2017 Party Platform

Energy – Education – Alaska Values

MOVING ALASKA FORWARD

The Alaska Democratic Party moves our state forward by working for the best interests of all Alaskans. We are committed to diversity, fairness, hard work, integrity, transparency, and personal responsibility. We strive for healthy families and communities, economic opportunity, prosperity, and environmental protection. We honor good citizenship and patriotism. We believe the essence of Alaska’s democracy is active participation in fair elections and we encourage every eligible Alaskan to vote. We nominate, elect and support Alaskans who are committed to serve the public interest. Valuing diversity and individualism, we stand united as Alaska Democrats.

We believe that good government is essential to the achievement of our joint and individual goals. We strive to make Alaska’s government a worthy beacon to all: a compassionate efficiently-run institution that serves the health and well-being of all its citizens. We are committed to social justice and equal rights for all people and future generations.

Our Alaska spirit and cultural identity makes us uniquely suited to be leaders in innovation in technology, energy, education, health care delivery, climate change mitigation, addiction treatment, responsive government, and the protection of human rights. We call on all Alaskans to work together on a strategy for a sustainable, prosperous future for all.

BUILDING ALASKA’S DEMOCRACY

Constitutional Rights. We support all the rights guaranteed in the United States and Alaska Constitutions, regardless of ethnicity, creed, color, religious denomination, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression.

We believe that:
Corporations are not people.
The bill of rights was never intended to serve corporations.
**Voting Process.** We support a voting process that facilitates the greatest amount of participation from all Alaska voters while remaining transparent in its organization and verifiable and accountable to all of its citizens. We support counting all ballots, including military, absentee, and early. We support automatic voter registration, and open primaries, for all elections. We propose forming an *Election Task Force* to identify best practice election policies and to offer accurate and new forms of education of the voting process.

**Voting Rights.** We must restore the full protections of the Voting Rights Act, to ensure nationwide that all elections to federal and state offices are conducted uniformly and in a manner than ensures that no one who is of legal voting age is disenfranchised from voting or is prevented from voting expeditiously. We are united as a nation, so unfairness anywhere impairs the function of our whole system of representation and democracy.

**Ballots.** We advocate the continued use of paper ballots that are hand-marked by marks or punch holes. Electronic means of casting and counting votes are susceptible to hacking that could introduce undetectable errors. Optical scanners and electronic voting machines, as used in Alaska, are vulnerable. Vigilance is required to prevent manipulation of our elections, which are fundamental to democratic, fair government.

**Redistricting.** We oppose the partisan gerrymandering of Alaska’s legislative districts as happened in 2011-2012, causing the map to be twice struck down by the courts as unconstitutional. We support an open, independent, transparent redistricting process with meaningful public participation.

**Campaign Finance Reform.** The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* has a disastrous effect on funding political campaigns for elected office. *Citizens United* opens the floodgates to unlimited, unregulated funding of super PACs, creates the need to counter such funds with other large donations, has driven the cost of political campaigns to astronomical and unacceptable levels, and thereby undermines the integrity of our democracy.

We insist on achieving a system of fair, publicly financed political campaigns. We support requiring regular primetime public debates between all qualified candidates. Publicly-funded media time should be equally distributed between all qualifying candidates and should substantially replace the current, mostly privately financed campaign system which seems to undermine our democracy. We support efforts to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United*, included but not limited to supporting appropriate nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Equality.** We are committed to the protection of civil and equal rights for all people, regardless of ethnicity, creed, color, religious denomination, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, and the continued efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination. We are committed to equal pay for equal work, with specific recognition of the importance of equal pay for women, minorities, people with disabilities, and youth. We recognize the importance of
social equity which includes quality housing, safe neighborhoods, good schools, quality childcare, access to equal opportunities for employment, and affordable public transportation. We are committed to taking affirmative actions to support a good quality of life for all communities, both urban and rural.

**Privacy.** We support Alaskans’ rights to privacy, confidentiality, and freedom of choice, including religion, reproduction, medical care, and life partners.

