coins (they haven't been made of solid copper since 1982) in circulation is shrinking and sometimes hard to get in quantity.

"While there are many pennies circulating throughout the world, at some point, the ability for the City to obtain and use pennies for making change will end," Angie Flick, finance director for the City and Borough of Juneau, wrote in an Oct. 30 memo to the committee. "This resolution provides official direction regarding the City's cash transactions and making change when pennies are not available. Upon adoption of this resolution, CBJ will transition out of using pennies as our bank is no longer providing rolled pennies to customers."

Flick told Assembly members on Wednesday that people with exact change can still pay a non-rounded amount.

*See **Pennies** on Page 6*

Empty Bowls celebrates 20 years of filling The Glory Hall's financial needs and people's stomachs



People select ceramic and wood bowls from tables during the 20th annual Empty Bowls fundraiser on behalf of the Glory Hall at Centennial Hall on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

'The amount of change and growth that we've gone through is just tremendous,' says former unhoused resident who is now a longtime worker at the shelter

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Logan Henkins has gone from being without housing to assisting people without housing, so for Saturday's 20th anniversary of the Glory Hall's Empty Bowls fundraiser, he did double duty by filling attendees' ears and stomachs.

Henkins, who said he's been affiliated with the shelter for about 15 years and helped at the fundraiser for the past five or six, revisited his early days as a kitchen worker in his first-ever soup providing at Centennial Hall. For the second straight year, he made a Tlingit drum as an auction item, performing a song to entice bidders partway through the evening.

"The amount of change and growth that we've gone through is just tremendous," he said in an interview before his drum performance, referring to his time at the shelter since his arrival.

Empty Bowls, the Glory Hall's biggest annual fundraising event, allows the hundreds of ticket-buying attendees to select handmade ceramic and wood bowls created by various locals that are displayed on tables in the entrance hall of the convention center. Those bowls — or disposable paper ones nearly all people opt for — can then be filled with various soups served in the main ballroom that are made by restaurants and individuals.

Two Glory Hall workers, including Henkins, were among those making soup.

"Some of my first cooking at the Glory Hall was breakfast cooking — sausage gravy," he said. "I couldn't do a gravy today, so I went with a breakfast chowder."

Henkins said he learned drum-making in 2020 and decided to make one identical in form to last year's, with a different artist design, when that one earned $500 for the shelter. He performed a Chilkat blanket song — remembered from childhood — to get the attention of potential bidders.

For some people attending the event looking at the items for bid — which included a dessert auction as well as the one for donated items — there were personal connections with both donors and locals with housing needs.

"My friend Tara, who made those cupcakes was coming and I have done a lot more work with the unhoused community this year," said Binta Wold, looking at the dessert auction items with Griffin Plush.

Wold said she works with Juneau Animal Rescue, and issues arise when pets and their owners need help.

"A lot of the time unhoused folks have pets, and maybe you give them some resources or they are getting harassed by people who don't think unhoused people should have pets, so we end up working with them," she said.

The Glory Hall's 55 shelter beds have been full every night for the past two years, said Jorden Nigro, executive director of the Zach Gordon Youth Center, the emcee for Saturday's event. She said the shelter also provides about 60,000 meals a year to local people in need.

The shelter experienced struggles during the past two years when the Juneau Assembly eliminated a designated campground for people experiencing homelessness, resulting in dozens of people setting up tents near the building so they could access meals and other services.

Last summer and fall, it closed its doors to people without beds at the shelter due to safety concerns before reopening them after the city's cold-weather emergency shelter opened for the winter. The city-run shelter is intended as a night-to-night overnight

*See **Glory Hall** on Page 4*

GLORY HALL

Continued from page 3

facility that is closed during the day, while the Glory Hall offers longer-term assistance to its occupants.

The Assembly earlier this year approved keeping the shelter open during the warmer months for the first time, while also cracking down on illegal camping in public spaces. Kaia Quinto, executive director of the Juneau Housing First Collaborative, which operates the shelter and soup kitchen, said in an interview Saturday this summer went much smoother than last year.

"It was wonderful because of the warming shelter," she said.

Among those making soup and providing other food and drinks for the fundraiser were Red Spruce, Devil's Club Brewery, Harbor Mountain Brewing, Queen of the North, Coppa, Island Pub, Grumpy's, Rainbow Foods, Lemon Tree, The Rookery Cafe, Tide + Timber Cafe, The Hanger, U.S. Foods and Sysco Alaska.

Among those making bowls were University of Alaska Southeast professors Jeremy Kane and Boni Parker, who "collaborated with a group of 10 students to complete these bowls that have been in progress since the start of the fall semester," according to a post on the UAS Facebook page.

"Last week, artists glazed and fired all 100 bowls. The entire process took 40–60 hours of work, plus a 12-hour firing!" the post notes.

Other makers included Neil Slotnick with a series of small carved wood bowls, Jim Bowman, Paul Voelckers, Mary Pat Wyatt, Travis Smith and The Pottery Jungle.

"I don't know about you, but I have so many bowls at my house that came from all these Empty Bowls and I just love them because they're all different," she said. "They're all made by different makers, but they also all came from a cause that feels very important and close to my heart."



Griffin Plush and Binta Wold looking at the Glory Hall's Empty Bowls fundraiser for the shelter at Centennial Hall on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)



Jorden Nigro, executive director of the Zach Gordon Youth Center, talks about the Glory Hall's activities to assist people without housing and provide meals to those in need during the Empty Bowls fundraiser for the shelter at Centennial Hall on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

Heather Byrd, who grew up in Juneau, said she's been coming to Empty Bowls for several years and "this is pretty much all I eat out of, are these kinds of bowls." She was with Matt Sykes, who moved to Juneau last year. He hefted a rust-colored ceramic bowl as his choice before entering the ballroom.

"It's got good depth, good feel to it, nice color," he said. "I mean, I never knew I was just into bowls, but after looking at all these bowls, I guess I'm a bowl enthusiast."

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

Mount Jumbo Gym gets spooky sendoff as a Halloween venue

Douglas Ghost Walk hosted at gym for final time as building set to be sold



Young Douglas Ghost Walk attendees play spooky carnival games at the Mount Jumbo Gym on Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026. (Ellie Ruel / Juneau Independent)

By ELLIE RUEL, Reporter

Over 100 trick-or-treaters flooded Mount Jumbo Gym for the last time on Saturday night. This Halloween marked the final time the Douglas Ghost Walk will take place there, after years in the building.

"I came to this Ghost Walk in the early '60s, so it's been going at least 60 years. I'm sure it's been longer, but I know over 60 years," said Maggie Swanson, one of the event organizers and head of the Douglas 4th of July Committee. "We didn't use to trick-or-treat in Douglas at all. This is where you came."

Swanson said the prizes in this year's orange plastic goody bag handed out to children as they entered were reminiscent of the ones she received when she was younger. For her and other residents, the gym closure is bringing up memories.

"It's really hard," she said. "It's emotional, we've been doing it here for so many years. On a personal level, too, I've had other residents of Douglas come down and take a look as well, because for them it's the same thing. It's hard to say goodbye."

It's not the end of the event itself, and according to Swanson, the committee will focus on finding a new location once the end-of-year festivities are over. Following Mt. Jumbo's official closure due to a city budget deficit in early September, the Marie Drake Gym reopened for public programming.

This year's event went out with a ringing bang, as participants chose from a variety of Halloween-updated carnival games, like knocking over skulls or a spooky version of ring toss.

Elodie Pierre, 8, waited for a ring toss game with her parents, sporting matching family astronaut costumes.

"We watched all of the Artemis 2 mission from the takeoff to the splashdown," said Erin Shine, her mother. "And she became obsessed with astronauts in space."

Shine said she wanted to bring Elodie before the event was over. It was their first Ghost Walk.

"I thought this was a great safe place for kids to come," she said.

Kerri Woodsum said her kids have been going to the Ghost Walk for years. Her son Paxton Willoughby used to attend for fun, and now is a member of the Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé hockey team that runs the carnival games. June Willoughby, her daughter, was in her third year attending — this time as a light-up jellyfish. She said her favorite game was the one run by her brother, which involved throwing balls at skulls on a shelf.

It's nostalgic," said Woodsum. "I think that it's something to do on a rainy day."

Autumn Muse and her 5-year-old son Miles said they have memories at the gym, which is why they wanted to come to the last Ghost Walk there. It's a seven-year tradition for their family, and while they're sad about the location change they're glad the event will continue.

"We wanted to come in the last year of it being at the Jumbo Gym," Muse said. "We've got many good birthday parties here and it's kind of a special place to us."

• *Contact Ellie Ruel at ellie.ruel@juneauindependent.com.*



Young Douglas Ghost Walk attendees fish for rubber ducks at the Mount Jumbo Gym on Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026. (Ellie Ruel / Juneau Independent)

The Columbia ferry will miss at least a week of service due to engine trouble



The Columbia state ferry is scheduled to remain in Ketchikan until at least Sunday due to an engine malfunction, according to the Alaska Marine Highway System. (Screenshot from Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities video)

Ship stopped in Ketchikan for repairs; revised schedule calls for it to depart on Sunday and resume normal sailing between Washington and Southeast Alaska

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

The Columbia state ferry is stuck in Ketchikan due to problems with its port main engine, with repairs expected later this week and resumption of service planned beginning Sunday, Nov. 8, the Alaska Marine Highway System announced Monday.

The ferry reached Ketchikan on Sunday, after a short-term delay in its schedule was initially announced as engineers assessed the engine.

"Following technical inspection, replacement engine components (a cylinder liner and piston) are required," a service notice posted on the ferry system's website states. "AMHS has secured the necessary spare parts, and a specialized Wärtsilä technician will be in Ketchikan on Thursday to perform the repairs alongside our engineering crew."

"Resuming service on Sunday will place the vessel back on its standard northbound schedule, covering all scheduled ports of call going forward," the announcement adds.

