

# Mark Begich

## Debra Call

### FOR ALASKA

## EMPOWERING RURAL ALASKA TO SUCCEED AND FLOURISH

As I have said before, for rural Alaska to thrive, we must invest in the foundations of economic success: infrastructure, education, public safety, reliable and safe transportation, job training programs, social services, and affordable energy. We must protect and strengthen subsistence rights and build new education and job opportunities. As Governor, I will continue to be a partner with rural Alaska in my fight to move all Alaska communities forward – and I will personally hold regular meetings with Alaska Native leaders to hear directly from them and discuss how the State can better serve their communities. I will work directly with regional and village corporations, tribes, and local governments to lay out a long-term vision for rural Alaska with true community support. Then, I will fight to ensure that State resources and plans match the needs of that collaborative vision. Too many times, State resources come too late, don't align with community goals, and are only prioritized in times of crisis. If we want to build together, we must plan together. And then the State needs to honor its word.

### PROTECTING AND STRENGTHENING SUBSISTENCE RIGHTS

I have always strongly supported subsistence rights for Alaska Native people, and I have fought to protect them my whole career, on the Anchorage Assembly, as Mayor of Anchorage, and as U.S. Senator. This traditional and customary way of life, practiced for thousands of years, must be sustained for the nutritional, economic, and cultural well-being of Alaska Natives and rural Alaskans. I have been honored and humbled to be invited to fish camps across rural Alaska, and I understand how subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering connects people to their culture and community. I recognize the essential role subsistence plays in the food security of our rural communities, and I have forced the federal government to increase its understanding and acceptance of this traditional way of life. As Governor, I will:

- **Increase tribal involvement in natural resource management:** ensuring access to subsistence resources in rural Alaska is essential. As Governor, I will consult on a government-to-government basis with tribes to make sure there are healthy populations of game in rural Alaska and access is supported, not complicated, by State agencies. And I will make sure that the Native community is represented on boards and commissions related to harvesting animals – Whaling, fish, caribou, moose, and more vital to subsistence.

- **Increase funding for research and monitoring of salmon stocks:** salmon is one of the key subsistence resources in rural Alaska, but too many communities are facing a food crisis because of plummeting fish stocks and fishing restrictions. We know climate change plays a major role in this crisis, and we must better understand and address the causes of these steep declines through research and mitigation measures.
- **Oppose lawsuits that challenge the historic Katie John decision:** one of the most important decisions a governor makes is whether to join in lawsuits when Alaska rights are at stake. Unfortunately, the current administration has sided with those trying to undermine subsistence rights in the *Sturgeon* case – as governor, I will fight against lawsuits that threaten subsistence, not join them.
- **Enhance access to traditional foods:** I will support local residents and community groups striving to provide traditional foods to elders and youth in State facilities, just as I forced the federal government to do with its programs. It's essential these foods can be shared at State facilities to help nourish the souls and stomachs of rural Alaskans.

## BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY GROWTH

For rural Alaska to thrive, we must continue to invest in the foundations of economic success –energy, transportation, water, wastewater, and education infrastructure. We must replace unreliable and unaffordable energy systems that strain communities and family pocketbooks. As Governor, I will:

- **Increase investment in renewable sources of energy:** wind, geothermal, biomass, hydro, and tidal power can allow our rural communities to drastically cut their fuel costs while increasing safety. Investment in these sources must be coupled with adequate training for local residents who must run the facilities – both infrastructure and training have been sorely lacking in too many communities.
- **Move Alaska to 50% renewable by 2025:** I will deliver on Alaska's existing goal of 50% clean energy by 2025. Alaska should strengthen that goal to a renewable portfolio standard just like those that have been implemented by 29 other states. Alaska has been stuck at 22% renewable energy for a decade – we can't accept that. Alaska has the best micro-grid research in the world, and we should be testing technologies here and exporting our expertise to the military, developing countries, and states worried about grid resilience.
- **Champion increased investment in rural broadband and protect net neutrality:** rural Alaska deserves the same access to the 21st century information economy as the rest of the state – it should be up to every Alaskan to choose their own future, not a choice made for them by a lack of opportunity. We need to make sure every community in Alaska has access to affordable, reliable broadband. And as Governor, I will use every tool at my disposal to make sure that we protect net neutrality to have a free and open Internet – because every Alaskan deserves the same access to all the content on the web, not just what corporations want them to see.
- **Secure federal funding for climate change adaptation projects:** I will work closely with the Congressional delegation to secure climate change adaptation funding for village relocation and adaptation, similar to the proposal in the *Low Carbon Economy Act* that Senators Murkowski and Stevens supported to cut climate emissions and bring billions to Alaska for climate adaptation projects.

