

# A Report to Alaska

## From U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski

Fall 2005



United States Senate

### A Message to Alaskans

*In the first session of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, we have already achieved much that will benefit Alaska and the country. We have worked aggressively this session to pass major pieces of legislation such as the highway reauthorization bill and the bi-partisan energy bill. We have strongly advocated for Alaska's interests by beating back efforts to end responsible logging in the Tongass and challenging permitting for fish farming in our waters. The Senate will soon confirm John Roberts as the Chief Justice of the United States and will soon receive another nomination from the President to fill the second Supreme Court vacancy. And we have helped spur an economic recovery that has added nearly 4 million new jobs in the last two years.*

*At this point in the year, we had hoped to have the FY06 budget process completed – a process that will lead to the opening of ANWR to limited oil and gas development. Including ANWR in the budget gives us our best chance of getting it passed. Early in the year we successfully defeated an effort to remove it from the budget. However, due to the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina, legislation that we intended to take up after the August recess, such as the budget, was postponed.*



*Senator Murkowski stands with a group of medical students in support of efforts to increase access to health care.*

*For Katrina alone, we've already appropriated nearly \$62 billion for recovery efforts and as of the time of this writing, we are bracing for what may be needed as a result of Hurricane Rita.*

*If we are able to complete the budget this year, we are very hopeful that the 20-year fight to open ANWR will end. Alaskans have long known what the opening up of ANWR would mean to the State and to the country. As we pay record gas prices across the country, Americans are also realizing the benefits of ANWR's potential.*

*Heading into the end of this legislative year, I will continue to advocate for improving the state of health care and health care access, education, energy, veterans affairs, and infrastructure development in Alaska. And I will continue to work toward building the best Alaska we can create to take advantage of this exciting time for the State.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Murkowski".

Lisa Murkowski

## Alaskans Reach Out to Katrina Victims

In the massive outpouring of compassion and generosity for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, I want to thank and recognize Alaskans for their efforts. While there are far too many acts of compassion to list completely, it's important to highlight the efforts we are capable of in times of crisis to illustrate that the compassion of this country truly does stretch from coast to coast.

Some of the victims of the hurricane not often mentioned are the Gulf Coast fishermen. At what would be the height of the season, the Gulf Coast fishing industry has been decimated. It is estimated that it will take at least 18 months for the \$2.7 billion a year industry to be up and running.

Before the total damage from the storm had been realized, Alaska's fishermen were reaching out to their colleagues in the Gulf. The United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), one of the nation's largest commercial fishing groups, has extended offers of support to the Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) and its more than 500 members. The offer includes gear, apparel and logistical support to the shrimp alliance. Currently, UFA is working with SSA, my office, and other organizations to tally a list of pressing items needed.

A group of women on the Kenai Peninsula sent homemade quilts to the evacuees. One businessman with ties to Alaska donated one million dollars in housing to the recovery effort. A disaster response team from Alaska, one of only a few trained "Type 1" teams in the country, relocated to Selma, Alabama, where it helped organize up to 100,000 mobile homes and RVs for people who lost their homes in the hurricane. Dozens of Alaskans traveled to the Gulf region to volunteer with the Red Cross and Alaskans across the State raised thousands of dollars for Red Cross efforts. Alaska's military played a critical role as well, as Alaska Air National Guard crews flew across the country to deliver trucks and supplies to rescue teams.

And in our State, nearly 4,000 miles from the Gulf Coast, evacuees have arrived and are being taken in by friends and willing families.

In the wake of tragic events, Americans continue to surpass their own records for generosity, and Alaskans are always part of the solution.

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## Energy Bill Will Light a Better Path for the Country

In passing an energy bill this year, we set aside partisan differences and forged balanced legislation that will help the nation both gain more domestic energy and develop renewable energy and alternative fuels. A real effort was made toward advancing energy efficiency and aiding the environment. This bill will help us develop our oil, natural gas, and coal resources and should help Alaska tap our huge gas hydrate reserves.

The bill authorizes \$550 million over the next decade for improvements to the State's energy infrastructure. Under the bill some \$55 million yearly is authorized to the Denali Commission to be used to fund a host of projects including energy generation and development, transmission networks, interties, fuel tank replacement and cleanup, fuel transportation networks and related facilities and coal energy generation and alternative coal fuel projects. Other incentives should help develop renewable energy technologies such as wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal and further a variety of energy projects that could greatly aid the State's economy and employment in the future.