The 52-year-old Columbia returned to providing mainline service between Bellingham, Washington, and Southeast Alaska in June after a seven-month layup period for maintenance. It has suffered two breakdowns during the past two weeks, with the previous one occurring last week when it departed Bellingham more than a day late due to engine trouble and skipped some Southeast Alaska stops as a result.

Monday's AMHS announcement stated people already aboard the Columbia can remain there while repairs are occurring this week.

"For passengers choosing to disembark and make alternative travel arrangements (such as flights home), the Ketchikan Terminal staff will process ticket reimbursements and coordinate arrangements for unaccompanied vehicles left in our care," the announcement adds.

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

PENNIES

Continued from page 2

The resolution was unanimously advanced by the committee to the full Assembly for consideration.

Flick, in an interview Monday, said cash transactions are still common at some city-owned entities such as pools and Eaglecrest Ski Area, but are a very low percentage of the city's overall financial activity. She said the policy change should have no effect on the city's bottom line, since some prices will go up a penny or two, while others go down by that amount.

The change — mirroring what Foodland IGA and some other local stores are doing — means purchases for $1.01 and $1.02 will be rounded down to $1, while $1.03 and $1.04 will be rounded up to $1.05. It's also a policy recommendation by the Government Finance Officers Association, which develops standards provided to state, provincial, and local government finance officials in North America.

A bill seeking to implement such rounding standards within Alaska was introduced in January by Rep. Dan Saddler, R-Eagle River. The bill made it out of the House State Affairs Committee, but stalled in the House Finance Committee.

Penny rounding laws have been enacted in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia and Washington, according to the law firm Holland & Knight LLP.

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Hannan to co-chair House Finance Committee, Schrage to be House Speaker in new majority



Rep. Sara Hannan, D-Juneau, speaks during a House floor session on May 20, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

Democratic-led coalition of at least 23 members retains Chuck Kopp, R-Anchorage, as majority leader; Rebecca Himschoot, I-Sitka, to serve as Rules Committee chair

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Rep. Sara Hannan, D-Juneau, will play a central role in crafting the state's operating budget during the next two years as a co-chair of the House Finance Committee, according to an announcement Thursday by the Democratic-led majority caucus.

Other leadership positions announced are Rep. Calvin Schrage, I-Anchorage, as House Speaker; Rep. Chuck Kopp, R-Anchorage, as majority leader; and Rep. Rebecca Himschoot, I-Sitka, as rules committee chair. The other two finance committee co-chairs are Rep. Ashley Carrick, D-Fairbanks, who will oversee the capital budget, and Rep. Neal Foster, D-Nome, who will oversee legislation.

The incoming Democratic-led Senate majority announced its leadership on Wednesday, including Sen. Jesse Kiehl, D-Juenau, as one of two Senate Finance Committee co-chairs.

The House majority is expected to have at least 23 members — compared to the current 21-19 majority-minority split — due to Democratic gains in Tuesday's elections, although results of races won't be fully tallied until Nov. 18. The mostly Democratic coalition will also likely be working with Democrat Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins as governor rather than departing Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, whose negotiations with legislators have been contentious during much of his two terms.

"I'm very excited," Hannan told the Juneau Independent in an interview Thursday. "This is actually going to be the largest caucus I've been in, and we're very excited to be working with what we believe to be a governor who we share a lot of vision and goals with."

Hannan, elected to a fifth two-year term as an unopposed candidate for the District 4 seat that represents downtown Juneau and Douglas, has been a member of the finance committee for the past four years and chair of the Legislative Council for the past two years.

Both the House and Senate have had Democratic-led bipartisan majority coalitions during the past two years. The party's gains in Tuesday's election meant they could have formed a majority for the upcoming session consisting only of Democrats and aligned independents, but during a leadership meeting in Anchorage on Wednesday opted to keep Kopp in the majority leader position he has served in for the past two years.

*See **Hannan** on Page 8*

Juneau Independent

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HANNAN

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Hannan said that was a caucus decision based on his tenure during the past session.

"When you're working on building a team, relationships matter," she said.

Kopp, in a prepared statement, said "Alaskans have shown time and again that when we work together, we can accomplish big things. I am confident this coalition is ready to build on that tradition and deliver meaningful results for communities across our state."

Schrage, first elected to the House in 2021, served as minority leader during the 2023 and 2024 sessions, and a co-chair of the finance committee during the past two years. In a prepared statement, he emphasized the diverse makeup of the incoming majority.

"The House Majority Coalition reflects the diversity, strength, and values of communities all across Alaska," he said. "By working together, we are committed to delivering practical solutions and real results for hardworking Alaskans and their families."

Hannan, in her role as finance committee co-chair, will oversee the House's crafting of its proposed operating budget for the coming fiscal year based on the draft submitted by the incoming governor. The House typically passes its draft first, which is then considered and amended by the Senate, and then a six-member committee meets at the end of the session to craft a compromise budget to send to the governor.

Having two legislative majority caucuses and a governor that are largely aligned should help in terms of policy goals and process, but the state's fiscal situation will remain a challenging one when crafting the budget, Hannan said.

"It's our only constitutionally mandated job, and I understand the magnitude and the seriousness of that work, especially in a time where we've got some real economic issues to address," she said. "And although many people focus on, 'Isn't there going to be extra revenue from the high price of oil?' hasn't everything the state has done in the last year with the high price of oil also impacted our cost of functioning? So we are going to have that, but I am excited and honored to have been selected by my caucus to have that job."

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TELEPHONE HILL

Continued from page 1

it clear potential bidders can suggest smaller-scale projects for only part of the downtown historic neighborhood.

The formal Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will be for a project of "up to 155 market-rate and affordable units" on four developable lots. But Assembly members, meeting as the Committee of the Whole, said additional language should be added to the draft RFQ they were considering to make it clear alternatives will be considered.

If a company wants to limit redevelopment to 30 high-end condos on a single lot, for instance, then the proposal should at least be allowed, said Mayor Beth Weldon. Such a proposal might not score high using the city's criteria to evaluate submissions, but among the unanswered questions is how many developers are interested in Telephone Hill.

"If nobody else comes through, yes, we want to find more housing and we'd love to do affordable housing, but if no one's going to bid on that then I don't want to stop anybody from putting a project forward that we could consider," she said.

Redeveloping Telephone Hill, where some of Juneau's oldest houses are located, has been under consideration since the state acquired the land in the 1970s as a possible site for a new Capitol. The city took over ownership in 2022 with residential redevelopment in mind, with the Assembly in 2024 giving preliminary approval to a concept calling for four midrise buildings with 155 residential units.

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TELEPHONE HILL

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Opposition to the plans was voiced by residents who had rented the existing homes for many years until being evicted during the past year, plus other people wanting the neighborhood to be preserved. A civil lawsuit by some former residents challenging the legality of the city's redevelopment plans is scheduled to go to trial in December.

Assembly members opted in April to put demolition of the existing homes on hold temporarily while additional redevelopment options were considered, resulting in the updated RFQ for consideration on Monday.

City Manager Katie Koester said she plans to formally publish the RFQ next week and leave the submission period open for at least 60 days. A timeline issued by her office envisions Assembly review of proposals next February, finalizing terms with a developer by staff during spring, a public hearing on the proposed agreement in July, and finalizing the deal in September or October.

Koester reminded Assembly members the RFQ allows companies to submit their qualifications to redevelop a project in the way they envision, which differs from a formal request for proposals. She said further discussion about what type of redevelopment to proceed with can be a subject of further conversation with a developer once the best-qualified one is selected.

Some Assembly members during Monday's meeting suggested different or additional housing parameters besides "up to 155" units. Nano Brooks said he favored including a target number below 100 units "just because that, I believe, will elicit more responses because the type of development with less than 100 units in an area is easier to do than over 100 units."



A map shows four properties on Telephone Hill being considered for redevelopment by Juneau city leaders. A notice being published this month will allow companies to propose projects for all or some of the lots. (City and Borough of Juneau image)

Assembly Member Ella Adkison said she didn't see a practical reason for detailed specifics about alternative project possibilities.

"I want to see any feasible project that people can come up with," she said. "We've made it clear what we're looking for, but I'm not really interested in adding a lot of sidebars that would prevent a person from being responsive and submitting a project."

Among the primary goals in the RFQ are at least 30 housing units affordable to households earning 80% of the area median income, and creating or preserving open space and recreation areas.

The Assembly didn't take a formal vote allowing Koester to proceed with the RFQ, instead offering recommendations to incorporate into the draft before it is officially published.

"I think we just need to move forward, and we need to figure out if there's anybody out there and what that looks like at this point," Assembly Member Mila Cosgrove said as the discussion wrapped up. "And I think, rightly so, there are a lot of people with a lot of questions that we simply can't answer right now until we have more information, and for that reason I think we just need to move forward and trust that we've created a process that will allow us to look at the options and navigate towards the best solution for the community."

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

DOT

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Stage 1 work is not within the federal agency's jurisdictional wetlands, so the agency's permit isn't needed at this time.

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DOT

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"However, ground-disturbing activities are not allowed until the State of Alaska environmental checklist and Alaska Historical Preservation Act consultations have been completed," DOT stated in a post on its Facebook page.

Southeast Alaska Conservation Council staff saw the equipment being staged on Friday. The nonprofit organization threatened a lawsuit through a demand letter on the same day addressed to DOT, its contractor (K&E Alaska Inc.), and the Corps of Engineers.

Letters were also posted on equipment at the project site, which were removed as of Monday, according to Melissa Lewis, SEACC's communications director.

"I think folks are probably going to be going out there intermittently to keep an eye on things," Lewis told the Juneau Independent in an interview Monday.

The SEACC letter states it is formally placing DOT, its contractor and USACE on notice regarding "severe legal and procedural deficiencies in the environmental review and permitting process" for the Cascade Point project. SEACC demands "any and all clearing, grading, blasting, staging, pre-construction, and construction activities at the site be halted" until the permitting process has occurred.