## SUPPORTING RURAL FAMILIES

Families in rural Alaska face the same challenges as those in urban Alaska but also must deal with high food and energy prices, limited job opportunities, little access to quality child or elder care, and much more. As Governor, I will work with tribal health corporations, non-profit organizations, and tribes to support rural families and seek new, innovative solutions based on rural values. I will support rural families by doing these things:

- **Protect the PFD:** I'm proposing a permanent plan for the Permanent Fund, which will take the Dividend out of the hands of politicians and protect it in our State constitution. My plan would also constitutionally protect a sustainable PFD that many Alaska families depend on to supplement their income and inflation-proof the fund. As part of my "Invest in Alaska" plan, the PFD today would be around \$2,000.
- **Develop rural housing based on traditional construction using creative financing to increase and improve housing stock:** I will have the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation and Alaska Energy Authority work with tribal housing entities and the University of Alaska to continue developing new housing based on traditional construction and examine financing options to make owning a home attainable in rural Alaska.
- **Improve workforce training and opportunities for child and elder care professionals:** major gaps in Alaska child and elder care exist in part due to a lack of affordable training programs and trained professionals. As Governor, I'll make it a priority to increase access to affordable, high-quality training and grow our community of trained caregiver professionals. Providing tuition waivers to individuals committed to providing care in high-need rural areas is one way we can improve access to training and grow our rural provider numbers. Using the dental health aide program as a model, I will forge new partnerships between Alaska Native organizations and the University of Alaska to train child and elder care professionals to work in rural Alaska.
- **Provide safe places for children to play and learn outside of school hours:** a common problem in many villages and rural communities is a lack of public facilities for children to play, hang out, or engage in extracurricular activities when school is out. My administration will work with communities and school boards to make sure that gyms or other facilities are open on nights and weekends so kids have a safe place to be and to avoid risky or destructive behavior.

## BUILDING A THRIVING ECONOMY BASED ON RURAL VALUES

Rural Alaska has always faced steep challenges to developing thriving local economies. As Governor, I will protect cornerstone programs to support rural economies, like revenue sharing and Power Cost Equalization. But, as a state, we must realize current efforts are not enough. We must invest in programs supporting Native-owned businesses, tribal entrepreneur development initiatives, and local hire for State-funded construction projects. We also need to expand workforce training in rural hubs to develop work skills, beginning as early as middle school. I will:

- **Protect State revenue sharing programs:** based on the fundamental belief that our resource wealth should be shared by all Alaskans, I will fight to protect State revenue sharing with Alaska communities, especially rural Alaska communities with limited alternative revenue sources. This includes protecting the Power Cost Equalization program to help communities and families lower their energy costs.
- **Expand workforce training:** we need to start workforce training programs earlier in students' school careers and connect rural schools to university and urban training programs. This will require more tele-learning technology and instructors to bring trainers into the classroom. Alaska has great trainers in the public and private sectors, and we can and must provide access to these opportunities for rural Alaska students.
- **Support rural small business:** as US Senator, I was a strong defender of the federal 8(a) contracting program for Alaska Native small businesses. As governor, I will explore creating a similar preference for State contracts to make sure our Alaska Native and rural small businesses have the opportunity to do the important work our state needs.
- **Continue State-Tribal compacts:** as Governor, I will continue the important compacts we have with tribal governments around the state and explore additional opportunities where we can utilize these agreements to more effectively deliver necessary services to the most remote parts of Alaska.
- **Engage the University System to identify and create opportunities for success in rural communities:** rural Alaska students have educational and training needs that are different from larger communities – and they have their own unique opportunities to take advantage of, if they have the right training and education. As Governor, I will engage our State university system and work directly with rural communities to better coordinate education and training offerings to meet the needs of our young people living in rural Alaska.
- **Break down barriers preventing Alaska tribes from taking land into trust:** during my time in the Senate, I was proud that after constant pressure, the Obama Administration removed key barriers preventing Alaska tribes from taking land into trust. Empowering tribes to take land into trust gives tribal communities the control they need to protect and care for their communities – including providing adequate public safety. As Governor, I will use the full strength of my administration to take on the federal government and make sure they understand what is in the best interest of our communities— no matter how small or far from Washington, D.C. they may be.
- **Access Coastal Impact Assistance for rural boroughs:** As Alaska's Arctic continues to see energy development, I will direct the Commissioner of Commerce to work with rural mayors to secure federal funding from the offshore oil and gas impact aid program.

