

EDITORIAL

# Secure the Fund

The Alaska Permanent Fund dividend should be enshrined in the Alaska constitution.

Doing so would protect the dividend from decisions made under duress in its regard, particularly when the state has financial constraints.

Such is the case now. Confronted with a billion-dollar budget deficit, the state has twice reduced permanent fund dividend payouts to Alaskans by approximately half, leaving payouts at \$1,022 and \$1,100 in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

The past two years, the formula for dispersing payouts hasn't been followed.

Sen. Bert Stedman is one of the legislators who are concerned, and is supporting the constitutional idea. He says he believes that the Legislature drew too much from the fund's earnings to pay for government and paid too little in dividends in the past two years.

Stedman favors a discussion around how to protect the fund.

Let it begin. Alaskans, too, share Stedman's concern for the permanent fund. It was wisely established when the state started receiving oil revenue. It served the state and its residents well. It should be well preserved for future generations.

This is a topic to monitor and, if drawn, comment on throughout the legislative session that starts Jan. 15.

FROM OTHER EDITORS

# No empty promises

It's entirely appropriate for President Trump to offer support for peaceful protesters in Iran and to demand that the government there respond with restraint. Despite claims by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that they were instigated by foreign "enemies," the protests that erupted in that country last week seem to be home-grown and motivated by dissatisfaction with high prices, unemployment and a corrupt ruling elite.

Some protesters may also have objected, as Trump claimed in one of his tweets, to the fact that their wealth "is being stolen and squandered on terrorism."

But Trump and other American politicians need to be careful not to issue calls for regime change, however veiled, that the United States is unable and unwilling to back up with military action. The president came close to making such a promise in a tweet on New Year's Day that began with "Iran is failing at every level despite the terrible deal made with them by the Obama Administration" and ended with the exclamation "TIME FOR CHANGE!" In a similar vein, Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) said: "We should support the Iranian people who are willing to risk their lives."

Such language offers Iranian dissidents false hope, just as former President George H.W. Bush raised the hopes of Iraqi Shiites and Kurds in 1991 when, near the end of the first Gulf War, he said that the Iraqi people could "take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside." When those Iraqis rose up against Saddam, U.S. forces didn't come to their aid. Trump's words also make it easy for the Iranian regime to dismiss their protests as American-inspired. That doesn't mean U.S. politicians can't sympathize with the concerns of young, disaffected people in Iran or that the U.S. can't penalize Iran when it believes that country has misbehaved. The U.S. already has imposed sanctions on Iran for its support for militant groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah and for its testing of ballistic missiles potentially capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

Finally, Trump must resist the temptation to seize on the protests in Iran as an excuse for further undermining the nuclear agreement. In October, Trump declined to certify to Congress that staying in the nuclear deal was in America's interest even though the International Atomic Energy Agency repeatedly has said that Iran has complied with the agreement. But he didn't say that he would reimpose the sanctions that were lifted in connection with the deal or demand that Congress do so.

At the same time, Trump warned that the agreement would be "terminated" if Congress didn't take action to improve on the agreement — action that hasn't been forthcoming, raising the possibility that he might reimpose sanctions this year, effectively ending the agreement.

Might the protests in Iran — and the government's response to them — give Trump another reason for taking that extreme step? (In one of his tweets, the president mentioned "all of the money that President Obama so foolishly gave (Iran).") That truly would be an irresponsible reaction. The nuclear agreement wasn't a favor to Iran; in restraining its nuclear program, it contributed to the security of the whole world. That was true before the protests and it's still true.

— Jan. 3, LA Times



# Let's not be our own worst enemy in developing ANWR

By CURTIS W. THAYER

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Congressional Delegation — Sen. Lisa Murkowski, Sen. Dan Sullivan, and Congressman Don Young. They delivered the ultimate Christmas gift to Alaska, the ability to open the 1002 area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for safe and environmentally responsible oil exploration.

ANWR has been a 37-year, uphill battle, eventually passed by Congress but vetoed by President Clinton in 1995. Now that Congress and President Trump have finally approved ANWR, Alaska must not squander the opportunity. Considering how we have stymied progress on new oil discoveries by independents during the past three years, we are now our own worst enemy to developing ANWR.

I recently talked with several independent oil companies' executives, some doing business in Alaska and others not. While their interests and objectives vary, there are common conversational threads throughout, some heartening and all worth noting.

Most independents believe Alaska has the potential to be one of the hottest oil basins in the world. In fact, it's a point that's been reiterated

time and again. I find that very encouraging, but it begs the question, "Why aren't we seeing a boom on the North Slope?"

