

EDITORIAL

# Direct participation

Southeast Alaskans understand that the Unuk, Chickamin, Sitkine, Taku and other rivers have great significance to many facets of life in this region. It's past time for the U.S. federal government to acknowledge that significance, and take appropriate steps to help guarantee the continued health of these river systems that originate across the U.S.-Canada border in British Columbia.

Earlier this week, Alaska's congressional delegation of Sen. Lisa Murkowski, Sen. Dan Sullivan and Rep. Don Young joined with Alaska Gov. Bill Walker and Lt. Gov. Byron Malloff in sending a three-page letter asking U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to raise concerns about the current and potential impacts of mining in British Columbia with Canada's federal government — and to consider whether the topic should be addressed by an international commission.

The letter also requests the establishment of a formal consultation process with U.S. federal, tribal and state agencies regarding B.C. mining projects, and a commitment for water quality research and data collection.

"We, like this administration, prioritize the promotion and protection of American economic interests, which in this instance could be threatened by B.C. transboundary mining and inadequate financial mechanisms to assure long-term management of toxic redress for damages from potential releases," states the letter to Tillerson. "In light of our common interests, we have renewed optimism that the federal government will support the peoples and governments of Alaska, and utilize their international tools to protect overall U.S. interests in this situation."

We understand that Canada is a sovereign nation with the prerogative to develop its natural resources as it sees fit. However, mining within the Canadian watersheds of the Unuk, Sitkine, Taku and other rivers that flow into Southeast Alaska has the potential to profoundly affect this region if mining design and operations are inadequate to maintain downstream environmental quality or, heaven forbid, an accident or other catastrophic failure occur.

Unfortunately, Canada doesn't have a sterling record in this regard. The now-closed Tulsequah Chief mine site in northern B.C. continues to discharge acid drainage into the Taku River as it has for decades now — and the 2014 failure of the Mt. Polley Mine's tailings dam in central B.C. dumped more than six billion gallons of water, mine tailings and other materials into the upper watershed of the Fraser River, according to the letter.

Simply trusting the Canadians to protect the transboundary rivers isn't a reasonable position for Alaska or the U.S. federal government to take. We need direct participation in the permitting processes for these types of B.C. mines — and assurance that the financial resources for long-term management of mine sites and covering damages for any disasters are in place.

The U.S. federal government should be pursuing these issues with Canada with more vigor than it has shown to date, and we're pleased that the congressional delegation and Walker and Malloff are encouraging Tillerson and the feds to move forward.

To be clear, the letter and its requests are not against mining in British Columbia. It's about recognizing and adequately addressing the risks to Southeast Alaska. The risks are large enough to merit meaningful participation in the process by the United States.

## FROM OTHER EDITORS

### AK fiscal cliff is here

Unless the Alaska Legislature acts, the state of Alaska will run out of money at some point in the next fiscal year.

The state's deficit is forecast to be \$2.7 billion. Its principal savings account, the Constitutional Budget Reserve, has less than \$2.1 billion remaining.

After years in the red, the state has run out of time. The fiscal cliff is here, and we're about to go over the edge.

The Legislature (and we as state residents) have options. We can spend from the Permanent Fund, we can cut state services, or we can tax ourselves. We've already done the second option. This year, the state's budget is \$10.7 billion. Five years ago, the budget was \$13.5 billion. Both of those figures include the Permanent Fund Dividend.

The state isn't building big projects anymore: Gone are new museums, new schools, dams, bridges and roads. We've seen cuts to the ferry system, we've seen the University of Alaska cut to pieces, and we've seen our local schools flattened. If the state continues to cut services, we're likely to see lawsuits alleging the state is failing its constitutional obligations.