Equipment staged at the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal site near Juneau on Monday, Nov. 2, 2026. (Photo courtesy of Southeast Alaska Conservation Council)

"We are concerned that this project is being pushed forward," Lewis said. "We're concerned that they're trying to break ground before the governor's term is up."

Gov. Mike Dunleavy, a strong supporter of the proposed terminal, is scheduled to depart office when his second consecutive term ends Dec. 7.

Lewis said SEACC hadn't received a formal response to its letter as of Monday afternoon. A Juneau Independent inquiry to the commissioner's office did not receive a response by end of business hours Monday.

Stage 1 of the proposed ferry terminal involves construction of an access road, site preparation of the staging area and stockpiling materials for the second stage of work at the site, according to DOT's webpage for the project. The second stage involves design and construction of the ferry terminal.

The proposed terminal has been controversial. Opponents state it appears the project primarily benefits a mining company that hopes to use the location to ship ore from the nearby New

*See **DOT** on Page 10*

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DOT

Continued from page 10

Amalga Gold Project, now in the exploratory stages. The proposed gold mine was approved for a faster federal permitting process in August.

A 2025 DOT report states the Cascade Point terminal will have mixed impacts on the state ferry system, but will be an asset to the mine as well as Goldbelt Inc.'s prospects as the property owner of the terminal site and a partner in the project.

The cost of the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal has risen to $120 million in a draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) for 2027-30 published in September, up from an estimate of $77 million in the previous plan. A public comment period on the STIP ends Monday.

DOT, in its announcement Monday, stated it will provide another public update before construction begins, including information on activities, schedules and potential impacts.

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



A K&E Excavating company Caterpillar bulldozer seen at the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal site near Juneau on Monday, Nov. 2, 2026. (Photo courtesy of Southeast Alaska Conservation Council)

Kiehl named finance committee co-chair, Giessel will be Senate president in new majority coalition

Bert Stedman, R-Sitka, a finance co-chair since 2019 and a primary figure in recent budget negotiations, loses spot; newcomers Stutes and Edgmon get leadership posts



State Sen. Jesse Kiehl, D-Juneau, standing, discusses an amendment to a bill reviving pensions for public employees during a Senate floor session April 29, 2026. At right, Senate Majority Leader Cathy Giessel, R-Anchorage, listens. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

The Alaska State Senate will again have a bipartisan majority coalition when a new legislative session begins in January, with current Majority Leader Cathy Giessel, R-Anchorage, getting promoted to Senate president, according to a press release issued by the coalition Wednesday.

Sen. Jesse Kiehl, D-Juneau, was named one of the two co-chairs of the Senate Finance Committee along with Bryce Edgmon, I-Dillingham, who served as House Speaker during the past session and was elected to the Senate in Tuesday's election. Another House member newly elected to the Senate, Louise Stutes, R-Kodiak, was named majority leader.

The leadership positions were determined during a meeting in Anchorage the day after the general election. Democrats and independents expected to be part of a majority coalition in that chamber are also meeting Wednesday, although no leadership announcements were made of as early evening.

The current Senate majority consists of 14 of 20 members — nine Democrats and five Republicans — and it's not yet certain what the size of the new majority will be since some elections are pending.

Giessel, a 14-year member of the Senate, has been a bipartisan coalition member since it was formed after the 2022 election by current Senate President Gary Stevens, R-Kodiak, who is retiring.

Kiehl, a member of the Senate since 2019 and finance committee since 2023, said in an interview Wednesday he is optimistic about co-chairing the committee under a new governor — likely Democrat Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, who has a solid lead over

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SENATE

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three Republican challengers. Budget and other negotiations with departing Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy were often contentious during his eight years in office.

"In this new role I think it's going to be a very productive Legislature with this coalition and with the incoming governor," Kiehl said.

A notable omission from the new Senate majority's leadership posts is Bert Stedman, R-Sitka, a co-chair of the finance committee since 2019 and a lead player in budget negotiations in recent years. He took some positions at odds with most of the current majority causes including opposing the revival of traditional pensions for public employees — a high caucus priority — and helping ensure the defeat of a bipartisan election reform bill by declining to support an override of a veto by Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

Kiehl declined to state if such actions are why Stedman was excluded from a leadership role.

"People sometimes move around and so I don't think there's a tale to tell," Kiehl said.

Attempts to reach Stedman for comment Wednesday were not successful.

The coalition also named only two finance co-chairs, instead of the three that have previously existed. Kiehl said it is possible a change to the coalition's leadership structure and its membership could still occur at some point.

"The doors are open and we continue to work with other senators who want to work across the aisle," he said.

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

Trump says Sen. Sullivan should immediately get Dan J. Sullivan's votes and be declared the winner

President backtracks on election night declaration that he would accept the results and with one-fourth of ballots remaining to be counted; filings continue in DOJ lawsuit



President Donald Trump speaks during a tour of the White House Ballroom construction at the White House, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2026, in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

President Donald Trump, who said on election night he would accept the results, on Thursday declared incumbent Dan S. Sullivan should immediately be declared the winner of Alaska's U.S. Senate race after being given all votes cast for Dan J. Sullivan.

"The vote totals for the Fake Dan Sullivan, plus the other 'slug' that the Dems put on the Ballot, should be immediately given to the REAL Dan Sullivan, and the Election is over — He easily wins. There is no other fair solution!" Trump wrote in a Truth Social message.

Alaska is still tallying votes sent by mail or otherwise legally cast by Election Day, which can arrive within 10 days after then for U.S.-sent ballots and 15 days for overseas ballots. The Associated Press estimated on Wednesday about one-fourth of all ballots cast remain to be counted.

Ranked choice tabulation of ballots is scheduled Nov. 18 and certification of the election on Nov. 25.

Democrat Mary Peltola currently leads the race with 48.2% of ballots counted so far, followed by Dan S. Sullivan at 47.9%, Republican Gerald Heikes at 2.3% and Dan J. Sullivan at 1.7%, according to results from the Alaska Division of Elections last updated at 2:11 p.m. Wednesday.

There are a number of unknowns that could affect the outcome either way between Peltola and Dan S. Sullivan.

The remaining votes to be counted

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SULLIVAN

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are largely from rural districts expected to be favorable to Peltola. An analysis published by the Alaska Beacon on Wednesday noted Dan S. Sullivan would gain more votes than Peltola if a ranked choice tabulation of existing ballots occurred, due to votes he would receive from people ranking Heikes as their first choice. At the same time, more than a third of voters who ranked Heikes or Dan J. Sullivan as their first choice did not rank another candidate, according to The New York Times.

Filings are also continuing in a Trump-ordered lawsuit seeking to halt certification of the race if Peltola narrowly wins. A federal judge in Anchorage dismissed the lawsuit without a hearing before Election Day, with the U.S. Department of Justice now appealing the ruling.

DOJ's opening brief to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit is due Dec. 14 and answering briefs are due Jan. 11, 2027 — well after newly elected Senate members are sworn in Jan. 3. Some Republican senators have suggested they will refuse to seat Peltola if she wins.

The lawsuit, plus criminal investigations sought by Trump and Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, are based on allegations Peltola's campaign recruited Dan J. Sullivan and other spoiler candidates to confuse voters. The accusations have been denied by Peltola and others targeted, and legal experts have stated such tactics, known as ballot stacking, are common and generally legal.

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Juneau counselor accused of sexually abusing minor after providing her with alcohol, marijuana



Juneau's Dimond Courthouse on Thursday, Nov. 5, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

John Jay Redlich Jr., 42, facing multiple charges for encounter he filmed with 17-year-old girl at a residence

A Juneau man who lists his occupation as a behavioral health specialist is accused of forcibly sexually assaulting a teenage girl who said she was "very intoxicated" by alcohol he provided her at a residence, according to police and court documents.

John Jay Redlich Jr., 42, was indicted Thursday on eight sex crime charges and one drug-related charge for the alleged assault in late October. A charging document states the alleged victim told Juneau Police Department officers Oct. 26 the assault occurred when she was at a friend's house for a sleepover two days earlier.

"John provided Vodka and Tequila for her to drink and poured her many shots; She became very intoxicated," the charging document notes. "John provided her with marijuana, and they smoked in the garage."

The alleged victim said multiple actions involving forced sexual assault followed, including filming at one point, according to the document.

Police obtained a recording of a conversation between Redlich and the alleged victim where the specifics of the encounter were discussed, the charging document notes. In a subsequent JPD interview with Redlich, he acknowledged providing her with alcohol and marijuana, and described the sexual encounter as consensual while acknowledging he was "not super proud of his behavior."

He was indicted by a Superior Court grand jury in Juneau on four counts of second-degree sexual abuse of a minor, four counts of second-degree sexual assault and one count of third-degree misconduct involving a controlled substance. State records as of Friday afternoon show he is at Lemon Creek Correctional Center following a felony first appearance on Thursday.

His request for a public defender was approved, but he had not been assigned

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COURT

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a specific attorney at the Public Defender Agency as of midday Friday. A message left for him by the Juneau Independent at that office did not receive a reply as of Friday afternoon.

Messages left at phone numbers for him in the NPPES NPI Registry, where he is listed as an addiction counselor with primary and secondary practice locations, also did not receive a response. The registry notes he has a certification date of Nov. 22, 2022, but "Issuance of an NPI does not ensure or validate that the Health Care Provider is Licensed or Credentialed."

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

VOTING

Continued from page 1

"I think the education part is the biggest part that led me toward JKT. Fully funding our education department — pay our teachers what they're worth and get us fully funded so we can do the necessary work of raising strong kids."

She said certainty and adequate support are needed for Alaska teachers and children.

"Just keep our teachers well paid and keep our kids in school," she said.

Her son Nicholas Hope, 18, encouraged his peers to vote.

Chanda Lawless, also voting in Douglas, said funding education and cost of living were at the top of her mind as she cast her ballot.

Another mother-son duo, Christine Ermold and Luke Ermold, 21, were also passionate about education in Alaska. But Christine Ermold had a different approach, focusing on the three Republican gubernatorial candidates and where they each stood on funding public schools.