The independents' answers were swift and critical. They said we need to listen as a state and be pro-active to take advantage of the huge opportunity to compete with other states and attract the billions of dollars available for investment after the passage to the recent federal tax legislation.

They weren't critical of our geological formations or their potential; rather, as one seasoned North Slope independent put it, "Alaska's problems aren't in the rocks, the state's problems are all above the rocks." This is one of the universal themes shared by the industry executives I've spoken with. They believe the state's problems are of our own making, and what I find encouraging is that these problems are preventable.

All the independents agree we need to approve permits in a reasonable amount of time. California, for instance, is revered as an environmentally sensitive state. It's embarrassing that its permitting time is a fraction of what companies must endure here in Alaska.

The independents also complained about the state's confusing and ever-changing tax code. They wondered why they couldn't create a simple, reasonable and fair tax code and stick with it like all other oil-basin states do.

Some executives suggest Alaska might partner with industry by helping with much-needed infrastructure. Similar to what we did to stimulate the development of Red Dog Mine, we can build roads, airstrips and shared facilities that become revenue generators through industry user fees. Others were critical; suggesting that the state could do to work with Native village corporations to improve relationships and help mitigate land use plans and permits.

All the independents agree that if the state would meaningfully address these concerns that Alaska's oil fields would boom with success. Success seldom just happens. It's not a game — it's a plan and a strategy. If we want success, we need to address these concerns with practical resolve.

Independents like Hilcorp, Armstrong Oil & Gas, Caelus Energy Alaska LLC, and Oil Search — coupled with companies like BP, ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil — are

striving to ignite a renaissance on the North Slope. They're proving that our geological formations are oil rich with much more still to be discovered. These companies are finding success despite the unfriendly environment that has soiled Alaska's reputation with investors and explorers.

It's time that we quit fighting industry over nickels and dimes when billions are at stake. It's time to remove the barriers that hinder our state's financial success.

With the New Year fresh, let's seize this opportunity and work to realize our potential. Let's put our minds and efforts towards creating new wealth for Alaska instead of fighting over a series of nuisance and regressive taxes that will harm the economic well-being of our communities. The opportunities exist for success. All we need now is the political will and leadership to realize that success.

It's time to roll up our sleeves, formulate a plan, implement that plan, and enjoy a tremendous 2018 for Alaska.

Curtis W. Thayer is lifelong Alaskan and serves as president and CEO of the Alaska Chamber.

# TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is **Wednesday, Jan. 10**, the 10th day of 2018. There are 355 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:**

On Jan. 10, 1776, Thomas Paine anonymously published his influential pamphlet, "Common Sense," which argued for American independence from British rule.

**On this date:**

In 1861, Florida became the third state to secede from the Union.

In 1863, the London Underground had its beginnings as the Metropolitan, the world's first underground passenger railway, opened to the public with service between Paddington and Farringdon Street.

In 1870, John D. Rockefeller incorporated Standard Oil.

In 1920, the League of Nations was established as the Treaty of Versailles went into effect.

In 1946, the first General Assembly of the United Nations convened in London. The first manmade contact with the moon was made as radar signals transmitted by the U.S. Army Signal Corps were bounced off the lunar surface.

In 1948, future country music star Loretta Lynn (nee Webb) married Oliver "Mooney" Lynn; she was 15 at the time, he was 21 (the marriage lasted until Oliver Lynn's death in 1996).

In 1957, Harold Macmillan became prime minister of Britain, following the resignation of Anthony Eden.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson, in his State of the Union address, asked Congress to impose a surcharge on both corporate and individual income taxes to help pay for his "Great Society" programs as well as the war in Vietnam. That same

day, Massachusetts Republican Edward W. Brooke, the first black person elected to the U.S. Senate by popular vote, took his seat.

In 1978, the Soviet Union launched two cosmonauts aboard the Soyuz 27 capsule for a rendezvous with the Salyut 6 space laboratory.

In 1984, the United States and the Vatican established full diplomatic relations for the first time in more than a century.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton, attending a NATO summit meeting in Brussels, Belgium, announced completion of an agreement to remove all long-range nuclear missiles from the former Soviet republic of Ukraine.

In 2000, America Online announced it was buying Time Warner for \$162 billion (the merger, which proved disastrous, ended in December 2009).

**Ten years ago:** The United States lodged a formal diplomatic protest with Iran over an incident in which Iranian speedboats harassed U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf. President George W. Bush, visiting Israel and the Palestinian-controlled West Bank, said a Mideast peace pact would require "painful political concessions by both sides." John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee, endorsed Barack Obama's White House bid. Mailla Nurmi, whose "Vampira" TV persona pioneered the spooky-yet-sexy Goth aesthetic, died in Los Angeles at age 85.