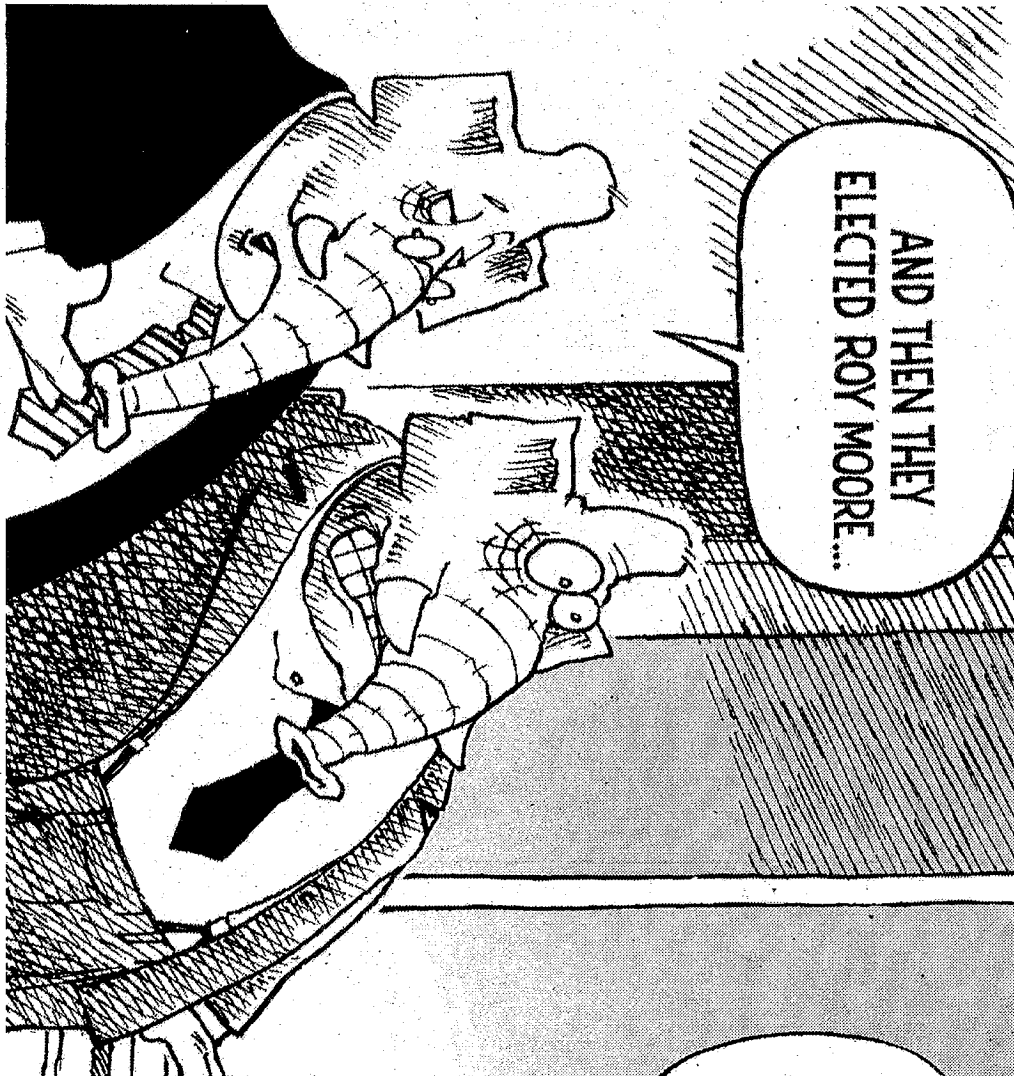
At some point, we need to start paying for what we need. That point is now.

We need a progressive, statewide income tax, and here's why:

— Oil isn't paying the bills anymore. While production is up, prices are down, and the state's long-term forecasts show they won't rebound any time soon. Solar and wind energy are too cheap, people are buying electric cars, and while there will always be demand for oil (to make plastics and fertilizers, for example), Alaska oil is expensive when compared to other options.