"As someone who absolutely tends to vote down the Republican ticket, one of the things that is really significant to me is looking at candidates who are willing to continue to support public education," she said. "That whole aspect of educating the wide populace so that we have a well-informed electorate, a well-informed voter populace, is huge to me."

She said she voted for Republican candidates and who she voted for was influenced by her passion for public education.

"Where candidates fell in terms of siphoning off public funds for private education versus where candidates fell in terms of supporting public education was a huge deal for me," Christine Ermold said.

She said she retired from the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District after 20 years and now works at the University of Alaska Southeast, which brought her to Juneau four years ago.

Her son came home from overseas in May and, while it wasn't his first time voting, it was his first time casting a ballot in-person. He did so at the Auke Bay Ferry Terminal with his mother at about 6:30 p.m. Luke Ermold was in the U.S. Air Force for four years and was stationed at Royal Air Force Lakenheath in the United Kingdom.

"Who's going to take care of the troops and what are they actually wanting to do?" he said. "Being in the military, there's a lot of things you see. People who were neglected and left in bad spots, and especially with mental health issues there's funding for it and there's support, but there's not enough."

"A big thing that I saw at the base I was at was the mental health clinic was always overrun. People who truly needed help were never able to get it because they just couldn't get an appointment. So people who take care of the troops and who really want to support them — that's what I look for because a lot of my close friends are still struggling."

His mother said incumbent Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, consistently looks at issues related to service members.

Luke Ermold said voting from overseas was possible, but complicated by a general lack of awareness on how to do so.

"The USO (United Service Organizations) did a lot, actually, trying to help educate everybody and tell everyone that you can vote from overseas and it is possible and does get through," he said. "And there were delays and lines. It was difficult, but doable. I think the knowledge just

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VOTING

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needed to be more widespread throughout a lot of troops because a lot of people just didn't know. They're getting too sucked into work that they just never really heard about it."

He said it felt good to come out in person on Election Day.

"Growing up, one of the polling stations were at the schools where his dad and I were principals, and so he would come with us and we would vote, and he'd hang out," his mother said. "And so getting to vote with you as an adult is super cool. Makes my heart joyful."

Laura Klingman and her partner Paul Brown both said they voted for Senate Democratic candidate Mary Peltola and canvassed for her. Klingman is a federal worker and archaeologist. She said she spoke on behalf of her personal beliefs and her vote did not represent her workplace.

"I very much decided that I needed to vote for people who are going to help protect our federal lands — and my job, to be completely honest," she said outside the Douglas library. "I'm not born and raised a Democrat. I was raised Republican, and through time and compassion and working for public lands and public spaces, I very much have grown into a Democrat. I voted for the people who I thought were going to be good for the Alaskan people and for Alaska."

Klingman said she has been a federal employee since 2022 and moved to Alaska for the job. She said the decision has heavily influenced her life, including a belief access to public lands is important. Klingman added she also voted for independent U.S. House candidate Bill Hill.

"I could not vote for a party that wants to inappropriately and illegally gut federal agencies without any kind of forethought on that process whatsoever," she said.



Tania Mausia, who recently moved to Juneau, sits with her dog Thor outside the Douglas Public Library after voting on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

Brown said he chose to vote for Peltola because he wanted to see Democrats seize control of Congress.

"There's been no counter to Trump and what he's doing and all that so yeah, was not a hard choice to vote for Mary," he said.

Brown said he is not sure if Peltola will be able to stop "insider trading in Congress," as her campaign has said, but hopes it will happen if she wins.

"A Republican just seems to generally lean towards letting private industry do whatever they want with very little compensation for the citizens," he said.

Both said they enjoy public lands for hiking, fishing, camping and cross-country skiing.

"I felt some of the Democratic leaning and Democratic candidates, they often talked about the individual Alaskan and not just what is good for the whole state of Alaska, but what actually will help benefit the everyday person that lives here," Klingman said, adding that protecting subsistence is important. She and Brown said they support ranked-choice voting.

At Alaska Electric Light & Power in Lemon Creek, Ella Sapinoso held her grandmother's hand as they left the polling station in heavy rain. Both immigrated from the Philippines in the early 2000's and became naturalized U.S. citizens.

"I'm glad that there's more precincts that are available and that it was super seamless. Like my grandma here, English isn't her first language, so they were super helpful teaching her how to fill out voter registration," she said.

Renee Hughes has been the poll chair at the AEL&P precinct for over 30 years. She said it's the people she volunteers with and voters she meets that keep her coming back.

"I have people that I know from the very first time who come to vote here still," she said, adding Election Day brings together neighbors and friends who may not have seen each other in a while.

Mary Uyanik said Election Day brings together her family. After voting with her son at AEL&P, she was headed to the Mendenhall Valley so other family members could vote in

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VOTING

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their precinct. Uyanik said she voted with family in mind.

"Since I started voting when I was young, I always thought of my kids first. My son, it's his first time voting today, so it's a big deal for our family to vote," she said. "My parents taught us at a young age to vote, and I mainly think of my family when it comes to voting."

She said the topics that came to her mind were education, Alaska Native rights and a subsistence lifestyle.

"Even though I never lived in a village, I think of how they depend on subsistence," she said. "My parents grew up in Petersburg and Sitka, but I grew up here. I've also been learning more about how up north they depend on subsistence and their groceries cost even more than ours."

She said high prices are out of control, making it important to vote. Uyanik and other voters on Tuesday said the flood of political calls and texts almost dissuaded them from voting this year, but they decided to vote anyway because it's a civic duty.

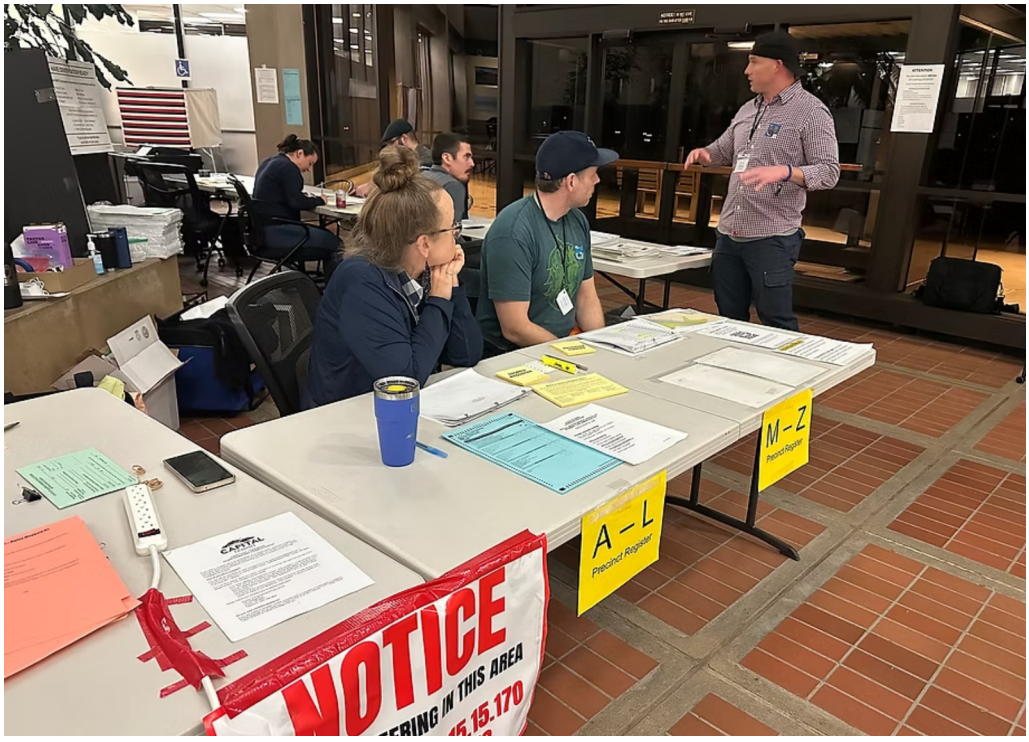
When asked if anything struck her different about this year, Hughes said each election is important.

"They're all historical," she said. "Each has their significant challenges and different issues. It doesn't matter if it was 50 years ago or today."

She and the other volunteers were taking a short dinner break after 5:30 p.m. and thanked AEL&P for the use of their kitchen.

Poll workers took a similar breather after a lunch rush at the State Office Building, but it didn't compare to turnout on previous days.

"It's been steady and coming in waves," said Abby O'Brien, a poll worker. "I think a lot of people came at early voting."



Ryan Wilson, precinct chair at the State Office Building, instructs election workers on closing procedures shortly before 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

O'Brien, working the polls for the first time, said she was one of those people. She voted early at the Mendenhall Mall Annex on Sunday and spent an hour in line. She said she arrived at the State Office Building at 6:30 a.m. on Tuesday and would be there until 8 p.m., when polls closed. She said she was expecting another rush when people got off work.

"It's a fascinating process," O'Brien said about why she wanted to be a poll worker. "I was interested in seeing the mechanics of it all and being visible out in the community to help."

More than 30 people were in line at the State Office Building after the voting station closed on Monday, the last day of early voting.

The steady stream of people with a few surges was a common observation held by poll workers at precincts across Juneau on Election Day.

Ryan Wilson, precinct chair at the State Office Building, said 416 people had cast Election Day ballots as of about 7:30 p.m. Only a few additional voters arrived before the polls closed.

"It never got busy," he said, estimating twice as many people cast in-person votes during the primary election on Aug. 18.

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



Avery Grossardt, a ballot issuer for the precinct in the State Office Building, brings a polling place sandwich board inside as Election Day voting ends at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

Voices

Only the important things in life have to be real

By LARRY PERSILY

I like talking and listening with taxicab and ride-sharing drivers. It gets me away from only talking and listening to myself or my friends, who tend to have the same outlook on life as I do. It introduces me to new ways of looking at the world.

And it's often interesting, which I figure comes with the fare. Like paying for a movie, though I would never eat popcorn in the backseat of a taxi.