**Five years ago:** President Barack Obama nominated White House chief of staff Jack Lew to be treasury secretary. Vice President Joe Biden met with representatives from the National Rifle Association and other pro-gun groups as he worked on recommendations to curb gun violence. Major League Baseball announced it would test for human growth hormone throughout the regular season and

increase efforts to detect abnormal levels of testosterone.

**One year ago:** An unrepentant Dylann Roof was sentenced to death in Charleston, South Carolina, for fatally shooting nine black church members during a Bible study session, becoming the first person ordered executed for a federal hate crime. President Barack Obama bid farewell to the nation in an emotional speech in Chicago. Singer Buddy Greco, 90, died in Las Vegas.

**Today's Birthdays:** Opera singer Sherrill Milnes is 83. Blues artist Eddy Clearwater is 83. Rock singer-musician Ronnie Hawkins is 83. Baseball Hall of Famer Willie McCovey is 80.

Movie director Walter Hill is 78. Actor William Sanderson is 74. Singer Rod Stewart is 73. Rock singer-musician Donald Fagen (Steely Dan) is 70. Boxing Hall of Famer and entrepreneur George Foreman is 69. Roots rock singer Alejandro Escovedo is 67. Rock musician Scott Thurston (Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers) is 66. Singer Pat Benatar is 65. Hall of Fame race car driver and team owner Bobby Rahal is 65. Rock musician Michael Schenker is 63. Singer Shawn Colvin is 62.

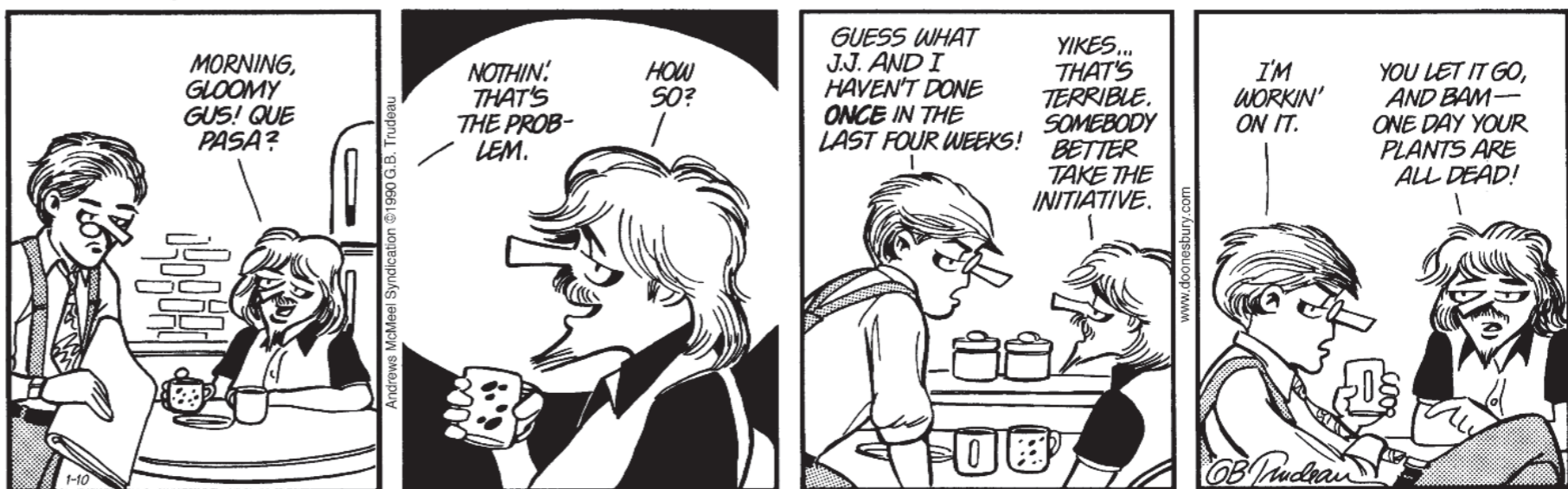
Rock singer-musician Curt Kirkwood (Meat Puppets) is 59. Actor Evan Handler is 57. Rock singer Brad Roberts (Crash Test Dummies) is 54. Actress Trini Alvarado is 51. Rock singer Brent Smith (Shinedown) is 40.

Rapper Chris Smith (Kris Kross) is 39. Actress Sarah Shahi is 38. Presidential adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner is 37. American roots singer Valerie June is 36.

**Thought for Today:** "History must speak for itself. A historian is content if he has been able to shed more light." — William L. Shirer, American author and journalist (1904-1993).

by Garry Trudeau

# Doonesbury Flashbacks



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