**Natural Resources.** Alaskans should be able to influence decisions on the use and development of our natural resources, and therefore Alaskans are entitled to reasonable and easy access to relevant information in a timely manner. The Alaska Constitution requires that the state manage our natural resources for the maximum benefit of the people, and on a sustainable basis. We also recognize the value of consumptive and non-consumptive use of resources as a benefit to the Alaska economy.

**BUILDING AND MAINTAINING ALASKA’S ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES**

**State Fiscal Policy.** Alaska must have a comprehensive, long-term fiscal plan that provides for essential government services and infrastructure, includes community revenue sharing, and protects the Alaska Permanent Fund and its dividends. We support multi-faceted measures to address our current fiscal crisis, including suspending payment of oil tax credits, and the exploration of new, non-regressive sources of revenue.

**Education.** Alaskans deserve a world-class education system in which every student is engaged and supported to reach his or her full potential. We support comprehensive and equitable public education from early childhood through college and career programs, and a strong higher education system. We recognize that education produces strong returns on investment. In addition, we believe higher education and the pursuit of knowledge are goods in themselves.

We are committed to a consistent allocation of funding to education, including support to small and remote community schools. We support K-12 liberal arts education, including mathematics, science, music, arts, technology and computer science, accurate Alaska Native, American and world history, social studies that includes world religions and belief systems, civics, literature, languages, nutrition, cultivating and harvesting of food, exercise, and age appropriate information about the human body, self-care and sexual health. In addition, we support trauma-informed practices in all levels of education and workforce development. We support weapons-free learning facilities.

We advocate mandatory programs designed to teach children K-we in public schools, that a person’s body, including their own, is theirs and theirs alone. We also advocate for similar programs designed to teach older children the concept of consent and that rape is wrong.
Higher Education. Higher education is a cornerstone to building a diverse economy and it offers vast opportunities to citizens of Alaska. We support fully funding the University of Alaska system to ensure that it will continue to provide a broad menu of educational opportunities to Alaska students, and provide significant research that serves Alaska and our nation. We support publicly funded higher education that is free or affordable for students.

Online Learning. We support expansion of high quality online distance learning education programs, both state and non-profit learning institutions, and the development of a high bandwidth statewide Internet communications infrastructure to support distance learning, because distance learning offers flexible learning environments that allow people at all stages of their lives and careers to more easily continue their education and update their knowledge and skills. Life-long learning should be our shared cultural mantra.

Jobs. Our economy depends on the development of a ready and well-trained Alaska workforce. Alaska jobs should be filled by Alaskans. We are committed to full employment. A $15.00/hour minimum wage with the goal of a living wage, equal employment opportunity, and a safe, healthy, harassment-free workplace.

Investment in Sustainable Industries. Alaska cannot afford to invest preferentially in extractive, boom-and-bust industries. Investing in new, developing and sustainable industries must be a priority for the legislature and governor. Wise choices must be made to ensure Alaska’s fate is not tied to the price of oil.

Environment. Alaska’s quality of life and robust economy depend on our natural environment, clean air, and clean water. It is critical that we eliminate or minimize pollution through green technologies and infrastructure, energy efficiency, waste reduction, recycling, and proper management, cleanup of hazardous, solid waste and strict enforcement and aggressive enforcement of environmental laws. Use of verifiable scientific research and traditional knowledge is essential to ensure environmental protection and appropriate responses to climate change and ocean acidification. The First Nations of Alaska have a unique perspective on both our environment and our economy. We support open spaces, trails, and recreational opportunities.

Alaska’s world-class ecosystems and incredible natural resources sustain our families, communities, and cultures. We support clean air, clean water, and protecting sensitive lands and natural resources that support our unique quality of life including subsistence, recreation and tourism for current and future generations. We support balanced, rigorous public participation in activities that impact Alaska’s environment. We support the protection of Bristol Bay watersheds with vibrant input from the people of the region, and oppose the proposed Pebble mine given the danger it poses to the world’s greatest wild salmon fishery. We support responsible oil development performed in a manner that protects our fish, game and wildlife resources.
Climate Change. Climate change and ocean acidification are emergencies of the highest order that require immediate, substantial mitigating choices and actions by all levels of government, from international to local. Climate change and ocean acidification, as experienced in the present era, are largely human caused, and require human solutions.