Recently, I enjoyed one of the best rides ever. The driver told me two stories, both pretty amazing — one for its happiness, and one for what it told me of how convincing TikTok has become as a source of news to many people.

First, the happy-ending story.

The driver started talking about her life, how her teenage mother had given her up for adoption at birth. How she always wondered what her mom was like, how she wanted to meet her and build a relationship.

She never blamed her mother, accepting that it was the best decision mom could make at the time under the circumstances.

But she never gave up trying to connect with her mom. Sleuthing her way through social service agencies and closed adoption records, she succeeded in finding an agency that said it would deliver a letter to mom, telling her of her daughter's interest in connecting.

She laughed as she told how the agency tracked down mom at her job, handed her an official looking envelope, and mom feared it was a notice from a collection agency. But after reading it, she realized it was a different kind of past due notice. Her daughter wanted to see her.

They met, they talked and they shared the lives that each had missed.

Then we switched subjects, though I'm not sure why. The driver started talking about data centers. That's when I learned she gets all of her "news" from TikTok.

She told me data centers have single buildings that stretch for miles, all under one roof, and that developers dig down 50 feet or more, probably to hide secret stuff underground. She was particularly concerned about those 50-foot-deep holes and why no one knows about them, as if anyone could hide a hole as deep as a five-story building.

She continued reciting what she had learned about data centers from TikTok. It was all pretty unbelievable to me, but I was along for the ride, not to debate.

And while discussing her reliance on TikTok, and her distrust of any other news source, she asked me if I knew about all the pyramids hidden around the United States. Real Egypt-like pyramids, built of limestone blocks. Real, though a secret to all but a few people.

She knows they're real because she saw them on TikTok. I didn't ask her if she knew the locations. I didn't want to know, just in case I had been to the town and missed seeing a 100-foot-tall pyramid in front of my trifocal eyes.

She is totally convinced the pyramids are real, even though she admits she doesn't know anyone who has seen them in person.

I thought about discussing with her that TikTok and social media are full of made-up "news" and manipulated photos. But she seemed so happy at finding her biological mom, I figured, who am I to question what she believes is real. She now knows her mom is real. After that, the pyramids really don't matter.

• Larry Persily is the publisher of the Wrangell Sentinel, which first published this column.

'I hope my exhibition will show others with disabilities that it's possible to be an artist and have a business'

By FU BAO HARTLE

Juneau is my hometown, and I like to take photographs around town and while I adventure around Southeast Alaska with my parents on our boat. My focus is on landscapes and wildlife. I had my first solo exhibit at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum in November with an opening reception on the First Friday, Nov. 6, from 4:30-7 p.m.

The exhibit highlighted the beauty of Southeast Alaska, and the bears and the habitat they call home. The exhibit is called "Southeast Alaska Sailing Adventures through the Lens of Fu Bao." All the pieces are printed on canvas; I have been experimenting with canvas prints since 2025.

In 2022, I started my photography business with the help of my parents and support staff with Tides LLC. I was encouraged to start a business by my peers at a Peer Power Alaska meeting. Some of them talked about their businesses and I told them that I wanted to have a photography business and they encouraged me.

From my original photographs, I have calendars, prints, magnets, and note cards made. In 2025 I had my

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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first-ever solo art show at the Alaskan Brewery gallery and am looking forward to my show in November at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum.

I hope my exhibition will show others with disabilities that it's possible to be an artist and have a business. I want to tell people we can do art with disabilities. We are not unable. All of this is really important to me because it's fun, and an opportunity to learn and a lot of interesting work. Believe in yourself and never give up and ask others to help you if you need it.

• *Fu Bao Hartle is a Juneau Special Olympics athlete and advocate, and a commercial photographer.*

Alaska needs more homes. Leadership can restart our homebuilding engine.

By SHAUNA HEGNA and MIKE HUTSON

Try building a home in rural Alaska. You may spend years chasing dozens of funding sources just to pay for it, and you still won't have driven a single nail.

Then come the costs. In the 80% of Alaska communities with no road access, every board and nail, and many skilled trades, must be flown or barged in. Houses can run $800 a square foot, four times the national average. With almost no nearby sales for comparison, appraisers struggle to value homes, and standard loans often fail.

This isn't only a village problem. In Anchorage, Fairbanks, and other road-connected towns, building costs outrun what the market can pay, and working families can't find affordable homes. Employers, hospitals, the military, and the university struggle to house the people they need.

A teacher in Anchorage and a health aide in a Bering Sea village face different obstacles, but both are priced out. Alaska's economy pays the price.

Congress recently passed the bipartisan ROAD to Housing Act promising funding and rules that better fit rural places, including faster environmental reviews, more factory-built homes, disaster recovery help, and faster construction on vacant or underused parcels. Whether Alaskans see the benefit depends on whether state leaders are ready.

We're not starting from scratch. The Alaska Housing Finance Corporation already runs many housing programs, and state-managed funds could help finance workforce housing. Regional housing authorities, tribes, employers, and builders have the expertise and are poised to build.

What's missing is a plan that brings it all together. Now, projects wade through separate applications, deadlines, and rules, and paperwork alone can sink them. A collection of programs is not a strategy.

A National Housing Crisis Task Force offers a roadmap. Alaska could start with five steps:

– Lead with a statewide plan – Make housing a priority, set a production goal, and put someone in charge.

– Put public land to work – Make vacant and underused public land available so projects pencil. A new state program is trying it.

– Fill the financing gap – Seed a loan fund with public and philanthropic dollars and recycle the repayments to finance the next round of homes.

– Build cheaper – Lower building, renovation, and energy costs by scaling innovations like modular and factory-built homes incorporating energy efficiencies.

– Cut red tape – Help local governments allow more kinds of homes in more places and approve them faster.

Coordinate all five together, and the impact multiplies. For example, Housing Alaskans pooled $3 million from public, private and philanthropic sources to complete 292 homes in 27 projects across 19 communities. Each project was already vetted by multiple funders but stalled just short of full funding. That $3 million unlocked about $100 million already invested but not deployed, without piling on paperwork, and families moved in sooner.

Now imagine that approach applied to federal dollars: partners coordinating investments, conducting joint reviews, and attaching fewer strings. Projects would finish faster, face fewer price spikes, and federal money could be tailored to the ground it lands on, whether permafrost or an empty lot in Anchorage.

The window is open, but it won't stay that way. If we are serious about housing as essential infrastructure, Alaska must be ready to claim these resources and coordinate them with our own.

Let's House Alaska is a community network working to make that happen. With a newly elected governor and Legislature about to get to work, it is time for bold action to address the housing shortage.

Alaska has the assets, the expertise, and the institutions. What we need now is the will to bring it all home, literally.

• *Shauna Hegna is the president of Koniag and chair of the Housing Alaskans Board of Directors. Mike Huston is the president and CEO of Northrim Bank and vice chair of the Housing Alaskans Board of Directors.*

Sports

JDHS girls win fourth straight Region V swim team title



Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé senior Kaden Aldrich celebrates his win in the boys 200 freestyle final during the 2026 Region V Swim and Dive Championships at Juneau's Dimond Park Aquatic Center, Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026. The JDHS girls won the Region V team title and the boys were runner-up to Sitka. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

Sitka Wolves boys topple Crimson Bears, earn first team title since 2015

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

The Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé Crimson Bears girls won their fourth straight Region V Swim and Dive team title Saturday at Juneau's Dimond Park Aquatic Center, while the Sitka High School Wolves boys stopped a JDHS boys' three-peat, earning their first team title since 2015. Ketchikan earned the team sportsmanship award.

"I could not be prouder of how our swimmers and divers performed this weekend," JDHS coach Amber Kelly said. "We have been asking them all season to trust the process, focus on the little details and believe that their hard work would pay off. This weekend, we really got to see that come together. What makes me most proud isn't just the first-place finishes, but how the entire team stepped up, supported one another and competed with confidence."

Added assistant coach Dakota Hubert, "The energy from our team was electric and we had so much fun on the pool deck."

The Crimson Bears girls dominated the pool with 222 team points. Sitka placed second with 83, Petersburg third with 73, Ketchikan 54 and Wrangell one.

The Sitka Wolves boys scored 173 points to best the Crimson Bears score of 169. Petersburg scored 62, Ketchikan 57 and Wrangell 3.

"Winning the Region V is great and I am so happy for the boys," Sitka coach Robby Jarvill said. "It took all 16 boys to accomplish that. There are a handful of boys that got seventh and eighth place. All those points add up. It was a good team effort. The girls taking second was great also. Only six girls on our team and all six are qualified for state. This team is a great group of athletes, great leadership and they are just good kids. They like to have fun but also know how to work hard and compete."

The JDHS girls opened Saturday's finals by winning the 200-yard medley relay in 1:52.65, topping Sitka's 1:56.25, Petersburg's 1:57.50 and Ketchikan's 2:07.44. JDHS sophomore Katya Foy led off the relay with a 28.24 backstroke, senior Kennedy Miller followed with a 32.47 breaststroke, senior Amy Liddle a 26.58 fly and senior Kaelyn Szefler brought it home with a 25.36 freestyle.

"We are feeling really good," Miller said. "I think this weekend, watching everyone, we had a lot of really good swims. We dropped a ton of time. People are going to state that haven't before and I am really excited. I was really happy with my 100 breaststroke because I kept my second place and I'm definitely going to state. For that I am excited. But opening with the medley relay was really important for me because I don't swim until after the dive break. So it is kind of a way to get my jitter out and be like, OK, I am feeling good. And it is always so much fun."

The JDHS girls would get first-place finishes by senior Amy Liddle in the 200 individual medley with 2:26.57 and the 100 fly in 59.09. Foy won the 100 free in 54.91. They swept the relays, adding the 200 free relay in 1:44.13 (so Annabelle Woodruff 25.74, Miller 26.12, so Brook Taintor 26.46, so Maddie Manlulu 25.81) and the 400 free relay in 3:45.75 (Liddle 55.88, Woodruff 57.80, Szefler 56.32, Foy 55.75).

