

Statement of Chairman Daniel K. Akaka, Alaska Federation of Natives annual convention, "success beyond barriers"

Senator Daniel K. Akaka Papers

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Statement of Chairman Daniel K. Akaka, Committee on Indian Affairs
Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention
"Success Beyond Barriers"
Friday, October 19, 2012 at 1:30 pm
Dena'ina Convention Center

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PA-ga-la-giv-see!

Aloha!

I am so happy to be here in Alaska and to be able to spend time with you today, as you make *Success Beyond Barriers* a reality.

Alaska and Hawaii have a long, successful relationship working together, both in the halls of Congress - and at home in our communities.

I am **proud** of all that we have accomplished together.

In Hawaii, one great example of this collaboration was the building of the Hawai'iloa double-hulled canoe. As my people set out on this project to recover knowledge of traditional Hawaiian canoe-building, we used **400-year old Sitka spruce logs** -- donated from **Alaska Natives** from the Southeast and the Sealaska Corporation -- in the canoe's construction.

But we know the special relationship between Alaska and Hawaii goes back much further.

We can see evidence of the historical presence of my people in your lands –

in names like Chief Kaloa of Tyonek [*tie-o-neck*],

in villages like Kiana [*KAI-ah-nah*],

and in places like the *Hula-hula* River.

Today, Alaska Native Corporations are partnering with Native Hawaiian companies to succeed in business across the Pacific.

Immersion schools are sharing successful strategies to revitalize our Native languages.

Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native leaders, young and old, are engaging in cultural exchanges and building new relationships for the future.

Throughout my career, the Hawaii and Alaska Congressional delegations have worked **across party lines**, in support of each other, to advance issues important to each of our non-contiguous states. **Especially** for our Native peoples.

Over the 36 years I have served in Congress, I have collaborated with my good friends Congressman Don Young, Senators Ted Stevens and Frank Murkowski, and now Senators Lisa Murkowski and Mark Begich. We come together to pass bills and sustain programs critical to both of our unique states.

Lisa Murkowski is a powerful voice on the Indian Affairs Committee. Whether she is speaking in support of reforms in Native education, addressing health and social issues that contribute to the tragic rate of youth suicides in Native communities, or highlighting the critical role of subsistence in your daily lives, Lisa's work on behalf of Native peoples is well respected in the Senate.

* In a difficult budgetary environment, Lisa has been effective as a senior member of the Appropriations Committee meeting Alaska's needs through formula funding and program eligibility.

She has proven to be a thoughtful and independent legislator, working across the aisle when necessary to advance Alaska's interests.

For example, Lisa is a strong supporter of my provisions to protect Native Women from rape and abuse – which are included in the Senate's bill to reauthorize the *Violence Against Women Act*.

Your junior Senator, Mark Begich, is an up and coming member of the Senate's leadership team. He has strong character and a drive to work hard for Alaska.

We serve together on the Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee, where as Chairman he brings business and community leaders from across the country into the Senate to meet directly with us and help us chart the course forward. His voice is always there bringing Alaska's economic and social priorities to the attention of the Senate's leaders for action.

He continues to work tirelessly for Alaska Native education, health care, and jobs, highlighting the unique needs of your state like teacher housing and funding for village clinics.

Mark is also a strong advocate for our troops and veterans. We serve together on the Senate Committees on Armed Services, → Veterans' Affairs, and Homeland Security.

He and I worked together to block bad legislation attacking the S-B-A Native 8(a) program. We did this by ^{accomplished by} highlight ^{ing} the program's success in Alaska, Hawaii, and across the country, and its role in fulfilling the trust responsibility to Native communities.

As I prepare to leave Congress this January, I am confident that the close cooperation and partnership between Hawaii and Alaska will continue.

I want to extend my aloha to **your** leadership: to co-chairs Ralph Andersen and Albert **KOO-kesh** and **all** the rest of the A-F-N Board of Directors. Your board is a testament to the strength of diversity ~~and~~ coming together beyond regional differences to work for all Alaska Natives.

I have worked very closely with and have so much admiration for your:

President Julie **KIT-ka** and

Vice-President Nelson (Angapak) [**uh-NAH-puhk**].

Julie is full of innovative approaches to solving challenges.

Nelson's quiet style makes a big impact when necessary. They have been **effective** partners who bring the Alaska Native perspective to every conversation. *Mahalo* – thank you - to you all, for always working closely with me and my staff – and for the wonderful invitation to be here this week.

One thing I always notice... when I meet with Alaska Natives, there are usually **two or three generations** in the room. The word for that is **mentorship**, something that has always impressed me about Alaska Native leadership.

I admire the way you have committed yourselves -- to making sure the next generation of leaders are ready and prepared for the challenges they will face.

By including them in your daily operations, you are helping them gain experience and skills for future success.

As you know, I have the great pleasure and responsibility of being Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

I have focused on **strengthening the identities** of Native peoples, and their ability to **protect their homelands**.

I have worked with my colleagues to make sure they understand the **federal relationship** with Native peoples—and its origins in the Constitution.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to you, your leadership, your organizations, and your Congressional delegation for your **longstanding and unwavering support** of my bill, the *Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act*.

Senators Stevens, Murkowski, and Begich, and Congressman Young have all been cosponsors and vocal supporters of my bill.

I have also been focused on passing amendments to the *Indian Reorganization Act* known as the *Carcieri Fix*.

These bills represent a **commitment to parity** — to the principle that all federally-recognized Native peoples **should be offered the same rights** and opportunities -- and have access to the same tools.

I have seen many changes across the country, and I have been **amazed at the resiliency** of Native peoples, our cultures, and our languages.

