



Dear friends and neighbors,

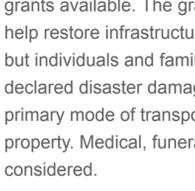
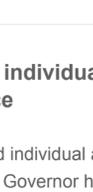
I hope everyone is doing well this week as we experience the aftershocks of Friday's quake. I was in my kitchen helping my youngest son get ready for school when the earthquake struck. He grabbed my hand and together we scooted under the kitchen table and waited it out. We then drove to get his older brother at school and bring him home.

Cleanup and relief efforts are well underway and the damage is already being repaired. I know that some in the district suffered extensive damage to your homes, including our Sand Lake Community Council president who had to move out of her home temporarily while fixes are made.

If you are one who suffered damage, please check out the link below for individual assistance relief; help may be available for your situation. Here's a few resources I've collected to share with you, I hope you find them useful:

- **State Roads:** For the latest updates from the Department of Transportation regarding road repairs and closures, [visit this page](#).
- **All Government Updates:** Here's where you can sign up for emailed updates from our state agencies on recovery-related matters, [click here](#) to sign up.
- **Quake Data:** You can track the quake data and aftershocks at UAF's Alaska Earthquake Center [here](#).
- **ASD:** The Anchorage School District is posting updates on facilities and the earthquake recovery efforts [here](#).
- **Sign up for Police Updates:** The Anchorage Police Department provides regular public safety updates by text and email via Nixle – you can sign up [here](#).
- **Connect with our Neighborhood:** You can keep in contact with others in your neighborhood through social media apps such as [Nextdoor](#).
- **For College Students:** UAA students and faculty can [check here](#) for recovery updates on campus.
- **Be Prepared with Supplies:** Now is the time to get prepared for the next earthquake. Visit [ready.gov](#) for general preparedness information, or [click here](#) for earthquake-specific recommendations.
- **How to Help Children:** Natural disasters can be difficult for young children to understand. [Click here](#) for some information on how to help children cope.
- **Volunteer with ASD:** The Anchorage School District is also looking for volunteers to help with the cleanup efforts at our schools. If you'd like to volunteer, you can find the information you need [here](#).

And just to let you know, the Anchorage Legislative Information Office will be closed until after the start of the legislative session. Please feel free to reach me at (907) 269-0117, or by email here at sen.mia.costello@akleg.gov. It's an honor and a privilege to serve you and I appreciate the opportunity to continue serving West Anchorage in the Alaska Senate.

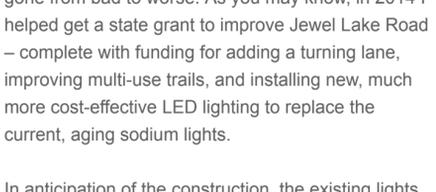


Sharing rideshare: Mia meeting a constituent who wanted to know how to use ride-sharing services. Mia introduced Senate Bill 14, which opened Alaska to ride-sharing services.

Apply for individual earthquake assistance

Do you need individual assistance following the quake? The Governor has declared a disaster for Friday's quake, making individual disaster recovery grants available. The grant program is designed to help restore infrastructure after a declared disaster – but individuals and families can apply when a declared disaster damages a primary residence, primary mode of transportation or essential personal property. Medical, funeral or dental needs are also considered.

The Individual Assistance Hotline went live yesterday at 8:00 am – so if you need assistance, call 1-855-445-7131 or [apply online at http://ready.alaska.gov](#). NOTE: Make sure to take pictures of the damage before repairing it or cleaning up – and keep receipts of your costs! The deadline to apply is January 29.



Cheering with Cheryl: Here I am with former Kincaid Elementary School principal Cheryl Guyette and her son at the little league championship at Jade Park. It's always so great to run into constituents enjoying sports facilities in our district. (Congratulations to the victorious Ironbirds!)

Jewel Lake street lighting is inadequate

If you've driven on Jewel Lake Road at night recently, you have probably noticed that the street lighting has gone from bad to worse. As you may know, in 2014 I helped get a state grant to improve Jewel Lake Road – complete with funding for adding a turning lane, improving multi-use trails, and installing new, much more cost-effective LED lighting to replace the current, aging sodium lights.

In anticipation of the construction, the existing lights between intersections have been removed. But the project has hit a snag. Traditionally, the state installs the infrastructure and the municipality operates and maintains it. This was how the previous lighting was maintained, for example.

Unfortunately, the current administration has so far refused to agree to the usual arrangement for maintenance. Since the state can't install the lighting without an operating and maintenance agreement in place, installation of the new lighting has been put on hold – and may be removed from the project altogether, except for the lighting at controlled intersections.

As you might expect, this is completely unacceptable to me. This stretch of Jewel Lake Road is already too hazardous – hence the capital project to make it safer – but the municipality's intransigence is leading to it becoming even less safe than before.

