



Mark
Begich
for Governor

ALASKA WOMEN & FAMILIES

With access to healthcare and workplace protections at risk due to extreme policies and attacks from Washington, D.C., Alaska's next Governor will be one of the last lines of defense when it comes to protecting Alaska women. We need real leadership who will support and implement fair, common-sense policies while also committing to vetoing dangerous, misguided legislation. Systemic inequality continues to keep too many Alaska women from achieving the economic security they deserve. As Mayor and U.S. Senator, Mark Begich has been an unwavering advocate for women - fighting for equal pay for equal work, protecting a woman's right to make her own health care decisions, and promoting safe, healthy communities for all Alaskans. This is the same comprehensive approach Mark Begich will bring as Governor and that is why he has a plan aimed at addressing the diverse and comprehensive issues facing Alaska women today.

CHILDCARE

Alaska's families spend almost \$200 million a year on childcare for kids under the age of six. Early learning and childcare also support some 7,700 jobs statewide. Childcare businesses support local economies and allow parents to return to the labor market. Despite this, a 2014 survey found that 46% of parents found it difficult to obtain childcare. On average, childcare in Alaska costs 18% of family income. We need greater access to affordable, high quality childcare from birth to kindergarten.

- **Streamline licensing requirements for childcare centers:** We all want to ensure the highest quality care is available for Alaska's kids, but overly burdensome red tape is making it harder for childcare centers to operate. Recent proposed changes to regulations will make it even harder for childcare businesses to break even. As Governor, Mark Begich will call for financial analysis of any proposed regulations to determine how they will impact service providers and caregivers. Further, Begich will create a cabinet level advisory group to determine how to reduce regulatory hurdles for childcare while ensuring kids' health and safety.

- **Improve workforce training and opportunities for childcare professionals:** Alaska's childcare desert exists in part because of a lack of trained professionals and unaffordability of training programs. Providing tuition waivers is one way we can improve access to well trained childcare administrators. Working with the State's existing early childcare organizations, we should develop a network to connect those with proper training to home-based and other childcare centers, improving employment and childcare access while improving quality and making it easier to achieve regulatory compliance.
- **Target childcare deserts with incentives and business development services:** Many childcare centers and home-based businesses operate with razor-thin margins, without access to capital or business development services. Connecting these entrepreneurs with capital can help childcare businesses grow to meet demand. States can offer tax credits for investments in child care facilities within childcare deserts, targeting investment to where it is needed, especially in rural areas.

EDUCATION

A strong education system is the backbone of our state. Without it, we can't train the workforce of tomorrow or even attract young people today. High teacher and education support staff turnover, lack of access to high quality early childhood education, and a persistently underfunded university system have left our education system ranked at the bottom nationwide.

- **Provide certainty to school districts, teachers, parents, and kids:** We cannot attract and keep the best teachers and education professionals until we forward-fund education, ensuring no more yearly or on-and-off pink slips. That is why Mark Begich laid out his "Invest in Alaska" plan which provides stable, long-term education funding and is estimated to, based on this year's data, free up \$1.6 billion in general funds currently used for education funding. It also means that the Legislature can't use the education system as a negotiating tool or political bargaining chip. Providing certainty to teachers, parents, and kids means a better education system for everyone.
- **Prioritize universal Pre-K:** 90% of brain development happens by age five, which means those years are the most important years to invest in a child's development. For every \$1 we invest in high quality early childhood education, the State gets back \$7 in reduced public services, increased economic activity, and spending less on incarceration. Access to high quality, affordable early childhood education is essential to raising the next generation of great Alaskans. Business leaders, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, know great employees come from kids that have access to quality education. That's why Begich is a strong supporter of universal pre-K without diminishing the current needs of K-12 education.
- **Ensure necessary resources:** Education budgets aren't keeping up with increasing costs of healthcare, energy, or inflation. School districts have been cut severely and we see class sizes going up, teachers using their own income for supplies, and each school counselor serving as many as 700 students in some school districts, if those positions still exist. We must ensure education funding increases with inflation and real costs, so schools are getting the necessary funding, resources, and support from the State Department of Education and Early Development.

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL ALASKANS

Alaska has historically been ahead of the curve on promoting human rights. In 1945, through the tireless work of many, led by Elizabeth Peratrovich, Alaska's Territorial Government passed the Alaska Anti-Discrimination Act, nearly twenty years ahead of the U.S. Civil Rights Act. We still have far to go, but as Governor, Mark Begich will fight to ensure our state government reflects our shared value that all Alaskans are treated fairly.

- **Protect marriage equality:** Same sex couples should be allowed to marry and enjoy all the same rights and privileges as any other married couple. The government should keep out of our personal lives – if someone wants to marry someone they love, then they should be able to. As Governor, Mark Begich will continue to fight for equal rights for all Alaskans and not let the rights of Alaskans become subject to the whims of the extreme agenda from Outside groups.
- **Safeguard all Alaskans from discrimination:** We must continue to support efforts to put gender and sexuality-based discrimination on equal footing with race and ethnic discrimination and increase penalties for wage discrimination in our state. As Governor, Mark Begich will prioritize these efforts and make sure they are reflected within every level of the administration.

SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

39% of privately-held businesses in the U.S. are woman owned and contribute 8% of employment and 4.2% of revenues.

- **Create statewide programs to support woman-owned small businesses:** For Alaska entrepreneurs, a network of mentors can make a big difference in starting or expanding a small business. A statewide mentorship network is one easy way to propel more women into business ownership. Many states, and the Federal Government, also offer procurement contracting preferences to woman owned small businesses, ensuring more of the State's money goes to supporting women. Tackle the gender gap between women and men for small business loans by increasing the Small Business Administration's lending authority for micro-financing (under \$50,000) and intermediate financing (under \$200,000) while also directing more technical assistance to woman-owned businesses entering the export market.
- **Support an inclusive family leave policy for all Alaskans:** Mark supports providing incentives to businesses to allow more workers to telecommute and work from home, especially for parents of young children working to balance careers and kids. Daughters are twice as likely to take care of their aging parent than sons are, putting great financial and emotional strain on already overtaxed families. It also ends up costing caregivers lost income and retirement benefits because they have to reduce their work hours to care for a parent. Helping older Alaskans stay in their homes isn't just the right thing to do—it saves money for families and taxpayers. Good family leave policies also help Alaska employers attract the best talent from around the country with 42 percent of job candidates saying paid maternity and paternity leave is an important factor when choosing a job opportunity.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

In addition to having some of the highest health care costs in the country, Alaska also faces issues with access to care. We need to ensure that we take common sense steps to provide quality, affordable health care to all Alaskans - no matter where they live.

- **Protect Women’s Fundamental Rights to Make Their Own Health Care Decisions:** Our next Governor and their administration will play a critically important role in protecting Alaska women from the current threats looming in Washington, D.C. when it comes to women’s rights and equal access to care. That is why Mark Begich will veto any attempt – whether a broad attack or subtle infringement – to undermine a woman’s right to make her own health care decisions.
- **Require insurers to provide 12 months of birth control:** Mark Begich has spent his entire political career working to ensure all women can make decisions about their reproductive health without coercion. Providing a year’s supply of birth control at a time is a solution that works for women.
- **Provide Clinics for Employees:** The Anchorage School District, Municipality of Anchorage, and even well-known Outside companies like Amazon are experimenting with providing health care services on site to employees as a way to reduce sick days, make it easier to get preventative care, and control costs. The State should incentivize the use of clinics outside of Anchorage for public employees as well as pooling access for private employees. Utilizing these innovative approaches for delivering services to our employees just makes sense, as State employees are the largest consumer group for medical services in Alaska.
- **Explore a Unified Health Care Option for Alaskans With Little to No Coverage:** With our small population and high costs, not to mention a large portion of the State’s population covered by Medicaid, Medicare, Tri-care, and Indian Health Service, we could save money by pooling Alaskans into a single health care option. We should not be afraid to look beyond our current system of delivery to find innovative approaches that produce cost savings.

PROMOTING SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN URBAN AND RURAL ALASKA

Alaska has an unacceptably high rate of sexual assault and domestic violence. Half of all adult Alaska women have experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, or both. These statistics are not acceptable. Our current system for providing services to victims of gender-based violence is insufficient, but simple changes can make a real difference.

- **Provide victims the tools they need to report or leave their abuser when they are ready:** When Begich was mayor, he saw victims of sexual assault and domestic violence had to endure a disjointed maze of reporting and re-reporting to different law enforcement and medical personnel, often re-traumatizing those who have endured the worst. Under Begich's watch, the city changed that system so victims met with a trauma nurse, law enforcement, and an advocate at one location at one time. It is now the gold standard for sexual assault response, has received national awards and recognition, and is a system we can replicate throughout the State so victims know they will be heard and cared for safely when they come forward.

For many women, especially those who live in rural communities, lack reliable access to transportation, or struggle to balance work and family, a monthly trip to the pharmacy can be an insurmountable barrier to using birth control consistently. Consistent use of birth control is the best way to prevent unintended pregnancy, but one in four women say they have missed pills because they could not get the next pack in time.

- **Make sure victims can get justice where they live:** By empowering judicial services within communities and utilizing compacts with the State of Alaska, we can create more opportunities for tribal courts, community courts, and wellness courts to deliver judicial services within our rural communities, reducing the barriers and providing protection for victims.
- **Bolster Public Safety in Rural Alaska:** Crime – including sexual assault and domestic violence - is not only an issue in urban Alaska. Our rural communities need better coordination and support to keep their communities safe. That is why Mark Begich laid out a detailed plan to bolster public safety in rural Alaska as part of his overall Keeping Alaska Families Safe Plan. We need better coordination between Village Police Officers, Village Public Safety Officers, and State of Alaska Public Safety Department to ensure that we have high-quality standards. We also need an Administration that will work with other state agencies and community organizations that can provide comprehensive services to help individuals in need of substance abuse services break the cycle of repeat offending.