Message from the Executive Director
By Paula F. Easly

Something to think about

I was alerted to read of Senator Paul Tsongas' comments in a Senate speech before his recent retirement from Congress. Tsongas warned his fellow Democrats: "The weakness that we have, as Democrats, is that we have never convinced the country we know how to run the economy, that Democrats are viewed as people who care less about how well the country is doing and spend all their time worrying about how you distribute the golden eggs. The country's health is at stake."

Tsongas confessed that as a member of the House he voted against the late Bill Steiger's bill to slash the capital gains tax because "I was a Democrat. I considered the ethic in the business world was pro-business, and therefore, since it is pro-business, we are against it. So I voted against it. That bill which I did not support did more for the economy of this state than anything I did as a congressman."

While Sen. Tsongas has not been a notable friend of Alaska, he has been a thoughtful national figure and a well-respected member of the United States Senate. Only a person of great stature could make the admission he did.

As I reflect upon the Senator's parting words, I think of the many times Alaska's own Democrats and Republicans too have voted according to an alliance and not the merits of the issue. Often times the action proved deadly to the cause of Alaska's long-term prosperity, which is the major agenda of this organization. Let us encourage our new legislative leaders to ask the question "What is in the long-term best interests of Alaska?" and deliberate on the issues they will face next session. That is the guideline we in RDC use, and we think it just as prudent a criterion for legislative decision-making.
Former Legislator Attacks State's Track Record...

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dustry could expand from $300 million annually to over $3 billion. Such expansion would make Alaska one of the top mineral producing states in America.

Granite Rock Ruling...

Granite Rock must get a coastal development permit or face seven penalties that would force the company to shut down. Granite Rock took the case to federal District Court to argue it should be allowed to mine without having to obtain permits from an agency that is so opposed to mining. The Commission claims its permitting power, which is an effective veto power, must apply to Granite Rock and all mining claims on federal lands within the coastal region.

The District Court ruled against the mining company and so in doing made some rather unusual statements about federal law which, if upheld, could have serious consequences for all users of federal lands. If the Ninth Circuit does not overrule the District Court decision, Easley says the state cannot afford to establish a negative philosophy toward resource development.

Separate Regulations Proposed

The Executive Committee of the Resource Development Council (RDC) is urging the National Park Service (NPS) to exercise extreme care in revising rules regulating mining and mining activities within units of the National Park System to avoid negative effects on the mining industry and the rights of individual claimholders in Alaska.

The RDC action came after a recent NPS announcement that it intends to promulgate revised rules regulating mining and mining activities within the National Park System.

In a letter to Assistant Secretary Ray Arnett, RDC president Charles Webber called on the NPS and the Department of the Interior to separate proposed rules to govern mining within National Park Units by proposing regulations for Alaska from those of other states. In addition, Webber requested an extension of no less than 120 days for public comment and review to insure adequate opportunity for input to new regulations by concerned citizens.

"We feel strongly that nothing short of separate regulations for Alaska and an exhaustive public review and comment period on this important subject is warranted," Webber wrote. The RDC president pointed out that there are numerous environmental, economic and practical reasons why Alaska conditions are different from circumstances found in other states.

When Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980, it included many special provisions relative to mining that specifically guaranteed the rights of mining claimholders within the newly created units of the National Park Service in Alaska.

Notable Quote

"...there is a growing need for more mapping (geologic) at the smaller scale. Since only seven percent of Alaska is covered by detailed geologic maps, this is an information gap where the state's data base is deficient."

--Thomas E. Smith

Alaska Division of Geologic and Geophysical Surveys

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Alaska's Economic Priorities: A 5-Year Strategy

The Resource Development Council for Alaska will bring the dilemma of declining state oil revenues, state spending practices and the need for economic diversification to the forefront at its Fifth Annual International Conference on Alaska's Resources February 13-14 at the Anchorage Sheraton Hotel.

"Alaska's Economic Priorities: A Five-Year Strategy" reports on state development strategies and revenue forecasts, discusses community development planning and presents recommendations of other states.

A major theme of the program will be devoted to presentations by Alaska community and borough leaders who will discuss elements of their present economies and contingency plans for adjusting to declining state revenues. These speakers will present their community or borough's recommendation for the single most important action or project that would allow their economies to strengthen or diversify in the next few years. Other presentations will focus on the question of resolving competing regional demands for capital and means of assisting state political leaders in the decisionmaking process.

It is expected that projects proposed for state funding will far exceed the state's financing capabilities in the next five years. As a result, the conference will feature a panel of neutral development specialists from other states to share their views as to which projects, in their opinion, can best stimulate regional economic diversification, subject to available funding. RDC will also ask the audience to rank, within budget constraints, projects it believes would best meet the five-year economic diversification goal.

International development leaders and investors will also speak at the conference on alternative means of funding projects and leveraging capital.

To register for the conference, call or write the Office of Continuing Education at the University of Alaska-Anchorage at (907) 766-4779, 3251 Providence Drive, Room 103, Library, Anchorage, Alaska 99508. Registration fee is $175 before Jan. 5, $195 after.

All-Alaska Community Expo

The Resource Development Council will hold in conjunction with its 1985 resource conference, a trade fair featuring Alaska communities and other exhibitors February 13-14 at the Anchorage Sheraton Hotel.

The All-Alaska Community Expo will promote each participating area as a tourist destination to both Alaskans and visitors while providing information to potential buyers on local products available for export or for use in other states. The Expo will give communities an opportunity to distribute data on land availability, industrial support, population, utilities, communications, housing, transportation, employment, education, sports and cultural amenities.

In addition, the Expo will give each community an opportunity to publish facts and figures to conference attendees to generate support for its "most important action or project" for economic diversification.

For additional information, contact Cindy Jordan at 276-0700.