Since I was a boy, the United States has grown and evolved. I have witnessed **profound change** in the status and treatment of **all indigenous peoples**.

Gone are the days when our languages were banned, when our cultures and traditions were deemed unimportant, or worse, considered liabilities.

We have proven time and time again that our Native cultures and traditions hold **incredible wisdom** about how best to live in harmony and build a sustainable future.

Throughout my life, and my career in public service, I have worked to bring the **Hawaiian culture** and ^{the spirit?} **aloha**, love and respect, with me at all times.

I have sought to remain focused on what is **pono**, what is right and proper.

I set my goals around what can be achieved in the spirit of **lokahi**, unity, to **holo i mua**, move forward.

In these changing times, **it is critical** that **all** Native Americans — American Indians, Alaska Natives **and** Native Hawaiians — continue to **stand together**, and **move forward** together, to advance Native sovereignty and self-determination in the United States.

There is **strength** in that **solidarity**.

Native self-determination ensures the **promise of Native self-sufficiency**. It results in our continued ability to **be productive and contribute** to the well-being of our families, our communities, and our great nation.

Before I conclude, I want to encourage you all, and **especially the young people** in the audience today, to remember:

Live your Native values, draw courage from those that have ^{who} **come before you, and focus your work** on advancing self-determination and self-sufficiency for all Native peoples.

Strive to **extend aloha**—love and respect—in all you do. You **will** find it returned to you.

May God bless you, your families, your Native communities, and your great state of Alaska.

And may God bless the United States of America.

Anabasi, Goonesh-cheesh, Ee-lan-nigoo-loo, and Kitak-qua.

Like you, Native Hawaiians never like to say goodbye.

We say *a hui hou* — until we meet again.

^{*from*}
With fond *aloha, a hui hou.*

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AK greeting



Aloha! I am so happy to be here in Alaska and to be able to spend time with you today, as you make ["]Success Beyond Barriers["] a reality.

Alaska and Hawaii have had a long and successful relationship working together, both in the halls of the Congress - and at home in our communities.

I am **proud** of all that we have accomplished together.

In Hawaii, one great example of this collaboration was the building of the Hawai'iloa double-hulled canoe.

As my people set out on this project to recover knowledge of traditional Hawaiian canoe-building, we used **400-year old Sitka spruce logs** donated by **Alaska Natives** ^{to the Native Hawaiians} to construct the canoe.

But we know the special relationship between Alaska and Hawaii goes back much further.

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Lisa Murkowski is a powerful voice on the Indian Affairs Committee. Whether she is speaking in support of reforms in Native education, challenging health and social issues to reduce the tragic rate of youth suicides in Native communities, or highlighting the critical role of subsistence in your daily lives, Lisa's work on behalf of Native peoples is well respected in the Senate.

She has proven to be a thoughtful and independent legislator, working across the aisle when necessary to advance Alaska's interests. For example, Lisa is a strong supporter for my provisions to protect Native Women from rape and abuse -- in the Senate's bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

Lisa's seniority and experience makes her the top ranking Republican on both the Energy and Natural Resources Committee -- and the Appropriations subcommittee on Interior and Environment.

In a difficult budgetary environment, Lisa has been effective in meeting Alaska's needs through formula funding and program eligibility.

Your junior Senator Mark Begich is an up and coming member of the Senate's leadership team. He has strong character and a drive to work hard for Alaska.

We serve together on the Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee, where as Chairman he brings business and community leaders from across the country into the Senate to meet directly with us and help us chart the course forward. He gives us access to national trendsetters in the private sector, and it's incredibly helpful to our Senate leadership team. And his voice is always there bringing Alaska's economic and social priorities to the attention of the Senate's leaders for action.

He and I have worked together to block bad legislation attacking the S-B-A Native 8(a) program. We highlight the program's success in Alaska, Hawaii, and across the country, and its role in fulfilling the trust responsibility to Native communities.

He continues to work tirelessly for Alaska Native education, health care, and jobs, highlighting the unique needs of your state like teacher housing and funding for village clinics.

Mark is also a strong advocate for our troops and veterans. We serve together on the Senate Committees on Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security.

I have no doubt that he will continue to be one of the strong leaders for Alaska in the Senate for many years to come.

In electing both Lisa and Mark to the United States Senate, Alaska Natives have demonstrated the power of their voices and their votes. Your Senators have responded with a focus and commitment to meeting the needs of your communities.

As I prepare to leave Congress this January, I am confident that the close cooperation and partnership between Hawaii and Alaska will continue.

I want to extend my aloha to **your** leadership: to co-chairs Ralph Anderson and Albert Koo-kesh and all the rest of the A-F-N Board of Directors.

I have worked very closely with and have so much admiration for your President Julie Kit-ka and Vice-President Nelson Angapak [*uh-NAH-puhk*]. They have been effective partners who bring the Alaska Native perspective to every conversation. *Mahalo* – thank you - to you all, for always working closely with me and my staff.

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Senators Stevens, Murkowski, and Begich, and Congressman Young have all been cosponsors and vocal supporters.

My top legislative priorities this year have been securing passage of the *Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act* as well as the amendments to the *Indian Reorganization Act* known as the *Carcieri* Fix.

These bills represent a **commitment to parity** — to the principle that all federally-recognized Native peoples **should be offered the same rights** and opportunities -- and have access to the same tools.

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and Alaska.

And may God bless the United States of America.

Anabasi, Goonesh-cheesh, Ee-lan-nigoo-loo, and Kitak-qua.

Me ke aloha pumehana, a hui hou.