

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



May 10, 2021

The Honorable Dan Sullivan
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sullivan,

For the past fifteen years, the Alaska legislature has worked tirelessly to promote bipartisanship, despite extensive differences in ideology, vision, and geographic representation—all for the benefit of moving Alaska forward. Just over the past five years, the Alaska legislature protected Alaskans from the COVID-19 pandemic, increased public safety in our local communities, and looked out for our seniors and most vulnerable. We also continue to work through many policy decisions to find the best possible options for Alaskans—and we are doing it together. That is the spirit we in the legislature have worked to exhibit and one we will continue to practice.

Last week, you had the privilege of addressing the Alaska legislature during a joint session. Through misrepresentations and political rhetoric, your speech damaged this reputation for bipartisan cooperation that many in the legislature have fought to preserve, and to extend into the future. Our collective bodies are made up of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents from all stretches of this great state. With this makeup, it behooves us to come together and understand our challenges, perspectives, and needs as a community.

Today, we express our sincere disappointment for bringing Washington, D.C. partisanship to Alaska and embedding the divisive tone of that partisanship and rhetoric into our chambers. During your speech, you blamed Democrats, our ideals, and our passion for a better America as the problem in this country. Not acknowledging the importance of President Biden's American Rescue Plan that provided over \$1 billion for this state to recover its economy from the COVID-19 pandemic, provided relief to local communities and businesses, maintained services for those who are most in need, and provided thousands of dollars in direct relief to struggling Alaska families illustrates that rhetoric. That plan, endorsed by Democrats in Congress, was widely supported by the public – whether Republican, Democrat, or Independent Americans.

We cannot imagine that you genuinely believe the rhetoric you professed during joint session because it is not how Alaskans work with each other. We may differ, but we don't demean or denigrate. We look to each other for solutions and new ideas. That is the Alaskan way of life.

We ask you to take a page from our playbook: seek out those in Congress you do not see eye-to-eye with and put the rhetoric aside. Work with them to understand their community needs, as they should do with you. Only in that way can we actually move this state forward.

Political blame does not benefit this nation or Alaska. Let's make progress in the directions we so desperately need: a nation that seeks out collaboration and creative thought; a nation that looks to grow our society through quality education and innovation, not by struggling to hold on to the past; and a nation that looks up to and respects our community leaders and fundamentally believes in science.

A positive change in our political culture won't suddenly happen overnight. It will take a lot of effort, and that must start somewhere. Please join us in sending a signal to Washington that we will not stand for or engage in unnecessary political rhetoric and partisanship that further damages our nation.

Sincerely,



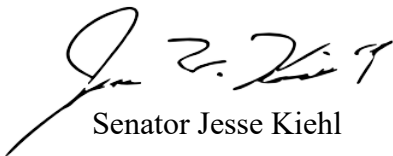
Senator Tom Begich
Senate Minority Leader



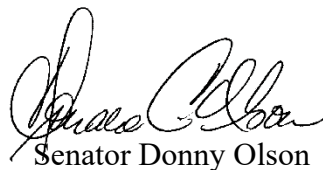
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson



Senator Scott Kawasaki



Senator Jesse Kiehl



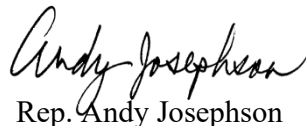
Senator Donny Olson



Senator Bill Wielechowski



Rep. Ivy Spohnholz



Rep. Andy Josephson



Rep. Harriet Drummond