

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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SENATOR LYDA GREEN SENATE DISTRICT G

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 15, 2003

In the Sunday Anchorage Daily News editorial column by a former legislator, nostalgia and sound bites were used to render a negative assessment of MatSu legislators. I respectfully disagree with the examples used and the conclusions drawn.

MatSu delegation members **have not** said they do not want government services. The MatSu delegation believes that those services (courts, roads, public safety and education), which are inherently impossible for an individual to carry out, are the necessary and appropriate functions of government. Over-regulation, duplication of services and high taxes are not a wanted or wise use of money. Public land access, Second Amendment rights protection and job development are paramount. Do not mischaracterize nine years of legislation and improvements in the MatSu Valley.

- Public Safety—Palmer and Wasilla have city police departments.

However, most of the population resides outside these service areas.

The Troopers cover the remainder of the district. My office received numerous calls about neighborhood crime. We learned of potential solutions through the American Sheriff's Association. We took those suggestions for a sheriff's department or a public safety contract for these areas to the Borough. Discussions and an interest survey are

being initiated with the community councils at this very time. Local residents will decide if this type of law enforcement is acceptable and if they are willing to participate. This is great progress toward solving a difficult problem.

- Court System—Caseload growth is being experienced in many areas of the state. Judges have traveled to handle high caseload areas for years. In the Court budget, I included funding for an Assistance Judge and Court Clerk for Palmer. I have also included funding for security at the Palmer and Kenai courthouses.
- Hospital Finance/Detoxification Beds—Every hospital writes off non-collectible debts. One of the programs being considered in a local facility is a detox unit. Often, the patient ends up at the hospital to receive continuing services anyway. I worked with Nugen's Ranch to restore funding for its detox beds. A review of occupancy rates in all detox centers was conducted by DHSS. Detox beds are paid for at 100% occupancy (even when not occupied) by the state. Nugen's occupancy rate was less than 65%. The funding was moved to a facility with a higher occupancy rate. Although I did not like this outcome, it was probably the correct one. The detox beds were not closed by the legislature. I will continue to work to have detox beds in the MatSu Valley.
- Medical Health Care Coverage (Medicaid)—Until this year, Alaska did not have a law defining the crime of medical health care fraud. I sought to change that. As a result of numerous committee hearings,

SB41, Medical Health Care Fraud, is now law. SB41 should result in better use of all Medicaid dollars and better reimbursements for hospitals.

- Education—Several years ago, Senator Rick Halford and I introduced SB11, which provided reimbursement of approved school construction costs. MatSu approved all construction and maintenance programs available. In 2002, an even broader reimbursement program passed.
- Industry Development and New Jobs—I introduced legislation (requested by the MatSu Borough) to provide public prison expansion at Palmer Correctional. I have fully supported improvements at the Port McKenzie docks (voters have the chance to approve construction and maintenance projects which are 100% reimbursable for the dock at Port McKenzie) and infrastructure at Hatcher Pass. I have been delighted to appropriate funds for these projects. I currently serve on the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority, another project with great potential for MatSu.

I have worked with private citizens and with the cities of Houston, Palmer and Wasilla and the Borough for the maximum benefit and concern for their capital priorities. I will continue to make the best possible decisions for the MatSu area and the state while at the same time striving to limit government's control over people. However, I strongly support government's role in public safety, courts, education, roads and other activities the individual cannot maintain himself.

Very little in the referenced column was complete or correct. Leave MatSu and its legislators out of your ranting. Perhaps, the author would be better off to reflect on his own limited legislative accomplishments.