



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2011

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays



(Click video to watch greeting)

Seasons greetings eNewsletter subscribers! I would just like to take a few moments to wish Alaskans a Merry Christmas and happy holidays. I hope you will use this special time of year to celebrate all that is good in Alaska; and to count your blessings, to focus on family, friends, good health and good times.

As Alaskans we are thankful for the natural beauty of our state and the one-of-a-kind generosity of our neighbors. Let us never take these for granted.

From the blue and white lights in the Town Square of downtown Anchorage to the dancing northern lights over

Ester - we can feel the Christmas spirit.

But as we enjoy the time with family, we must also thank those who are not here with their loved ones: our men and women in uniform, who stand ever vigilant to serve our country and keep us warm in the comfort that we are safe. May you keep them and their families in your prayers this holiday season.

From my family to yours - Merry Christmas, happy holidays and Happy New Year.

Send Me Your Christmas Tree Pictures



We do everything bigger in Alaska - whether it's the "Charlie Brown" trees many of us chop down and take home to decorate, or the festive spirit we display through the holiday season. I'm always talking up Alaskans to my Senate colleagues from the lower 48, so I encouraged Alaskans to help me back that talk up via Facebook and Twitter, with pictures of their Christmas trees.

Here are a few samplings from Alaskans who have participated:



Thank You



Maj. Glynn with USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Schwartz, a former Commander of AK Command at JBER.

I have had the pleasure over the last few years of hosting a military fellow from the U.S. Air Force to advise me with a thorough fluency in military affairs. The fellow works in my office for a year, and works with my staff on military issues facing Alaska and our country. This year, I had the pleasure of hosting USAF Major Jason Glynn. His insight and first-hand knowledge of our nation's armed forces was invaluable to me, and I was sad to see him leave. Major Glynn, you served your country and Alaska well.

Toys For Tots Toy Drive



Senator Murkowski dropped off some toys at the U.S. Marine's Toys for Tots Drive in the Capitol. Over the 67 years of the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots Program, Marines have distributed more than 400 million toys to more than 188 million needy children.

Legislation Returns Air Quality Authority to Interior Department



After months of negotiations, last week I was pleased to announce a deal that would return authority over air emissions from offshore activity in the Arctic to the Interior Department via the 2012 Interior Appropriations bill. As the ranking Republican on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, I inserted language into the Interior Appropriations bill, which was passed in a larger appropriations bill this past weekend.

This language is one of the most important steps Congress can take to ensure that responsible development is allowed to go forward in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas. Transferring air quality authority from the EPA to Interior could place Alaska's Arctic leases on a level playing field with the Gulf of Mexico and provide a level of predictability - without compromising environmental protections for those companies willing to invest in the production of America's energy.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) currently has jurisdiction to issue air quality permits on Alaska's outer continental shelf. However, in the Gulf of Mexico the Interior Department administers air quality compliance-with results. The language I wrote provides regulatory parity for the Beaufort and Chukchi seas with the western and central Gulf of Mexico.

While I am pleased the language is in the Interior appropriations bill, this is just one step forward in the process for responsible development and energy security for Alaska and the nation.

Alaska's Hidden Gems: Unalaska



(Photo courtesy of Nancy Peterson)

Even in a state with seemingly endless beautiful sites, Unalaska is a breathtaking gem. Beyond being one of the most picturesque locations in the state, it also features the largest fisheries port in the United States. The picture above is Unalaska's new Carl E. Moses Boat Harbor. Almost 20 years in the making, this project was the product of the Alaska Delegation's efforts for the last two decades.

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