



# CONSERVATION VOTER



Alaska Conservation Voters

www.acvoters.org

Summer 2007

## ACV Goes Full Steam Ahead in Legislative Session

With the First Session now in the rear view mirror, we've reached the mid-point of the 25th Legislative Session and several conservation issues are in the mix and lined up for consideration in the 2nd session. ACV was anticipating a session where it would be tough for anyone to pass bills, regardless of whether they strengthened or weakened environmental laws. With the strong focus of the session on the Alaska Gasline Inducement Act (AGIA), ethics, budgets, revenue sharing, senior care and 90-day session rules, that proved to be the case.

Our priorities are still in the works, which is to be expected in a two-year legislative cycle where major bills often take two or more sessions to get to the goal line. ACV's highest priority—clean, renewable energy—is now a very popular theme in the Capitol and is likely to get even more attention in the future. The insertion of \$20 million in the capital budget with the intent that it can be used for the Fire Island Wind Farm is one testament to this growing interest. Our top bill, HB152, which would establish a fund to support renewable energy projects in Alaska, was sponsored by Speaker Harris and passed unanimously in the House before making it through its first Senate committee with strong bi-partisan support. We expect the bill to pass next time around.

Our other priorities, clean water for salmon and mining

tax reform, continue to face uphill battles, but we will push on with new strategies. The bill by Rep. Seaton and others to protect clean water in salmon spawning streams moved out of its first committee, but stalled in House Resources. Rep. Seaton's HB156, which would update the state's mining tax and royalty system (parts of which have not been reviewed since 1955, before statehood) to ensure maximum benefit to all Alaskans, was heard three times and held in its first committee. While ACV recognized the difficult nature of both issues, much needed discussions have begun and we are still in the game.

A bill supported by ACV that did pass was HB220. Rep. Buch introduced this bill to ensure that Internet 'hunting,' where a real-time gun can be fired at an animal via a computer, does not reach Alaska's borders. Alaska now joins 31 other states in banning this practice.

We were also pleased to see that no new funding was included in the Capital Budget for the three "Mega Projects"—the Knik Arm Bridge, the Juneau Road and the Gravina Bridge.

With the new leadership at the Governor's office, ACV also worked to engage the new Palin Administration on conservation issues. One area where the conservation community made their mark was in the Governor's AGIA.

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*ACV's Executive Director, Kate Troll, was invited by the Governor's office to attend the signing of the Alaska Gasline Inducement Act*

## Clean Elections vs. Big \$\$ and Big Influence

*The ongoing FBI corruption investigation highlights the need for a real change in the legislative culture, but can anyone stop the influence of big money and big influence on political campaigns? ACV takes a closer look at Clean Elections.*

In a reality heightened by the recent corruption and bribery scandals, the enormous expense to run for public office is claimed to distort the process in many ways: 1) it forces

candidates to spend more and more time raising money and eliminates candidates unable or unwilling to do so; and 2) increases the influence of powerful special interests with deep pockets, thereby begging the question: are some votes for sale? We applaud Gov. Sarah Palin and lawmakers for taking a small step in the right direction by passing ethics legislation this year, but ACV believes more is needed to restore the public's trust in government.

As Alaskans, we can complain about the corrosive influence of our existing way of financing elections, or we can do something about it. Voters have the ability to change things for the better when they choose our political leaders at the

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Alaska Conservation Voters protects Alaska's environment through public education and advocacy, and supports pro-conservation candidates for public office.

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- Suzanne Bostrom & Andre Camara | Communications & Legislative Manager
- James Creely | Fundraising Coordinator

## LOBBYIST

David Rogers

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR >>

Instead of just being focused on the Legislature for receptivity to conservation initiatives, this year marked a return to working with the Administration. In fact, much of our progress this year comes from working with members of the Palin Administration, as illustrated by two significant amendments to AGIA (see related story on Legislature, p.1) and by the establishment of a sub-cabinet on climate change. We certainly have more topics to raise with the Palin Administration, such as moving Habitat back to Fish and Game and development of a state energy policy, but this level of responsiveness is a most welcome change from the Murkowski Administration and it bodes well for the future.