We support international cooperation that acts effectively on the climate change emergency. We endorse the U.S. Senate ratifying *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*. We support the position that the State of Alaska must accept, respect and be advised by the evolving best available science (and scientists who produced it) on the realities of climate change. The State of Alaska must make research, mitigation, and adaptation to climate change a top priority when allocating resources to our universities and government agencies. Human caused climate change poses an imminent danger to our planet and civilization that demands immediate action on many fronts. We must look to science and the precautionary principle in setting policy priorities and objectives.

We call for reinstatement of Alaska’s *Climate Change Sub-Cabinet and Advisory Groups*. We support the ongoing climate related work of Alaska’s universities and government institutions including the *Governor’s Task Force on Arctic Policy and Climate Change* (and its recommendations), the *Cold Climate Housing Research Center*, the *Institute of Social and Economic Research*, and State of Alaska and Federal government collaborations in their respective Arctic programs.

Fisheries. The founders of the State of Alaska recognized the importance of protecting and maintaining our fisheries. We support state statutes, regulations and land use plans that do so proactively and federal efforts to do so, including by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to establish science-based restrictions on discharges of dredged or fill material associated with a potential mine at the Pebble deposit in the Bristol Bay drainages. We urge that the national platform of the Democratic Party continues to support the EPA’s efforts and to provide likewise that such restrictions must apply to all potential mines at metallic sulfide deposits in the Bristol Bay drainages. Governor Hammond and Senators Stevens and Gravel anticipated this kind of issue when they and the State proposed and successfully urged Congress to establish cooperative, federal-state planning for the Bristol Cooperative Bay Region enacted by the Alaska National Interest Land Conversation Act. If the EPA’s restrictions render development of mining claims at such deposits economically impractical to develop, then we urge the state to challenge the validity of the claims, and we urge the state and federal governments to use their cooperative planning authority to facilitate state legislation that closes state lands in the Kvichak and Nushagak river drainages to new mining claims so that federal funds can spent to purchase existing claims, or mineral rights, at such deposits at a reasonable portion of invested value.

To maintain our fisheries, we need to be conservative, to protect habitat of wild salmon stocks and other fish important for commercial, subsistence and sport uses, and protect against overharvest. We recognize that pollution, riparian development, timber harvest, mining, dams, overharvest, hatcheries, invasive species, dewatering and other matters can harm fish and fisheries. We recognize that our ability to restore lost habitat and lost generic populations is
extremely limited and often extremely expensive. We urge state agencies to model policies upon the requirement that fish stocks “shall be managed consistent sustained yield of wild fish stocks” (AS 16.05.730), and upon the Sustainable Salmon Management Policy of the Alaska Board of Fisheries, which addresses these concerns. Due to such concerns, we do not support the Chuitna Coal Project because it would destroy approximately twelve miles of salmon streams; we support a ban on farmed salmon; and we believe that any project which threatens wild fish important for commercial, subsistence or sport uses should be weighed against the policies we urge above.

Food Security. We believe that access to healthy food and clean water is a basic human right and no Alaskan should go hungry or thirsty. Food security is a fundamental tie between the grower, consumer and the individuals who live off the natural bounty of the oceans, lakes, streams and land. We support subsistence gathering and harvesting, especially for those who live in rural and indigenous communities. We support subsistence values, including health and well-being through the gathering and harvesting of the animals that provide their lives to keep Alaskans nourished. We advocate for the mandatory labeling of GMO foods and products, and that extensive research should be undertaken regarding the safety of these of these products by unbiased parties.

Energy Policy. Alaska must lead in the development of environmentally responsible energy technologies, efficient use of Alaska’s conventional and renewable energy resources, and enhanced energy efficiency and conservation. Alaskans deserve access to affordable, sustainable energy. We urge policy makers to look for ways to reduce the high cost of energy.

