



SENATOR DONALD OLSON

25TH ALASKA LEGISLATURE

ULU NEWS - DISTRICT T



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One of the things about having a new governor is that you get to talk to all the newly appointed commissioners and find out what are their visions for the agencies they run. It is also a chance for me to share the concerns and desires of our district about agency operations and policies. Since they all have to be confirmed by a vote of the legislature, these conversations are usually quite frank and attentive.

I was particularly encouraged by my meeting with the new commissioner designee for the Department of Fish and Game, Mr. Denby Lloyd. He is quite knowledgeable and I believe he will be a good commissioner. We discussed the Area M issue and I was satisfied

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L to R: Willow Olson, Governor Sarah Palin holding Martin Olson, Senator Olson, and David Gray at the bill signing ceremony for Senate Bill 46—Coastal Management Programs. SB 46 was the second bill this legislative session to be sent to the governor for her signature.

with his views. The department plans to do more testing of mixed stocks to determine origin and timing of stock migrations through the area. My understanding is that new measuring techniques will greatly improve identification of fish origin.

Commissioner Lloyd also has a good handle on what has occurred over the years with the Yukon River fisheries. He is quite aware of abundance projections and the corresponding importance for commercial harvests on the lower river.

One issue I brought up to him was the extension of the CDQ program to the northern villages. I know this is difficult to achieve if it reduces the allocation to existing CDQ groups. But if there is expanded fishing effort up through the Bering Strait into the Chukchi, fairness alone requires that people living in those areas must somehow be allowed to participate in this program

In this last week, my bill to increase the senior care program payment from \$120 per month to \$150 per month passed out of the Health & Social Services Committee. SB 4 is now in the Finance Committee. Work on SB 74, the municipal revenue sharing bill,

was completed in the Community and Regional Affairs Committee that I chair. It has been passed on to Finance also.

Also this past week, Senator Lisa Murkowski was in Juneau and addressed the legislature. One of the issues she discussed was that Alaska is like most other states in having a physician shortage, especially of those who practice family medicine. There were several reasons given for this shortage, but one of the top reasons is because medical school is so expensive. As a result, when graduates are ready to go into practice, they often choose a specialty so they can afford to pay back their college debt. This is particularly critical for rural communities since it is hard to attract and retain physicians who prefer to live in rural Alaska.

The good news is that Governor Palin established the Alaska Health Strategies Planning Council to advise the Governor and the Legislature on ways to effectively provide quality health care and to help reduce those costs for Alaskans. Once the council is appointed, they will need to get to work immediately because the Governor wants an action plan from them by January 1, 2008

Visiting from the district this last week are the following: Kaktovik Mayor Lon Sonsalla with Karl Francis and Jeff Richardson; Theresa Imm of ASRC with two executives of BHP Billiton; Edie Wichert of Kotzebue and Joy Hewitt of Nome. Also met with Meera Kohler of AVEC.



Anna Fiskeaux, Willow, Martin & Senator Olson, and Martha Fiskeaux



Irene Anderson of Nome holding Martin Olson in Senator Olson's Juneau office.



Clement Richards of Kotzebue visiting Senator Olson.