The JDHS boys also won their first race of the championships, hitting 1:38.53 in the boys 200 medley relay, with junior Liam Kiessling hitting a 24.50 back, senior Josh Edwards 28.14 in the breaststroke, sophomore Levi Phelps a 24.46 fly and senior Kaden Aldrich a 21.43 free. Sitka placed second in 1:40.19 (sr Elliott Galanin

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SWIM AND DIVE

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27.46, sr Zach Martens 27.83, jr Tommy McCarthy 23.32, sr Corin Colliver 21.58). Petersburg was third in 1:47.68 and Ketchikan 1:52.26.

JDHS' Kiessling won the 100 fly in 51.11, edging teammate Edwards with 51.34 (3. PSG Hakon Eddy) and won the 100 back in 54.85 (2. JDHS sr Sam Pallenberg; 3. KTN sophomore Hunter Eckert; 4. SIT Galanin).

"Honestly I was half expecting that and half not," Kiessling said. "There was definitely some worry that I might not do as well and other people might take that first place. But when it came down to it I got it done and I got that first place, and I am really proud of myself. For me, the 100 back is more taxing. I am a new 100 flyer and the 100 fly just doesn't take it out of me like the 100 back does. Honestly, in the fly, it was having my teammate (Josh Edwards) right next to me, keeping me going. I am sure if he wasn't there I would have had a slower time. He was pushing me the whole race. It was really something special to have him there. The 100 back is a tough race for me. I was second at state last year and hoping for first this year. At regions we are competing against each other but when we go up to state, Southeast becomes one big team, and even if you aren't getting points for your team it is a bond that you get by swimming against them here. You don't want them to lost and not go to state with you. So it is really something special to race in regions with all these great people from these teams."

JDHS senior Kaden Aldrich placed first in the boys 200 free with 1:45.62 (2. SIT fr Ben Lihou; 3. SIT fr Sayer Bastian).

"It felt great," Aldrich said. "I was going in there feeling pretty good after we won the 200 medley relay. I got in and it was all going smoothly and well. I went out pretty fast. Everything was going according to my race plan. I closed out strong and did not fade. I am really happy with how it went. I wasn't expecting that much of a time drop. Maybe like a 1:47 or 1:46 at most, but I was really ecstatic to go to 1:45."



JDHS sophomore Cora Soboleff chases Petersburg junior Bella Miller to the finish of the girls 500-yard freestyle final during the 2026 Region V Swim and Dive Championships at Juneau's Dimond Park Aquatic Center, Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026. Miller won in 5:34.08 to Soboleff's 5:34.46 (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

Sitka senior Corin Colliver won the boys 50 free in 22.23 (2. SIT so Cedar Powers; 3. JDHS sr Sam Pallenberg; 4. SIT sr James Nellis; 5. SIT Galanin) and the 100 free in 48.22 (2. SIT McCarthy; 3. Powers; 4. Nellis).

"This feeling is definitely up there," Colliver said of Sitka's region title. "It was something we hadn't accomplished yet and it was something that I think I have been gunning for as a team, especially my group of seniors. We have been aiming for this our entire experience and this is just the point where, I guess, the stars aligned and we had the ability to do it. We are just really strong, the strongest we have been so far and mostly made up of seniors. For me, tonight, I just had to get into the zone. That is always how it is. I did not get the times I wanted, but I was able to beat the next best person and that is really what matters. It is surpassing what I can do right now, and be better than the next person."

Petersburg freshman Cyrus Hulebak won the boys 200 IM in 1:59.60 (2. SIT Martens; 3. PSG fr Hakon Eddy) and the 100 breast in 1:01.28 (2. JDHS Edwards; 3. SIT fr Sawyer Bastian).

Sitka's Martens won the boys 500 free in 4:57.44 (2. Lihou; 3. SIT sr Phin Edwards).

Sitka won the boys 200 free relay in 1:28.95 (McCarthy 22.40, Powers 22.59, Lihou 22.27, Colliver 21.69) and the 400 free relay in 3:17.91 (McCarthy 49.14, Powers 50.82, Lihou 49.36, Martens 48.59).

In the girls scoring, Petersburg junior Lexie Tow won the 200 free in 2:00.66 and the 100 breaststroke in 1:09.21.

"This regions was pretty good," Tow said. "I feel like I swam really good. A lot better than last year at regions. These were not my best times, but I feel like it will give me some more motivation to do better at state. I just feel like it will help me achieve that. And I feel like a lot of the new

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SWIM AND DIVE

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freshmen on our team that came in are also doing really good and I think they are going to do really good the following years. This has been a really fun season."

Sitka senior Taryn Fleming won the 100 back in 1:00.42, touching just ahead of JDHS' Foy in 1:02.45.

Petersburg freshman Tori Miller won the 50 free in 25.46 and junior Bella Miller won the 500 free in 5:34.08, just outtouching JDHS sophomore Cora Soboleff in 5:34.46.

For the Crimson Bears it would be the strong placings below first place that cemented the JDHS girls title. Swimmers are awarded nine points for a first place (second 7 points; third 6 points; fourth 5 points; fifth 4 points; sixth 3 points; seventh 2 points; eighth 1 point).

Following Soboleff in the 500 were Rasmussen in third, freshman Nyah Harris sixth and sophomore Ila Mannino seventh. Soboleff also placed second in the 200 free with 2:03.00, senior Maddox Rasmussen third and Woodruff fifth. K. Miller placed second in the 100 breaststroke with 1:11.63, senior Riley Soboleff was third and Manlulu sixth.

"Our girls really showed the depth of this team," coach Kelly said. "Sweeping the top four places in the 100 freestyle and winning all three relays says a lot about how hard this group has worked together. Every athlete has a role on this team, and seeing them come together and perform the way they did was incredibly rewarding as a coach."

Senior Avery Smith placed second in the girls 200 IM with 2:22.27, R. Soboleff fourth and junior Mae Crocker fifth. Senior Bailey Fisher placed second in the girls 50 free with 25.52, sophomore Brook Taintor fourth and sophomore Ellinore Higgins seventh. Woodruff placed fourth in the girls 100 fly, senior Avery Smith fifth and K. Miller sixth. Fisher placed second in the 100 free, Szefler third and Manlulu fourth. Szefler placed fourth in the 100 back, sophomore Natalie MacKinnon fifth and classmate Mia Calvin sixth.

The Crimson Bears boys placed second in the 200 free relay (Aldrich, Edwards, sr Sam Pallenberg, Phelps) and 400 free relay (Kiessling, Phelps, Andrews, S. Pallenberg).

"I am incredibly proud of our boys for finishing second overall at Regions," JDHS coach Kelly said. "We knew we were going up against a very strong Sitka team, but our boys showed up ready to compete. We had some outstanding individual performances, strong relays, and athletes stepping up when we needed them. What impressed me most was their determination and the way they supported each other throughout the meet. They have worked incredibly hard this season, and second place is something they should be very proud of."

JDHS boys scoring included sophomore Henry Thatcher fifth in the 200 free, senior Ben Pallenberg sixth and freshman Josh Ely seventh; Junior Axel Boily fourth 200 IM and sixth in the 100 fly; sophomore Keagen Andrews sixth 100 free; Thatcher fourth 500 free and sr Chedi Giron fifth; Phelps fifth 100 back, Ely seventh; Aldrich fourth 100 breast, Andrews sixth.

JDHS senior Moira Bahn won the girls one meter diving with 302.35 points, edging Ketchikan senior Lina Merrill with 256.40, Sitka freshman Ella Colliver with 249, Ketchikan junior Ellie Johnson 248.95 and senior teammate Adeline Williams fifth 228.45.

"I am really excited," Sitka's E. Colliver said. "Sitka has never really had a dive program. I think it is really cool that I get to be one of the first divers in a really long time. I don't really have a coach so it has been kind of difficult. But it has been really fun. Mainly there are some dives I just try to learn right before the meet. And then my dad, Michael Colliver, just helps me."

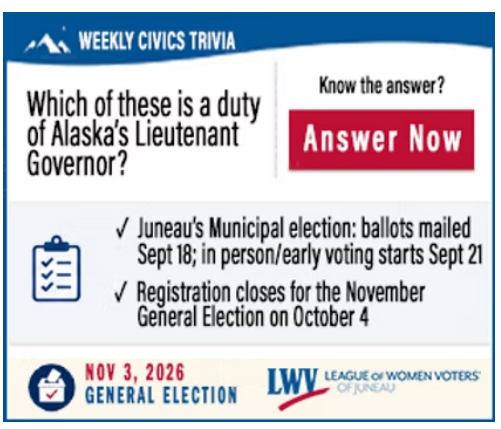
Sitka coach Jarvill said "Having Ella Colliver qualify for state is amazing. She only stated diving about three weeks ago. Very happy for her. It was a good regional championship. Now we will get back to work for a week and get ready for the state meet. That has been our goal all year.

JDHS senior Easton Berger won the

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SWIM AND DIVE

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boys' one-meter diving with 355.45 points with classmate Brady Newport second with 303.95. Ketchikan sophomore Marshall Kufner third 297.05, JDHS senior Alex Davis fourth 269.30, Ketchikan sophomore Jett Miller fifth 251.25 and JDHS freshman Traeus Mateo sixth 217.50.

"There were so many things that were special about this weekend," Berger said. "Just getting to see my teammates doing their best and making state is just amazing. A special shoutout to Brady (Newport) because this was his first year diving, and to make it as far as he did is truly impressive. He did so good and I am really proud of him. Our team has been training the entire season for this point and I am just so excited when I see them dive. When they throw a hard dive and do it well, I can't help but be excited for them."

Berger noted his best dive was supposed to be his inward somersault.

"It was really good," he said. "The weird thing is I haven't been practicing it much. I revered it, I wasn't going to throw it because I hadn't done well with it in practice. But when it was time for the board today I just knew I had to do it and it ended up scoring very well. I got sevens on it. But my favorite dive is always the reverse dive. I love how it feels. It is just super clean."