I'll be meeting soon with Mayor Berkowitz to discuss a speedy resolution to this problem. It is my belief that the fastest path to resolution will involve the municipality taking on the customary operating and maintenance costs, as that could potentially head off the need for a new, lengthy appropriations process. I'll keep you updated as the discussions progress.

While visiting with voters at the door, I learned about a health epidemic in our schools called "juuling"

While I was out knocking on doors this late summer and fall, I heard from several parents about their concerns about teen e-cigarette use in schools. I did some checking and I found that this problem has been getting worse. Nearly one in five Alaska high school students report the use of e-cigarettes. Parents and youth told me that the devices used look like a thumb drive and teachers are unaware their students are using during class. In one case, while I was talking to a parent, her son texted her from school to say that kids were "juuling" right in class at one of our high schools.

Alaska is not alone in this problem; "juuling" is a national epidemic. [Here's a useful news article](#) outlining the severity of the problem nationwide, including the latest initiatives being taken by the FDA to regulate e-cigarette use.

I recently met with Anchorage School District Superintendent Deena Bishop, and made her aware of the concern in our district about this problem. I encouraged her to enlist students to help craft messages to their peers encouraging them to stay away from tobacco products and the risks of becoming addicted.

Under current Alaska law, e-cigarettes may only be sold or given to Alaskans over the age of 19. Still, e-cigarettes are getting in the hands of our students. Stopping this will require us all to be vigilant – especially parents of students.

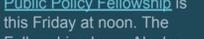
I'll be giving special attention to this topic going forward, including looking at the extent to which these products are being marketed to underage Alaskans. In the meantime, if you know a student – or anyone else – who needs help stopping the use of tobacco products, there is free, confidential help available at [Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line](#).

District highlight: Spartavets.org helping to reduce veteran suicides

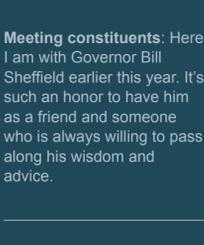
With a suicide rate nearly twice the national average, Alaska needs to take steps to reduce suicide – and our veterans are a particularly vulnerable population. Fortunately, there are services and training available right here in West Anchorage. As I was door-knocking I met Jake Chapman, the founder of [SPARTA Vets](#). Jake is a young combat veteran pursuing his doctorate in psychology. He has a real heart for serving our veterans, and it comes through strongly in his efforts to end veteran suicide.

The Suicide Prevention and Response Training Association (as SPARTA Vets is more formally known) is a local nonprofit organization whose mission is to "reduce Veteran suicide by teaching community members how to effectively respond to a person experiencing suicidal thoughts." It's a mission we all can support.

SPARTA Vets offers regular trainings, to help you learn to identify suicidal behavior and give you tools to help sufferers. They also provide a "Get Help" page to help persons in crisis find professional, clinical help. To find out more, visit SPARTA Vets online at <http://spartavets.org/>.



The deadline to apply for the [First Alaskans Institute 2019 Public Policy Fellowship](#) is this Friday at noon. The Fellowship places Alaska Native and rural Alaskans in positions working in the Alaska Legislature.



Meeting constituents: Here I am with Governor Bill Sheffield earlier this year. It's such an honor to have him as a friend and someone who is always willing to pass along his wisdom and advice.



Sharing Alaska pins in Egypt: Every year Alaskans ask me for state pins for them to hand out while they travel to other areas of our country or even foreign countries.

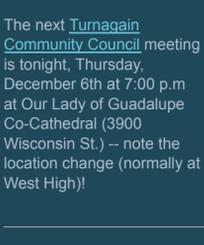
Here is constituent Jane Marcum giving out state pins to Mrs. Abeer Khamus as part of a trip with People to People International. Mrs. Khamus runs an organization for students of limited abilities and provides pre-employment training and other resources to help them succeed.



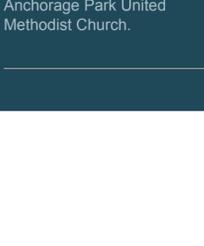
Celebrating those with differing abilities: Our 2018 Miss Teen Alaska McKinley Wooten and two of our wonderful 2018 Alaska Miss Amazing winners helped at this year's [Hope Community Resources Gala](#). A great event, and a wonderful cause.



The December meeting of the [Sand Lake Community Council](#) has been pushed to Monday, December 17 at 6:30 pm at Sand Lake Elementary. Bring a potluck dish to share!



The next [Spenard Community Council](#) meeting is Wednesday, January 2nd at the Spenard Recreation Center.



The next [Tumagain Community Council](#) meeting is tonight, Thursday, December 6th at 7:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral (3900 Wisconsin St.) – note the location change (normally at West High)!



If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, you're not alone. [REAL About Addiction](#) hosts support needs on the second and last Sundays of every month from 3-5pm at Anchorage Park United Methodist Church.

Stay Connected With Mia

www.alaskasenate.org/costello

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