Legislatively we continue to move forward. Who would have thought that ACV – during the first of two sessions - would have its top priority bill sponsored by the Speaker of the House, pass unanimously through the State House and then move out of the Senate Resources Committee with five “Do Passes,” which included Senate President Lyda Green and Resources Chair Charlie Huggins? Certainly this is due in large part to the sea change that is occurring around renewable energy, but it is also a reflection of the conservation community being more strategic with its priority selection and having a coordinated approach with key allies such as Chris Rose of the Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP). It also helps to have ACV represented by a well respected lobbyist. We are playing smarter and it shows.

Speaking of the sea change around renewable energy, I just recently returned from a business trip to New York City. While there, I was able to observe the first tidal turbines in the U.S. actively producing electricity. Yes, right in the shadow of Con Ed's power plant in the East River are six turbines. Verdant Power, a company that is also interested in Alaska, plans to place more turbines in NYC just outside the United Nations. At the top of Times Square, were also fully lit, brilliant images of wind turbines. Imagine that: panels celebrating alternative energy, right up there with Coca-Cola. Hopefully someday we will ride this crest of national interest and be celebrating Alaska's first wind farm on Fire Island and our own tidal turbines in Cook Inlet. Certainly, ACV is committed to this vision.

Thanks for your continued support and enjoy these summer months.



## Legislative Session *Continued from Page 1*

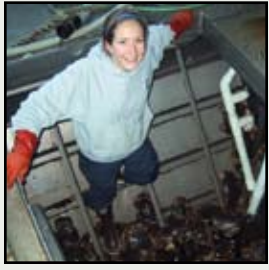
Through ACV's sister organization, the Alaska Conservation Alliance, we are on record in support of an environmentally responsible natural gas pipeline that is in the best interest of Alaskans. As such, ACV worked to ensure that pipeline producers would include their plans for controlling greenhouse gas emissions in pipeline proposals. Language was also added to ensure that the 'over the top' route, which is not endorsed by ACV, could not be proposed.

Thanks to all your support, ACV is revved up to continue our work to improve our quality of life here in Alaska. Stay tuned for more!

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# Farewell & Welcome to ACV Staff

Suzanne Bostrom, our current Communications and Legislative Manager, is leaving ACV and ACV's sister organization, the Alaska Conservation Alliance (ACA), to attend Lewis and Clark Law School. Thanks to Suzanne's willingness to defer law school last year, we were able to



*Suzanne helping friends unload their crab catch in Juneau*

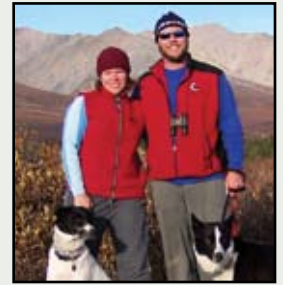
benefit from her many talents. The quality, readability and thoroughness of the "Conservation Watch" is one reflection of Suzanne's dedication and hard work—but there's so much more: "In a very short time for this complicated and confusing world, Suzanne has developed a good understanding of the Alaska Legislature, conservation politics and many of the issues that are on our table. I truly value her

insights and unflagging support. Frankly, I don't know what I would have done without her," notes lobbyist and Conservation Watch co-editor David Rogers. "On behalf of the conservation community in Alaska, I want to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to Suzanne for helping to raise the stature and effectiveness of ACA and ACV," said Kate Troll. "We hope to see Suzanne back in Alaska practicing law."

While Suzanne will be dearly missed, we are fortunate to have Andre Camara coming on to fill her shoes. Please help us welcome Andre to ACV and ACA as our new Communications and Legislative Manager.

Andre's first introduction to politics and the environment came in 1991 when he started working for Clean Water Action, establishing their canvass operations around the country. Ironically, Andre first found his way to Alaska in the summer of 1998 when we hired him to lead ACV's seasonal canvass effort. The following summer, Andre began working with Alaska Center for the Environment (ACE), directing their canvass effort.

In 2000, Andre worked for Conservation Strategies and helped to get several pro-conservation candidates elected, including mayor Begich. After that election, and until now, he worked for ACE as their Anchorage Issues Coordinator. At this point, back at ACV—where his whole Alaska life began—he is pleased to be working on state-wide issues/elections and we look forward to benefiting from his expertise for years to come.