I particularly want to highlight the bill's climate change title. This is the first climate change title crafted by Congress. I was an original co-sponsor of several bills that were included in the final energy bill to address climate change, including a series of efforts to reduce the intensity of greenhouse gases. An effort was made to increase the use of clean energy technologies and share clean technologies with other countries to globally address human carbon dioxide emissions and climate change.

Not only is this an energy bill, it is a jobs bill. Given all of the renewable energy requirements, which should produce over 500,000 jobs, plus those jobs produced from construction of an Alaska gas line and the opening of ANWR, we are investing in the country's labor and economic future as well as its energy future.

## Investing in America's Roads and Infrastructure

Completing another long-standing legislative goal this year, Congress passed the highway reauthorization bill providing funding for road and transportation projects throughout the country. This year, all three members of Alaska's Congressional Delegation sat on the House-Senate conference committee that crafted the final bill. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time all three members of the Alaska Delegation have ever been on the same conference committee for any bill, let alone a major one like this. As a result, Alaska's interests were well represented.

For rural Alaska, provisions of the bill are especially important. The bill authorizes the Denali Commission to plan, design, construct, and maintain roads connecting to and within remote Alaskan communities, with advice from an advisory group dominated by rural and Alaska Native interests. The highway bill also helps alleviate unfair airplane usage taxes affecting rural Alaskans, seaplanes, and flightseeing operations. And, at my urging, the bill designates the highway route between Fairbanks and the Canadian border as a new international high-priority corridor. This will assist the State in obtaining additional funds to upgrade that area of roadway, if necessary, for anticipated heavy traffic associated with future gas line construction.

Reliable transportation is critical to our national well-being. This is especially true in Alaska, where our road and transportation systems are woefully inadequate compared to the rest of the country. For Alaska's economy and citizenry to develop in the future, we need to further connect our communities and ensure that we are prioritizing our transportation needs. I'm pleased that the bill we passed will help us meet these goals

### Did you know?

- Wrangell is the only Alaskan city to have existed under four nations and three flags: Tlingit Nation, Russia, Britain and the United States.

## Base Realignment and Closure Commission Keeps Eielson Operational

Alaska scored a tremendous win this year when the military Base Realignment and Closure Commission rejected the Pentagon's recommendations to reduce Eielson Air Force Base to "warm status" operations.

Eielson proved its value to the BRAC Commissioners. The base provides the best aircraft training space in the country, and its strategic importance can't be overstated. Aircraft stationed at Eielson can reach targets nearly anywhere in the world faster than they can from any of the Lower 48 bases.

I was overwhelmed with pride when I attended the regional BRAC hearing in Fairbanks earlier this year. The outpouring of support from Interior communities was tremendous, and I think the BRAC Commissioners clearly listened to the compelling evidence that Eielson was simply too important to be shut down.

The BRAC commission did, however, decide to send part of Eielson's aircraft fleet to the Lower 48. But compared to the massive direct and indirect job losses that would have resulted from a complete reduction at Eielson, the State scored a win.

The Commission also decided to relocate Kulis Air National Guard Base and close the Galena Forward Operation Location which it has been maintaining in warm status. For Kulis, the relocation to Elmendorf Air Force Base is conditioned upon the availability of sufficient funds to relocate the Kulis mission.

My thoughts are with the people of Galena and the Middle Yukon Villages in the wake of the BRAC Commission's decision to discontinue its financial support for the Galena Forward Operating Location. I will work with the Defense Department to make certain that Galena has access to all available federal resources to assist in its transition.

## Apply to be an Intern

My internship program provides an excellent opportunity for students to learn and serve through first-hand participation in government service and the legislative process. The program is intended to provide knowledge, tools, skills, and experiences that an intern will readily apply to future challenges and professional pursuits. For more information on my intern program, please visit my website at: [www.murkowski.senate.gov](http://www.murkowski.senate.gov)



Senator Murkowski and her summer 2005 first session interns.

## Support for ANWR Growing

Americans increasingly understand the nation's need for more domestic production of oil and natural gas after seeing the price aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the potential effects of Rita. A recent Pew Research Center for the People & the Press national public opinion poll showed that the rise in energy prices has had a modest but perceptible impact on public views of the tradeoff between boosting the energy supply and protecting the environment. A solid majority (57%) now says it is more important to develop new energy sources than to protect the environment, up from 49% who expressed that view in March. "Support for oil and gas drilling in the Alaskan Arctic National Wildlife Refuge also has gained," said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center in a release on his latest poll. Public support for ANWR development has risen 8% in the past six months to 50%. Americans support ANWR 50-42% in the most recent poll conducted between Sept. 8-11.