— The Permanent Fund can't cover the entire deficit. It isn't big enough. Furthermore, turning to the Permanent Fund will slash the Permanent Fund Dividend. That's effectively a regressive income tax. If you're a child or a low-income Alaskan, a \$2,000 dividend is much more of your income than if you're a rich Alaskan making \$100,000 a year. Cutting the dividend, as the Legislature did this year and Gov. Bill Walker did last year, is the equiv-

ALASKA'S STATE



## A trip to New

By GARRISON KEILLOR

Slight panic in the airport out in Texas. Waiting to check a bag, pull out my billfold, no driver's license. Check pockets, briefcase. Credit cards, no license. The brain flutters. Hotel? Taxi? Pick-pocket? A teen terrorist from Iyvestistan perhaps, trying to persuade TSA he is 75 and from Anoka, Minnesota?

How about dementia? Loss of license today, tomorrow can't conjugate "lay" and "say" next day my wife's name is missing along with the three branches of government.

OK. License found. In jacket pocket. I head for TSA, resuming my life as a Midwestern author, husband, father. Never mind that I checked that very pocket three times thoroughly. I'm OK. OK?

Life is precarious. So much depends on a small card with a grim picture of me on it. Lose it and I become flotsam, a fugitive, stateless, displaced. Sobering.

So I got on a plane to New York and when I disembarked my faithful iPhone was dead and wouldn't recharge, and suddenly it was: older, eat things again when you look around for a payphone and newsboys shout the headlines on the street corner and you get on an elevator and an attractive woman asks you for a light. And when a meteorite is headed straight for Gotham, Clark Kent steps into a phone booth to change into his Superman outfit and deflect the thing into Long Island Sound.

I spent a whole day with no cellphone and it gave me the feeling of being in a foreign country, out of touch, friendless, so I walked over to Grand

Central Station and there, under the great ceiling, I found an Apple store and maddening disappointment to see someone at their genius who could restore my connection to the world. I had an hour to kill and I did it in style. Oyster Bar, the restaurant that time I changed. I sat down and the waitress changed. I sat down and the waitress changed. I sat down and the waitress changed. I sat down and the waitress changed. I sat down and the waitress changed.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Keep forest plan

EDITOR, Daily News:

Last month, Sen. Lisa Murkowski's office issued a press release that said she "welcomed the Government Accountability Office's determination that the U.S. Forest Service's 2016 Amendment to the Tongass Land Management Plan is a 'rule' and therefore subject to the Congressional Review Act."

Sen. Murkowski went on to say that: "Every sector of the Southeast Alaska economy needs greater access to the Tongass, but this rule failed to provide it. Most concerning was the Forest Service's decision to accelerate a transition to young-growth timber harvesting, even though it never completed an inventory to ensure it would be carried out successfully. While this rule can be improved administratively or legislatively, disapproving it entirely is now another option that we will consider in the days ahead."

Central Station and there, under the great ceiling, I found an Apple store and maddening disappointment to see someone at their genius who could restore my connection to the world. I had an hour to kill and I did it in style. Oyster Bar, the restaurant that time I changed. I sat down and the waitress changed. I sat down and the waitress changed. I sat down and the waitress changed. I sat down and the waitress changed. I sat down and the waitress changed.

GARRISON KEILLOR

"Who cautioned me not to eat beans. I spilled on my clothes. Or stick beans up my nose. And never find out what life means."

After she brought the food, she did not back to say, "How's everything tasting?" "No — it's the Oyster Bar, the food is good. Do she come back later to ask, "You still world that?" She was a minimalist. Waiting on the service; it isn't the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

## Tolls on the highways? Repeal

The 2016 Amendment to the Tongass Land Management Plan is a win-win for all parties in protecting high-value fish and wildlife habitat transitioning to a young-growth timber harvest a 15-year period. Intact watersheds result in nurseries for our thriving salmon. Salmon, in provide economic activity through commercial, sport fishing, subsistence fishing and timber. Transitioning to young-growth timber will utilize existing road system built over the past 70 years, avoiding the cost of new road construction.

Our economy has evolved from being dependent on old-growth timber harvest to a diverse economy where tourism accounts for more than 14 percent of our regional employment. Commercial, sport and subsistence fishing accounts another 10 percent of our employment. The sheds off-limits for harvest in the TLMAP 2016 amendment directly support these economic sectors protecting some of the most high-value fish