

Alaska Municipal League Survey Questions
(150–200 words per response)

What’s important to you? Please describe your views on local control, unfunded mandates and the obligation to maximize local self-government?

Before I was elected to the State Senate, I served on the school board for the Mat-Su Borough, including two years as President. I understand the importance of keeping decision-making as close as possible to the people who are being served. I believe local control promotes greater accountability from government officials, and greater efficiency. Unfunded mandates essentially function as hidden taxes, whether those mandates come from the federal, state, or local level. As a career educator, I had a front-row seat to witness how excessive government regulations and mandates increased the costs of administering our schools and diverted the attention of teachers away from actual classroom instruction to filling out small mountains of paperwork. My general political philosophy is to reduce the footprint of state government, and certainly dealing with unfunded mandates is one crucial component of that objective.

What measures would you take to fully fund the (Alaska Permanent Fund) dividend, if any?

I have long maintained that the Permanent Fund Dividend program is one component of state government that has worked well over the years. We should have left it alone. It was never broken, and it therefore didn’t need “fixing.” Governor Walker needlessly squandered the trust of the Alaskan people when he vetoed \$666 million from the PFD. These dividends were scheduled to be paid to Alaskans under a statutory formula that has worked well for decades. I am the only candidate for Governor that supports maintaining the traditional, 50/50 allocation of Permanent Fund earnings, with 50 percent used for dividends, and the other 50 percent available if needed for public services.

No candidate for governor has filed more legislation to restore and protect the PFD. I sponsored SB 1 in 2017, which called for restoring to Alaskans the amount of the dividend that was vetoed by the Governor. With a value in excess of \$65 billion, the Alaska Permanent Fund is an unqualified success story. The state’s budget woes were not created by the Permanent Fund dividend program, and I believe the PFD is essential to protect the fund for future generations of Alaskans.

Rank the following AML priorities: PERS reform; K-12 and University education funding; fiscal policy; capital infrastructure projects.

State government must keep its word and meet its obligations, whether we’re talking about tax credits that were promised to oil companies, PFDs that were promised to Alaskans, retirement benefits that were promised under the PERS program, or funding for education that is necessary to meet our constitutional responsibility.

A sound fiscal policy is obviously the key to achieving these goals. We must attain sufficient revenues to meet our obligations. My priority as Governor will be the development of our vast lands and natural resources. This holds the key not only for attaining state revenue goals, but also for providing a healthy tax base for local governments. There is no way to escape the reality that we must generate new wealth in Alaska. Otherwise, some of the taxation proposals amount to nothing more than competing schemes for slicing up an ever-smaller pie. We take money from one group of Alaskans and give it to another group and label it a “fiscal plan.” Growing the size of the pie is crucial to avoid this stalemate. Local

governments should be enthusiastic partners with the state on efforts to develop our natural resources to generate new wealth.

What would you do to ensure stable, sustainable revenue sharing, if anything?

Our ability to have a viable revenue sharing program is dependent on our success in developing our natural resources and increasing the revenue stream to the state. That is where my focus will be as Governor. I will actively look for opportunities to partner with local governments on projects to develop our natural resources and create new wealth.

Do you support the Alaska Gas pipeline and AKLNG project, and if not, what would change your mind?

I have never met an Alaskan who doesn't want to monetize our vast natural gas resources. The potential benefits in terms of new jobs and new revenues are the obvious upsides. However, I think there are far too many serious, unanswered questions about Governor Walker's approach on the Alaska LNG project to give it an endorsement. The difference between a pipeline project and a "pipe dream" comes down to one word: economics. Who is going to pay the \$44 billion cost for this project? What are the financial risks to the state? What are the risks of having a major share of the funding come from government-controlled companies in China, a geopolitical rival of the United States? Why did Alaska's major oil producing companies walk away from this project in 2016, and what could be done to bring them back to the table? Does the state have the in-house expertise to be managing one of the largest energy projects in world history?

Ultimately, I believe the private sector must play a more significant role, preferably a majority role, to ensure we have an economically viable project.

Speed round – short answers

Do you support Ballot Measure One, and why or why not?

I will vote NO on Ballot Measure 1. It would create new barriers to community development that municipalities, towns, and boroughs should find unacceptable. When the State DOT testifies that Ballot Measure 1 would make it harder and more expensive to make safety improvements to our roads and highways, that is a bridge too far. Furthermore, the ballot measure won't actually do anything to improve fish habitat—it just layers on burdensome regulations. I won't dance around this issue: these factors, combined with the threat to resource development, make me a clear, unequivocal NO vote on Ballot Measure 1.

Would you support increased funding for fisheries research?

We need to manage our fisheries based on sound science, and I am committed to providing the resources necessary to support excellent management.

Do you support continued and/or increasing funding of the Alaska Marine Highway System?

The Marine Highway System, along with air travel, is a crucial transportation system for Southeast and coastal Alaska. It needs to be funded and well-maintained. Just like other components of state government, we always need to be looking for ways to make AMHS operate more efficiently and

effectively. But there is no question that AMHS is essential for the economies of the communities it serves and must be preserved.

Would you continue with Medicaid expansion?

I want everyone to have access to affordable, quality health care. But when one-third of Alaskans are forced to rely on Medicaid for health care, is that something we should be proud of? I say: this should worry us. My focus as Governor will be on controlling the costs of health care, and health insurance. There is no single, 'silver bullet' solution for doing this. Instead, it will require dozens of measures to reform our health care delivery system. I will NOT define success based on growing the number of people who are dependent on government, but rather on growing the number of people who have no need for government assistance in meeting their health care needs.

If you were looking at the future governor of Alaska, what would you tell her?

I would tell her to do everything to restore trust by the people in their government. Form a coherent political philosophy, and then have the courage to stick with it. Voters want transparency in their government leaders – people who say what they mean and mean what they say.

What would you do to help ensure affordable higher education within Alaska?

The University of Alaska is a land grant-based institution. We need to ensure that the university has adequate land resources to monetize in order to help underwrite the costs of its mission.

There is no single policy prescription for this challenge, but in general we need to promote healthy competition as a means of driving down costs. Monopolies will never have an incentive to lower their prices. Our institutions of higher learning must be disciplined and realize that they cannot be "all things to all people" and still keep costs under control.

Are there areas of the state that should have reduced regulatory oversight as a cost-saving measure?

Yes. We need to reevaluate many areas of the state's regulatory oversight, to ensure that the costs and burdens of regulations are justified by the benefits. In particular, I believe we need to revisit the regulatory burdens on businesses and eliminate those regulations that impede private sector growth for no legitimate reason.

What are three actions you would take to make Alaska safer?

The explosive growth in violent crime and property crime demands an aggressive response. Alaska now leads the nation in almost every category of crime, making our state the most dangerous in the country.

SB 91 has made our crime problem worse, and I support repealing this troubled policy. We need to end "catch and release" of criminals, and we need to deliver swift and severe consequences for criminal behavior – especially for individuals dealing drugs. We need to ensure that police, prosecutors, and our courts have the resources they need. Finally, we need to focus on rebuilding Alaska's economy, as there is no doubt that the misery caused by our economic recession creates a climate in which crime will become more prevalent.

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