Conventional Energy. We appreciate the oil and gas industry for its historic and continuing contributions to Alaska’s economy. We support the monetizing of Alaska’s North Slope natural gas resources in a safe and environmentally responsible manner as soon as it is feasible to do so. Offshore drilling in the Arctic should take place only when there is demonstrated capability to clean up oil in broken ice, and when research and science prove it can be conducted without adversely impacting water resources, air quality, ecosystems, sensitive species and public health. With respect to fracking, we support a priority for domestic and agricultural uses of water, and when faced with scientific uncertainty, we urge resource agencies to use the “precautionary principle”, to error on the side of risking no harm, when dealing with conflicts. We support research into the impacts of fracking on ground and surface water.

Renewable Energy. We support:

Research and development of renewable energy technologies for which Alaska is particularly well suited to develop, including wave and tidal power and geothermal energy.

Cold climate housing research that results in practical application, particularly in regard to future construction and design in Alaska.
A tax credit structure to benefit environmentally sound small energy companies particularly in communities and villages off the road system.

Solar and passive energy in new construction.

Smart grids.

Requiring fair market compensation of home owners and businesses who produce and contribute renewable-energy-based energy to the electric grid.

Requiring environmentally sound operational standards for business in Alaska. We support strengthening civil and criminal penalties for businesses and individuals, including CEOs and other officers of businesses which violate regulations. We call for immediate creation of a roadmap for the development and implementation of renewable energy technologies and programs, to move Alaska toward an efficient, renewable-energy-based economy as rapidly and cost effectively as possible.

**Recycling.** We support state-wide planning for waste management, marine debris management, recycling, and outreach. This planning should include landfills providing a plan for waste reduction and recycling. Local recycling can be supported through incorporation of recycled products in design requirements, material specifications, and purchasing preference.

**Transportation and Infrastructure.** Transportation is the movement of people and goods. Alaskan communities must have access to all modes of transportation that pertain in their location: surface (highways, streets, board roads, ice roads, trails, and public); water (waterways, boats, ships, harbors, and docks); and air (aviation controllers, airstrips, taxiways, aprons, terminals, shelters, and maintenance facilities). Remote Alaska communities have unique transportation needs and must be included in statewide and national planning and investment. Transportation systems must be funded adequately and designed and constructed to ensure that they are safe, environmentally responsible, and adaptive to climate change and population growth. They must address communities’ needs for convenient, accessible and affordable public transportation, and promote health lifestyles. They must be maintained and managed to ensure a long life. We support expansion of public transportation including Alaska’s marine highway to include more coastal and river community access, commuter rail and Alaska’s rail system.

Infrastructure is all the built structures and systems needed for the sustainable operation of urban and rural communities. These include transportation, drinking water, sewage and septic systems, waste handling facilities, telephone, Internet, energy production and transmission, and public buildings such as schools, city and tribal offices, community centers, libraries, public safety facilities and public works facilities. We must maintain and modernize Alaska’s infrastructure to promote economic development and ensure that our facilities are environmentally sound, energy efficient, sustainable, and adaptive to change and technological opportunities.
Health and Social Services. Comprehensive, affordable, quality health care is a fundamental human right. This includes preventative care, mental and reproductive health services, and substance abuse and addiction care.

Alaska’s fiscal health is dependent upon the health of its people and their access to affordable health care. We support:

- Medicaid expansion and reform,
- Development and implementation of a single payer system to reduce and control costs,
- Community health centers,
- Public health services,
- Safe, affordable, long term care, and
- Holistic healthcare that considers and treats the entirety of a patient’s condition and lifestyle and includes the consideration and use of licensed non-traditional healthcare including integrated medicine, chiropractic, naturopathic and acupuncture care.

We also support confidential, unrestricted access to culturally sensitive health care. This encompasses the full range of reproductive health services including contraception and abortion without requiring guardian, judicial, parental or spousal consent or notification.

We recognize the relationship between childhood trauma and lifelong health and behavior consequences, which result in human suffering and economic costs. We recommend that the State adopt evidence-based and trauma-informed policies, integrating them into programs and systems as a public health priority.