*Andre with his wife Durelle and their dogs Gordy and Chester in Denali*

With Andre's transition from ACV Board chair to ACV staff, former State Senator Pat Pourchot will be stepping up to chair the ACV Board of Directors. With Pat's steady hand and keen political insight, the ACV Board will undoubtedly be well served. Peggy Wilcox will remain as chair of the political committee. ☑

## In the Spotlight: ACV Supporter Karen Compton

Karen Compton and her husband, Steve Compton, are strong supporters of Alaska Conservation Voters.

On a sunny weekend in June 2002, Karen completed ACV's comprehensive campaign training. That Sunday night she stayed up all night writing a campaign plan for Les Gara's race. Les Gara was a candidate in the August primary election for selection of the Democratic Party's nominee for the November general election. Of course, it worked and Les Gara won his race 2:1 and is still a representative in District 23.

Karen's political career took off from there... In November 2002, she worked on Ethan Berkowitz's campaign and he won re-election. In 2003 she worked on Mark Begich's campaign. Then, in 2003, she ran the Trust the People's campaign to gather over 33,000 signatures in two months in support of putting an initiative on the November 2004 ballot requiring a special election for vacancies in the U.S. Senate. She also worked on the 2004 Knowles Senate race, 2006 Begich Mayoral race, and the 2006 Knowles



Governor's race.

Currently, she is volunteering for the Cub Scouts and serving on the Board of Directors for the Anchorage Museum. Just recently, City staff asked Karen to serve on an advisory panel working to rebuild a salmon run in West Chester Lagoon.

When asked why she supports ACV, she said it is primarily the access to the campaign training. She says, "it provided me with 100% of what I needed to know to run a solid campaign. Plus, where else are you going to get free training that could lead to a whole new career?" As a result of Karen's work on subsequent campaigns, she started Compton Campaign Consulting, giving her a new career in Alaska and allowing her to make change in the world.

Steve and Karen met in Utah in 1997. At that time she worked as a television news anchor. In 2000, the couple decided to move back to Anchorage, Steve's home town. They now have two children, Hugo, age 7, and Guss, age 5, who both attend Inlet View Elementary. ☑

# CLEAN ELECTIONS

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ballot box, but another opportunity is to voice support for the Clean Elections Initiative recently filed by the Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG) and Clean Elections legislation (HB261 & SB182) introduced this session with bi-partisan support in both State bodies.

Clean Elections, currently used by seven states, have revolutionized how campaigns are conducted. It works like this: a declared Clean Elections candidate for public office agrees to accept no private contributions. The individual must go out and gather a significant number of signatures (e.g. 200 signatures for a House race) plus \$5 contributions from voters in their district. This qualifies them for a specified amount of campaign money from a State fund. Clean election candidates are

## 70% of voters in Alaska indicated they were in support of Clean Elections.

also eligible for matching funds from the State pool if they are outspent by a non-participating opponent or are challenged by a group doing independent expenditures against them or “in support” of their challenger.

The process would be used for primaries as well as general elections and is voluntary. The intent of the law is to “level the playing field” by providing adequate money to Clean Election candidates so they can be competitive with candidates backed by powerful special interests. Candidates could still opt to raise money the old-fashioned way, but would run the risk of being perceived as beholden to ‘those who paid

the bills.’ According to a poll conducted by Craciun Research in mid-March for AkPIRG, approximately 70% of registered Alaskan voters indicated they were in support of Clean Elections.

Pushing special interest money out of the election process may do more than clean things up. It could open the door for a variety of people to be able to run for public office with some hope of winning.

Clean elections in other states have resulted in candidates being able to spend more time engaging constituents on the issues and less time focusing on lobbyists or money. Here are a few examples of how Clean Elections have worked elsewhere:

- In Arizona, after 4 election cycles, 83% of voters support the system. The current governor of Arizona was elected using Clean Elections financing, as were the secretary of state, attorney general, and 38 of the state’s legislators.
- In Maine, 81% of candidates used Clean Elections financing in 2006.
- In 2005, Connecticut became the first legislature to pass a Clean Elections bill.



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