## FULLY SUPPORTING LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY

My Administration will work with local and tribal governments to determine better ways to deliver high-quality public safety services. Right now, we are failing as a state to provide adequate public safety – Alaska is #1 in crime nationwide, with a rate of violence against women nearly three times the national average. That's unconscionable. We need better coordination between Village Police, Village Public

Safety Officers, and the State of Alaska Public Safety Department to ensure that we have high standards, seamless information-sharing, and strong law enforcement practices across communities. 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 and mental health services to break the cycle of addiction and crime. And my Administration will be absolutely committed to reversing the damaging cuts to our Troopers made by the current administration. As Governor, I will:

- **Ensure that Village Police Officers and Village Public Safety Officers have critical training and workforce development resources:** This includes best-available training resources and techniques, with a high-quality professional standard to make sure these officers have the skills and tools to properly enforce our laws and keep communities safe. As governor, I will begin an exchange program as part of training that gives Village Police Officers and Village Public Safety Officers direct interaction with local police officers and State Troopers in urban and suburban settings. The program will also require officers from cities to travel to rural Alaska to observe first-hand how public safety operates in rural communities. By fostering integration between urban and rural law enforcement, each group can learn about the challenges faced by their counterparts and adapt their own techniques based on what they learn.
- **Provide Village Police Officers and Village Public Safety Officers adequate wages and benefits:** As Governor, I will work to make sure Village Police Officers and Village Public Safety Officers receive a livable wage and benefits that allow individuals to view these jobs as long-term careers that can support their families, rather than just short-term jobs on the way to other opportunities. It's also important that we have continuity with Village Public Safety Officers so that community members known to be dealing with mental illness or substance abuse can be treated properly – if there isn't good communication or continuity between officers, warning signs can be missed and situations escalate unnecessarily.
- **Develop programs with the University to grow our own public safety workforce:** One of the major obstacles in recruiting a public safety workforce that reflects the communities it serves is a lack of outreach and education. Working through the University system, my administration will create a program that connects directly with our young people and helps them become Village Police Officers and Village Public Safety Officers throughout Alaska. Public safety positions must be promoted and marketed to show young people in rural Alaska that these are careers that are both open to them and achievable through hard work.
- **Fill rural law enforcement attorney positions:** Too many rural boroughs have unfilled district attorney positions or their district attorneys live in urban Alaska – that is no way to run an effective and accountable public safety system. When officers apprehend suspected criminals, the rest of the legal system needs to act swiftly to make sure innocent suspects are cleared and culpable individuals are held and put on trial. My administration will dedicate the funding necessary to attract and retain appropriately-skilled attorneys to serve as rural district attorneys.
- **Utilize tribal compacts to empower judicial services within communities:** By utilizing compacts between tribes and the State, my administration will create more opportunities for tribal courts, community courts, and wellness courts to be used to deliver effective judicial services within our rural communities.

## EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT EVERY LEVEL

For Alaska Native and rural students to excel, I know they need high-quality, culturally-relevant education. Learning traditional languages and incorporating Native ways of knowing are vital to well-rounded learning. Tribes and rural schools need the resources and flexibility to be innovative in how they teach their students, not be stifled by one-size-fits-all mandates. Rural economies need skilled workers, and with a rejuvenated education system, Alaska students can become that workforce to strengthen our communities and create more home-grown jobs. To be very clear: I could not more strongly reject the proposal by one of my opponents to close rural schools and hand vouchers to rural families. As Governor, I will:

- **Promote local innovation in educational achievement:** parents, teachers, and administrators at the local level have the best information to make choices for our kids. My administration will use State resources to promote local innovation through grants for communities that improve early learning outcomes, support college access and success, and increase family and community engagement to improve student outcomes.
- **Prioritize universal Pre-K:** 90% of brain development happens by age five, which means those years are the most important time to invest in a child's education. For every \$1 we invest in high quality early childhood education, the State saves \$7 in reduced public services, increased economic activity, and spending less on the criminal justice system. Access to high quality, affordable early childhood education is essential to raising the next generation of great Alaskans.
- **Create new incentives to attract and retain high quality rural teachers:** I will look at the pay scale and retirement plan for rural teachers to create new incentives to support teachers who want to start, stay, and finish their teaching careers in rural Alaska. Incentives such as supported housing, accelerated retirement accrual, and bonus pay should all be examined. I will also work with local communities and school districts to create incentives to attract teachers that speak a Native language or are local residents.
- **Engage in new efforts to preserve Native languages in schools:** as experts have clearly demonstrated, many of our Native languages are at risk of going extinct in the coming decades unless we intervene with a real plan and resources to preserve them. My administration will partner with Native corporations, tribal organizations, and language experts to bring and preserve Native languages in our public schools.
- **Provide training and mentorship to rural school administrators:** too often, the importance of school leadership is overlooked when considering strategies to increase educational performance. My administration will partner with the university system to bring rural school principals and administrators cutting-edge training and professional development that will allow them to make sure their schools are utilizing the most current techniques and strategies to help Alaska students reach their full potential.

## SUPPORTING RURAL VETERANS AND GUARD MEMBERS

Our Alaska Native and rural veterans and National Guard members have unique needs that aren't being met under current policy. Rural active duty and retired Guard members deserve public thanks and recognition for their service to our state and country. To utilize the medical care they have earned by providing brave service, these individuals often have to travel hundreds of miles to see a doctor or specialist – we need to improve access. Rural veterans returning home need specialized education and training to transition back to the civilian workforce, and we owe it to them to provide them the resources they need for a successful transition. We can better deliver the services and resources our Guard and veterans need, while utilizing their top-notch skills to move rural Alaska forward. As Governor, I will:

- **Recognize rural guard members' service:** As it stands, active duty and retired Guard members do not receive the public recognition and thanks they deserve for the dedicated service they provide. As Governor, I'll be a tireless voice in recognizing their service and backing it up with a firm State commitment to providing them increased pay and benefits to honor their commitment.
- **Ensure rural active duty and retired Guard members have access to health care:** Right now, rural active duty and retired Guard members have to travel hundreds of miles to utilize the health care they have earned, effectively putting important treatment out of reach for far too many. As Governor, I will utilize new approaches to improve the delivery of important health care, including telehealth and traveling physicians.
- **Expand educational opportunities for rural veterans:** The transition from active duty to the civilian economy can be very challenging, particularly for rural veterans who may not have access to industries that provide a smoother translation of military skills. While the federal government provides GI bill educational benefits, rural veterans too often cannot take advantage of them due to distance. As governor, my administration will work closely with the university system, unions, workforce development organizations, and non-profits to provide rural veterans the training and education they have earned and need to successfully transition to the civilian workforce.
- **Train Guard members to support village relocation and resiliency:** We have a huge untapped resource with respect to our rural Guard members, who have exceptional skill in executing difficult logistical plans. Alaska is on the front lines of climate change, with villages bearing the brunt of the impacts of erosion, thawing permafrost, and drastic weather changes. We have villages that must be relocated to avoid falling into the sea or being swept away by rivers, and many projects and retrofits to village buildings are needed to make them more resilient to the changing climate. As governor, I will explore new ways to utilize Guard members' skills in meeting these challenges.