Alaska’s Seniors. Alaska’s seniors are vital to Alaska’s health. We support programs, which allow seniors to thrive in the state to which their contributions have provided so much to Alaska’s growth.

Alaska’s Military and Veterans. Alaska’s active duty military personnel and veterans are to be recognized and commended for their sacrifice, and should be provided with access to highest quality medical and psychological services in regional facilities. Reservist and National Guard members and families have the right to appreciation, support, services, protection of civilian jobs while deployed, and reasonable and compassionate consideration in regard to multiple deployments. We support research and grassroots community discussion of contingency plans in the event of military base closures. We support a smart, predictable defense budget that meets the strategic challenges we face.

Alaska’s First Responders. First responders should be provided access to the highest quality medical and psychological services for injuries sustained while engaging in first responder activities. We support legislation to protect volunteer first responder civilian jobs while engaging in first responder activities. We support continuing health care benefits for the spouses of first responders who die in the line of duty.
Justice. Alaskans must be secure against crime. We advocate restorative justice and efforts to reduce recidivism. Victims have the right to seek restitution, including punitive damages and expungement of criminal records where appropriate. Victims also have the right to participate in the criminal justice process. Sentences should be fair, just, and prioritize rehabilitation.

We are committed to a system of corrections in Alaska that publicly funded, owned, and operated. We believe that all Alaskans benefit when jails and prisons are non-profit. We support basic human dignity for all incarcerated individuals and value re-entry programs which increase an individual’s abilities to become a productive and successful member of society, rather than return to incarceration.

Sex Crimes. Victims of crimes, particularly abuse and rape, should be heard and not shamed. The effort to enforce sex trafficking laws, for example, should recognize sex workers as victims, not criminals, when they report violence to law enforcement; and the focus should be on investigating and prosecuting those who manipulate and take advantage of vulnerable Alaskans. In the interest of successful prosecution of sex crimes and protection of future victims, we support legislation that mandates the processing of the substantial backlog of rape kits (estimated 8,300 in 2016), as well as mandating future processing of rape kits in a timely manner.

Civil and Human Rights and Social Justice. We insist upon a criminal justice system that is informed about trauma and emphasizes treatment for all offenders, especially those with behavioral issues. We insist that offenders have access to and a choice in taking research and science based, alternative health treatments and medications in lieu of a prescription. We also feel that inmates should have the option to refuse medications prescribed to them unless ordered by the court.

We affirm the criminal prosecution of persons employed by state regulatory agencies who falsify or undermine the regulatory inspection process. Officers of the state who withhold exculpatory evidence from opposing counsel would be guilty of a class “C” felony.

Zero tolerance and so-called tough-on-crime policies often incarcerate individuals who could be rehabilitated without the need for actual jail time. Instead of a sentence that reflects the crime, many times these policies put individuals behind bars. The way to be truly tough on crime is to adopt evidence based policies to reform the criminal justice system to ensure a responsible issuance of justice that reduces the risk of re-offending.

Disenfranchisement of U.S. Citizens Serving Time in Prison. We believe that citizens who are incarcerated should have the right to vote, if for no other reason that they are subject to taxes. We support legislation that would remove current bars to voting and we encourage the participation of everyone in political and electoral processes.

Criminal Justice Reform. We believe that when individuals have served their sentences, they have paid their debts to society and should be free from arbitrary discrimination. For those arrested of misdemeanors and some non-violent felonies, we believe that bail schedules should
not be so onerous as to coerce guilty pleas from defendants who do not have the ability to pay, and we believe that fines should be appropriate to the offense, and that alternative sentencing, such as public service, should be available as an alternative to paying a fine or court fee related to misdemeanors when such alternatives are appropriate to the offense. In addition, tagging on additional court fees for collection of debt or applying interest to unpaid fines should be allowable. We support the development and implementation of effective job re-entry programs for criminals who have served their sentences.

**Rural Communities.** We encourage increased cooperation between the state and tribal governments in the delivery of justice to our rural communities. We also feel that incarcerated individuals from rural villages should serve their sentences as close as possible to their communities.