Senator Murkowski walks down the Capitol Steps with school kids from Alaska to support the Walk for Hope. The annual event helps raise money for Hope Cottage, a charity that provides a residential environment and assistance for the developmentally disabled. This year marked the 36th anniversary of this event.

## Legislative Accomplishments

The following is a list of measures that I have supported, sponsored or co-sponsored that have passed the Senate or Congress as a whole since the beginning of the 109th session in January.

- The highway bill (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005 -P.L. 109-59) to make our roads safer, strengthen our infrastructure and create jobs. According to the Department of Transportation for every \$1 billion invested in federal highway and transit spending, 47,500 jobs and job opportunities are created and sustained.
- The energy bill (Energy Policy Act of 2005- P.L. 109-58) to provide clean, affordable energy for a growing secure economy, and to protect nearly 2 million jobs over the next decade.
- CAFTA (the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States-Free Trade Agreement-P.L.109-53), which will open up new markets for American goods by reducing hefty tariffs and leveling the playing field for American farmers, manufacturers, and workers.
- Class Action Reform (Class Action Fairness Act of 2005-P.L. 109-2) to prevent personal injury lawyers from pushing frivolous lawsuits, causing Americans to lose jobs.
- Bankruptcy Reform (Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005- P.L.109-8) so that people who are responsible and pay their bills on time do not have to subsidize the irresponsible actions of a few who do not.
- Fiscal Year 2006 Interior Appropriations Act (P.L.109-54) providing an additional \$1.5 billion for Veterans' health care funding.
- National Women's History Museum Act of 2005 (S.501)
- The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (S.397)



Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman, Sen. John Thune (R-SD), Sen. Murkowski and White House Counsel James Connaughton on the ground in ANWR.

### Did you know?

- Did you know that ANWR oil discoveries could nearly double America's proven reserves of oil? The coastal plain, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, has an even chance of yielding North America's second largest oil field equaling twice the production of all East Texas's oilfields.
- Did you know that Alaska's natural gas line should bring at least 4.5 billion cubic feet of gas a day to market – alleviating about a third of the nation's likely shortfall in natural gas supplies next decade?



Senator Murkowski joins with other members of Congress to help promote Internet Safety Month. Murkowski was a sponsor of the resolution to designate June as Internet Safety Month to raise awareness of the potential online danger for children.



Senator Murkowski, accompanied by her husband Verne Martell, is sworn into her first full term in the Senate by Vice President Dick Cheney.

## Raising Awareness of FASD

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, we observed International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day (FASD). Every year in the United States, an estimated one in every 100 babies is born with FASD – approximately 40,000 infants a year. FASD is an umbrella term that describes a range of physical and mental birth defects that can occur in a fetus when a pregnant woman drinks alcohol. FASD affects more children than Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and muscular dystrophy combined.

An average of 163 Alaskan babies are born each year affected by maternal alcohol use during pregnancy. Among Native Alaska communities, the rate of FASD is 15 times higher than non-Native areas in the State. And, most significantly, FASD is 100 percent preventable.

I have introduced legislation, along with Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD), titled the Advancing FASD Research, Prevention and Services Act, that would develop and implement targeted state and community-based outreach programs to create awareness of and combat FASD. The bill would also improve coordination among federal agencies involved in FASD treatment and research by establishing stronger communication with these programs.

The related costs of FASD are high, more than \$3 billion each year in direct health care costs, and many times that amount in lost human potential. Lifetime health costs for an individual living with FASD averages \$860,000. The direct and indirect economic costs of FASD in the U.S. are estimated to be \$5.4 billion. The indirect financial, social, and emotional costs of FASD to the nation are even greater.

Our investment today in prevention, treatment and research will save countless amounts in future health costs and human potential of this devastating and completely preventable disorder.

**United States Senate**  
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## Tell Me Your Views

I am honored to serve the people of Alaska in the United States Senate. As one of your representatives in Washington, D.C., I am deeply interested in your views and opinions. Please let me know about your views on the issues that matter to your family and your community. Visit my website [www.murkowski.senate.gov](http://www.murkowski.senate.gov) to learn about what I'm working on in Washington, D.C., contact me, and sign up to receive my email newsletter.

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Doing what Alaskans do best – Senator Murkowski and her freshly caught Coho.

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