For dive events, the top two finishers from each conference tournament plus the next eight scores qualify for state, totaling 16 divers.

"I am so incredibly proud of all our divers," JDHS dive coach Savona Kiessling said. "Not just my JDHS divers but also our Southeast Alaska divers.I could really see the work they all have put in over the season — their dives have gradually become higher and their form has really improved. We are feeling confident going into the state competition. Most of our divers have competed at state before, so they understand the meet and know what they need to do in order to do their best."

"Easton was extremely dialed in this weekend and his top score reflected the hard work he has put in night after night," coach Kiessling said. "Brady is brand new to diving and earned second at regions this year which is a huge accomplishment and I'm really excited to see him perform next weekend at state. Alex's dives have gotten higher and closer to the board which is awesome, and his reverse half twist is probably my favorite dive to watch. Treaus, a freshman, has worked extremely hard to perform all 11 dives in a very short amount of time — a huge accomplishment. Moira had some really beautiful dives this weekend, which will be fun to show off in Anchorage, and Adeline really improved several of her dives this season, including her reverse, which has been exciting to see. I can't wait to watch them all perform at state."



JDHS senior Moira Bahn dives in the girls one meter dive final during the 2026 Region V Swim and Dive Championships at Juneau's Dimond Park Aquatic Center, Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

For relays, the first-place team from each conference championship meet and the next four best times earn state, for a total of eight relay teams in each relay event.

The first-place finisher from each individual swim event across the state's four conference tournaments (Southeast, Cook Inlet, Mid Alaska, Northern Lights) qualify for the state championships along with the next 12 best times, to total 16 swimmers in each event.

"I could not be more proud of how our athletes competed this weekend," JDHS assistant coach Dakota Hubert said. "It is so rewarding to see all of their effort come together when it matters most. Beyond the best times and results, I am proud of their determination, their support for one another and the way they represented our program. We are bringing a very large group to state and all six of our relays, which is incredible. I cannot wait to see what next weekend has in store. GO BEARS!"

Good Sport selections included Sitka's Elliott Galanin and Taryn Fleming; Ketchikan's Piper Bonzo and Nathaniel Duran; JDHS' Easton Berger and Maddox Rasmussen; Wrangell's Seth McMaster and Lynnea Harrison; and Petersburg's Bella Miller and Tavyn Cabral.

2026 REGION V SWIM & DIVE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Girls 200 Yard Medley Relay

1, JDHS (Foy, Katya SO, Miller,

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Kennedy SR, Liddle, Amy SR, Szefler, Kaelyn SR), 1:52.65. 2, SHS (Jarvill, Olivia R , Rice, Evi , Fleming, Taryn J , McCarthy, Aela), 1:56.25. 3, PHS (Miller, Bella JR, Tow, Lexie JR, Miller, Tori FR, Hinde, Olivia JR), 1:57.50. 4, KHS (Calvin, Mia SO, Jackson, Josephine SO, Bonzo, Piper SR, Parsons, Ella FR), 2:07.44.

Boys 200 Yard Medley Relay

1, JDHS (Kiessling, Liam JR, Edwards, Josh SR, Phelps, Levi SO, Aldrich, Kaden SR), 1:38.53. 2, SHS (Galanin, Elliott N , Martens, Zach J , McCarthy, Tommy K , Colliver, Corin J), 1:40.19. 3, PHS (Allison, Derek FR, Hulebak, Cyrus FR, Eddy, Hakon FR, Littleton, Cedar FR), 1:47.68. 4, KHS (Eckert, Hunter SO, Roskam, Evan FR, Duran, Nathaniel JR, Roskam, Ezra FR), 1:52.26.

Girls 200 Yard Freestyle

(Finals) 1, Tow, Lexie, PHS, 2:00.66. 2, Soboleff, Cora, JDHS, 2:03.00. 3, Rasmussen, Maddox, JDHS, 2:06.02. 4, Miller, Bella, PHS, 2:06.61. 5, Woodruff, Annabelle, JDHS, 2:08.63. 6, Lachapelle, Kendyl, PHS, 2:11.14. 7, Hinde, Olivia, PHS, 2:16.99. 8, Anderson, Sarah, JDHS, 2:19.89.

Boys 200 Yard Freestyle

1, Aldrich, Kaden, JDHS, 1:45.62. 2, Lihou, Ben T, SHS, 1:49.27. 3, Bastian, Sawyer, SHS, 1:51.39. 4, Edwards, Phin J, SHS, 1:58.25. 5, Thatcher, Henry, JDHS, 1:58.54. 6, Pallenberg, Ben, JDHS, 2:02.28. 7, Ely, Josh, JDHS, 2:03.87. 8, Allison, Derek, PHS, 2:06.21.

Girls 200 Yard IM

1, Liddle, Amy, JDHS, 2:16.57. 2, Smith, Avery, JDHS, 2:22.27. 3, Jarvill, Olivia R, SHS, 2:26.53. 4, Soboleff, Riley, JDHS, 2:32.91. 5, Crocker, Mae, JDHS, 2:42.33.

Boys 200 Yard IM

1, Hulebak, Cyrus, PHS, 1:59.60. 2, Martens, Zach J, SHS, 2:01.06. 3, Eddy, Hakon, PHS, 2:14.35. 4, Boily, Axel, JDHS, 2:18.08. 5, Duran, Nathaniel, KHS, 2:25.33. 6, Peterson, Jake, SHS, 2:34.84.

Girls 50 Yard Freestyle

1, Miller, Tori, PHS, 25.46. 2, Fisher, Bailey, JDHS, 25.52. 3, McCarthy, Aela, SHS, 25.58. 4, Taintor, Brook, JDHS, 26.98. 5, Bonzo, Piper, KHS, 27.03. 6, Martens, Mackenzie, SHS, 27.94. 7, Higgins, Ellinore, JDHS, 28.32. 8, Rice, Evi, SHS, 28.44.

Boys 50 Yard Freestyle

1, Colliver, Corin J, SHS, 22.23. 2, Powers, Cedar, SHS, 22.77. 3, Pallenberg, Sam, JDHS, 23.50. 4, Nellis, James C, SHS, 23.52. 5, Galanin, Elliott N, SHS, 23.70. 6, Roskam, Evan, KHS, 24.04. 7, Littleton, Cedar, PHS, 26.18. 8, Roskam, Ezra, KHS, 27.02.

Girls 1 Mtr Diving

1, Bahn, Moira, JDHS, 302.35. 2, Merrill, Lina, KHS, 256.40. 3, Colliver, Ella, SHS, 249.55. 4, Johnson, Ellie, KHS, 248.95. 5, Williams, Adeline, JDHS, 228.45.

Boys 1 Mtr Diving

1, Berger, Easton, JDHS, 355.45. 2, Newport, Brady, JDHS, 303.95. 3, Kufner, Marshall, KHS, 297.05. 4, Davis, Alex, JDHS, 269.30. 5, Miller, Jett, KHS, 251.25. 6, Mateo, Traeus, JDHS, 217.50.

Girls 100 Yard Butterfly

1, Liddle, Amy, JDHS, 59.09. 2, Fleming, Taryn J, SHS, 59.65. 3, Miller, Tori, PHS, 1:00.22. 4, Woodruff, Annabelle, JDHS, 1:01.39. 5, Smith, Avery, JDHS, 1:03.27. 6, Miller, Kennedy, JDHS, 1:03.68. 7, Bonzo, Piper, KHS, 1:10.85. 8, Nore, Arabella, WHS, 1:26.25.

Boys 100 Yard Butterfly

1, Kiessling, Liam, JDHS, 51.11. 2, Edwards, Josh, JDHS, 51.34. 3, Eddy, Hakon, PHS, 55.20. 4, Eckert, Hunter, KHS, 57.13. 5, Duran, Nathaniel, KHS, 59.97. 6, Boily, Axel, JDHS, 1:00.43. 7, Peterson, Jake, SHS, 1:12.84. 8, Emley, Odin, SHS, 1:15.41.

Girls 100 Yard Freestyle

1, Foy, Katya, JDHS, 54.91. 2, Fisher, Bailey, JDHS, 55.78. 3, Szefler, Kaelyn, JDHS, 56.41. 4, Manlulu, Maddie, JDHS, 57.72. 5, Jackson, Josephine, KHS, 59.55. 6, Martens, Mackenzie, SHS, 1:01.29. 7, Calvin, Mia, KHS, 1:05.12. 8, Parsons, Ella, KHS, 1:09.49.

Boys 100 Yard Freestyle

1, Colliver, Corin J, SHS, 48.22. 2, McCarthy, Tommy K, SHS, 48.44. 3, Powers, Cedar, SHS, 50.68. 4, Nellis, James C, SHS, 51.18. 5, Roskam, Evan, KHS, 52.10. 6, Andrews, Keagen, JDHS, 53.78. 7, Bardin-Siekawitch, Andrei, WHS, 58.01. 8, Littleton, Cedar, PHS, 1:01.63.

Girls 200 Yard Freestyle Relay

1, JDHS (Woodruff, Annabelle SO, Miller, Kennedy SR, Taintor, Brook SO, Manlulu, Maddie SO), 1:44.13. 2,

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SWIM AND DIVE

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SHS (McCarthy, Aela , Rice, Evi , Martens, Mackenzie FR, Fleming, Taryn J), 1:46.52. 3, KHS (Bonzo, Piper SR, Calvin, Mia SO, Parsons, Ella FR, Jackson, Josephine SO), 1:54.12.

Boys 200 Yard Freestyle Relay

1, SHS (McCarthy, Tommy K , Powers, Cedar SO, Lihou, Ben T FR, Colliver, Corin J), 1:28.95. 2, JDHS (Aldrich, Kaden SR, Edwards, Josh SR, Pallenberg, Sam SR, Phelps, Levi SO), 1:32.86. 3, PHS (Eddy, Hakon FR, Littleton, Cedar FR, Allison, Derek FR, Hulebak, Cyrus FR), 1:37.57. 4, KHS (Eckert, Hunter SO, Roskam, Ezra FR, Duran, Nathaniel JR, Roskam, Evan FR), 1:40.39.