**Subsistence.** Subsistence activities are vital to the survival of rural Alaskans and indigenous cultures. We support an Alaska constitutional amendment to guarantee subsistence activities of rural Alaskans, and policies that protect and preserve the culture of Alaska’s indigenous peoples.

**Rural Life.** We respect and support all rural Alaska communities, including their traditional cultural ways of life for current and future generations. We support access to equitable education, communications, clean water, sewer, power, public safety and health services. We support state recognition of Alaska Native tribal governments and the continued cooperation between state and tribal courts. We support continued development of healthy, vibrant rural communities through the creation of economic opportunity that balances with the subsistence-based economy. Alaska Native villages are among those most hard hit by fossil fuel use and climate change in Alaska. These communities should be empowered with the financial, technical, legal and educational resources they need to restore, adapt, monitor and protect their communities, and the ecosystems they rely upon, now and into the future.

**Labor.** We strongly support the right of every Alaskan to choose to join and/or organize a union, to negotiate and ratify contracts in good faith and to participate in union activities without fear or reprisal. Negotiated contracts must be honored and enforced free of discrimination. We support equal pay for equal work and a $15.00 per hour minimum wage. We support the labor movement and every Alaskan’s right to strike. Workers in extractive industries value a livable environment. Alaska Democrats want this to be a state in which people can work and feed their families and themselves.

**Housing.** The state and its communities need to find ways to make housing affordable, including senior retirement housing. We are committed to working to end homelessness in Alaska.

**Business.** The development and growth of Alaskan-owned businesses, cooperatives and industries are essential to our economy. We support responsible development of our natural and human resources. We promote instate value-added processing of resources with revenue reinvested in Alaska.
We support new state and federal policy to make small business grants truly available, because current processes are overly complex and the acceptance guidelines are narrow. This support for small businesses is crucial because Alaska needs to move away from boom-bust business models that deplete local resources until businesses fail for lack of resources. Alaska needs business models that restore as they create.

We promote Alaska Grown, manufactured in Alaska, and products sold in Alaska as well as outside markets. We should cut red tape around testing and retail sales of marijuana. Industrial hemp needs to be legally separated from marijuana as it can provide a diverse, small and big business manufacturing base of Alaska grown and Alaska made products. We need realistic ways to expand Alaskan farming, indoor farming and Alaska summer crops.

**Firearms.** We support the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which guarantees the right of the people to keep and bear arms. We support responsible gun ownership, and policies and programs to reduce gun violence and accidental gun deaths. This policy should include completed background checks for all gun sales, and education on hunting and weapons safety. We support a rational and safe policy for gun free zones. We support legislative action that would ban the sale to the general public of military assault-style weapons. We support legislation that requires the CDC to collect data on gun related injuries and fatalities. We also support government funded research into gun safety.

**BUILDING ALASKA’S LEADERSHIP**

**Accountable Leadership.** We insist on open, honest, transparent and accountable public officials in the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and local government. We are committed to a vigilant effort to expose corruption wherever it exists. We hold our public servants to the highest standard of integrity and accountability in all levels of government. We must require that they serve only the public interest, and govern in an open, transparent, inclusive and respectful way. Our leaders must promote public participation and easy access to government proceedings.

**Conflict of Interest.** We support legislation that requires elected officials to declare a conflict of interest and recuse themselves from voting on legislation appropriating cash, resources, or competitive advantages, to themselves, their family, their employers, or their business partners. We support legislative rules for the Alaska Senate and House requiring that any request of legislators to recuse themselves and any objection, including the name of the legislator raising an objection, be a part of the permanent record.

**International Relations.** We support diplomacy to advance international peace and economic prosperity, backed at all times by a strong national defense capability. We support multinational efforts to stop genocide, eliminate hunger, control disease, protect human rights, support collective bargaining for living wages and benefits, protect the environment, address climate change, and promote justice, prosperity and peace in the world. We are committed to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.
Tribal Sovereignty. Alaska Democrats embrace and support the rights of tribal governments and indigenous Alaskans.

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