

Congressional correspondence

Alaska's resources, strategic location vital to nation

By Sen. Ted Stevens

In January we begin the 110th Congress, which will mark the seventh time party control has changed during my tenure in the Senate.

For 20 of my first 26 years in the Senate, I was a member of the minority party, and those years are the source of some of my proudest accomplishments and fondest memories. I forged lifelong friendships with colleagues across the aisle, including Sen. Dan Inouye, a man I am fortunate to call my brother, and the late Sen. Warren Magnuson, a man I was honored to have call me son. Those Congresses were also responsible for legislation critically important to our young state – landmark measures like the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act, and the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

It is my hope that in 2007 we will return to a time when senators were not afraid to work with their colleagues across the aisle. Despite reports to the contrary, I believe the spirit of bipartisanship is alive and well among many members of the Senate, and I intend to continue my long-standing practice of working with any colleague who can help us do what is right for Alaska. When the Senate reconvenes in January, Sen. Inouye and I will continue to approach the work of the Senate's Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee and the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee as co-chairmen.

In the past year, I have spoken often of the need to develop a climate for investment in our state. Going forward, two of Alaska's most important assets – our strategic location

and tremendous resource potential – will depend on our ability to build this climate and attract investment from private companies and the federal government.

As we reduce the number of American troops in the Middle East and around the world, I believe a greater proportion of these forces will be stationed at home. Alaska must position itself at the forefront of this shift by demonstrating a willingness and ability to support larger deployments for extended periods of time.

We have a long-honored tradition of being good neighbors to the military personnel stationed throughout our state, many of whom are far from home. We need to let them know we appreciate their commitment to our nation's security and value their contributions to the state of Alaska.

It is also clear our nation faces an energy crisis, and our state will play a key role in its resolution. Developing our oil and gas resources will help stabilize energy prices, spur economic growth, and strengthen our national security. Alaska is at the forefront of alternative and renewable resource development, and we must promote the development of this potential to achieve energy independence and new clean fuels.

Alaska's opportunities are America's needs. It is difficult to predict when we will have the votes to pursue all of them, but we must begin laying the foundation for each of them now. At the federal level, Lisa, Don and I are educating our colleagues in Congress and those in the administration about our state's unique challenges and opportunities. In 2007, we will continue to work together to ensure Alaska's interests are reflected in the legislation passed by Congress. In doing so, we hope to help write the next chapter of our history – one that secures the future of our state.