Girls 500 Yard Freestyle

1, Miller, Bella, PHS, 5:34.08. 2, Soboleff, Cora, JDHS, 5:34.46. 3, Rasmussen, Maddox, JDHS, 5:49.16. 4, Lachapelle, Kendyl, PHS, 6:02.70. 5, Hinde, Olivia, PHS, 6:21.19. 6, Harris, Nyah, JDHS, 6:38.48. 7, Mannino, Ila, JDHS, 8:24.49.

Boys 500 Yard Freestyle

1, Martens, Zach J, SHS, 4:57.44. 2, Lihou, Ben T, SHS, 5:02.90. 3, Edwards, Phin J, SHS, 5:25.51. 4, Thatcher, Henry, JDHS, 5:36.41. 5, Giron, Chedi, JDHS, 5:43.16. 6, Becker, Gus, SHS, 5:55.95.

Girls 100 Yard Backstroke

1, Fleming, Taryn J, SHS, 1:00.42. 2, Foy, Katya, JDHS, 1:02.45. 3, Jarvill, Olivia R, SHS, 1:04.73. 4, Szefler, Kaelyn, JDHS, 1:05.69. 5, Mackinnon, Natalie, JDHS, 1:12.80. 6, Calvin, Mia, KHS, 1:14.40.

Boys 100 Yard Backstroke

1, Kiessling, Liam, JDHS, 54.85. 2, Pallenberg, Sam, JDHS, 58.13. 3, Eckert, Hunter, KHS, 58.47. 4, Galanin, Elliott N, SHS, 58.78. 5, Phelps, Levi, JDHS, 58.89. 6, Allison, Derek, PHS, 1:07.33. 7, Ely, Josh, JDHS, 1:07.53. 8, Bardin-Siekawitch, Andrei, WHS, 1:08.00.



The Region V girls champion Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé Crimson Bears pose for a photo during the 2026 Region V Swim and Dive Championships at Juneau's Dimond Park Aquatic Center, Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

Girls 100 Yard Breaststroke

1, Tow, Lexie, PHS, 1:09.21. 2, Miller, Kennedy, JDHS, 1:11.63. 3, Soboleff, Riley, JDHS, 1:11.96. 4, McCarthy, Aela, SHS, 1:12.45. 5, Jackson, Josephine, KHS, 1:13.21. 6, Manlulu, Maddie, JDHS, 1:13.52. 7, Rice, Evi, SHS, 1:15.35. 8, Colliver, Ella, SHS, 1:19.47.

Boys 100 Yard Breaststroke

1, Hulebak, Cyrus, PHS, 1:01.28. 2, Edwards, Josh, JDHS, 1:02.00. 3, Bastian, Sawyer, SHS, 1:02.47. 4, Aldrich, Kaden, JDHS, 1:04.20. 5, Chevalier, Erik M, SHS, 1:08.30. 6, Andrews, Keagen, JDHS, 1:09.61. 7, Pallenberg, Ben, JDHS, 1:13.61. 8, Cabral, Tavyn, PHS, 1:31.36.

Girls 400 Yard Freestyle Relay

1, JDHS (Liddle, Amy SR, Woodruff, Annabelle SO, Szefler, Kaelyn SR, Foy, Katya SO), 3:45.75. --, PHS (Miller, Bella JR, Lachapelle, Kendyl FR, Miller, Tori FR, Tow, Lexie JR), DQ.

Boys 400 Yard Freestyle Relay

1, SHS (McCarthy, Tommy K , Powers, Cedar SO, Lihou, Ben T FR, Martens, Zach J), 3:17.91. 2, JDHS (Kiessling, Liam JR, Phelps, Levi SO, Andrews, Keagen SO, Pallenberg, Sam SR), 3:29.47.

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



Sitka freshman Ella Colliver dives in the girls' one-meter dive final during the 2026 Region V Swim and Dive Championships at Juneau's Dimond Park Aquatic Center, Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

Crimson Bears spike Lady Kings at Ketchikan



The Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé volleyball team battles the Ketchikan Lady Kings in Ketchikan's Clarke Cochrane Gymnasium, Thursday, Oct. 29, 2026. The Crimson Bears won 3-0 Thursday and 3-1 Friday. (Photo courtesy Ketchikan Daily News)

JDHS has won 16 of 17 sets against Kayhi heading into volleyball regions

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

With the regular season complete, the Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé volleyball team has defeated the Ketchikan Lady Kings in 16 of the 17 sets they've played against each other heading into this week's Region V Championships in Juneau.

"I am very excited for us to host regions this weekend," JDHS senior June Troxel said. "Our team has learned so much and developed such a strong team bond. Heading into our games this weekend we know the importance of starting off the game strong and playing to our level, finding our strengths early in the game to help us later on."

Last Thursday in Ketchikan the Crimson Bears won 3-0 (25-17, 25-10, 25-23) and on Friday JDHS dropped that lone game to the Kings, but won 3-1 (25-19, 24-26, 26-24, 25-11).

The Crimson Bears may have the Lady Kings' number, but in sports, that is why you play the game. And the biggest games of the season are Thursday and Friday with the Crimson Bears hosting the Lady Kings in the region championships at the George Houston Gymnasium.

"We have been talking about that same subject all last week and starting practice today," JDHS coach Arnold Ibias said. "About not taking them lightly. You always want to win, but sometimes a loss helps you refocus. I have shared with them the story of the Ketchikan JVs coming in when I was coaching them (Kayhi) and beating Juneau-Douglas and I think it was because they took us too lightly."

JDHS has an 18-16-1 match record this season, a 14-3-1 mark at home. Ketchikan is 1-17 in matches this season.

"Sometimes the underdog might have a slight advantage because they have nothing to lose," Ibias said. "They just come in and play and that is what you have to watch out for. We have been talking about getting a lead and keeping it and not letting them hang around scorewise."

JDHS played with a purpose last weekend.

"What stood out was that the girls were playing confidently especially after coming back from the Anchorage trip," Ibias said. "Even in the set that we lost, they felt confident that they could win the next two sets. They realized at the right time what it feels like to win. Hopefully we will carry that on to state."

In Thursday's three-game sweep, Troxel had 14 points scored on serve (2 aces), senior Faith Contreras nine (2A), seniors Liliane Veikoso and Brie Powers six apiece, junior Nellie Stowers five and seniors Haley Gilbert (1A) and Clairee Overson three apiece. Gilbert had six kills, Troxel five, Veikoso four, junior Ruby Koski three, sophomore Winter Osterhout two and senior Leila Cooper, Stowers and senior Analia Perry one each.

"Our servers are placing the ball in difficult areas to pass and the receiving team is not in system," Ibias said. "It is something that we work on every practice."

In Friday's 3-1 win, Powers had 15 points scored on serve, Stowers 11, Gilbert seven (2A), Troxel six (1A), Veikoso five (3A), Cooper four (2A) and Contreras one. Veikoso and Koski had 10 kills apiece, Perry and Gilbert four apiece, Stowers three and Troxel and Cooper one apiece.

In the two-match totals, Veikoso led with 27 hits in play, followed by Troxel with 23, Koski 22, Stowers 20, Gilbert 17 and Perry nine. Veikoso had 51 kill attempts, Koski 40, Troxel 37, Gilbert 33, Stowers 27, and Perry 15. Powers had 27 assists and Veikoso 25. Osterhout had 11 digs, Troxel seven, Powers and Stowers five apiece and Veikoso four.

The Region V Championships will also feature the 3A title clash between Sitka and Mt. Edgecumbe. The Wolves and Braves will play at 5:15 p.m. Thursday and Friday, followed by the Crimson Bears and Lady Kings at 7 p.m.

"It will be exciting to have 3A and 4A in the same gym," Ibias said. "I hope people come out and watch some good volleyball."

Sitka has defeated Mt. Edgecumbe

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VOLLEYBALL

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this season by scores of 3-2 (22-25, 25-16, 23-25, 25-23, 16-14), 3-2 (21-25, 25-20, 25-20, 26-28, 15-13) and 3-1 (18-25, 25-18, 25-17, 25-14). MEHS has defeated Sitka 3-0 (25-8, 25-12, 25-19).

Sitka has won 13 matches overall this season and lost 13, MEHS has won five matches and lost 15.

They both have had strong outings against JDHS. The Crimson Bears have defeated Sitka 3-0 (25-15, 25-21, 25-17), lost 3-2 (23-25, 25-22, 14-25, 25-21, 12-15), lost 3-1 (24-26, 26-24, 24-26, 17-25), won 3-2 (17-25, 25-22, 27-25, 22-25, 15-10), and won 2-0 (25-12, 25-21). The Crimson Bears defeated MEHS 3-2 (24-26, 22-27, 25-19, 25-22, 15-12) and lost 3-2 (26-24, 18-25, 25-20, 17-25, 6-15).

The region championship is earned in the best-of-three matches. Matches are the best three-out-of-five games. If no team wins their first two matches, and an if-necessary match will be played at 3 p.m. Saturday (3A) or 5:15 p.m. (4A). If both 3A and 4A are decided in two matches, the winners will play a crossover game at 5:15 p.m. Saturday, with a 3 p.m. rookie game as a filler.

"Something that we pride ourselves on is that we use adults line judges," Ibias said. "Our usual volunteers are going to be out of town. So we are looking for two people per match. I don't want to sound like I am begging, but we are."

Adults looking to volunteer at the Region V Championships can contact Ibias at aribias@gmail.com or JDHS athletic director Julie Herman at julie.herman@juneauschools.org.

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



The Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé volleyball Varsity, JV, Crimson and C-Team players and coaches pose for a photo during practice early this season. JDHS hosts the Region V Championships in the George Houston Gymnasium, Thursday through Saturday, Nov. 8-10. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

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