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## A Message from Federal Co-Chair

*George Canelos*

**Dear Friends of the Denali Commission,**

### ***Elizabeth Peratrovich Day***

Alaskans celebrate each February 16th as Elizabeth Peratrovich Day, and we feature her incredible story at the end of this eNewsletter. Many readers know she was instrumental in passing a major Anti Discrimination Bill in Alaska, but few remember that this important legislation, focusing on equal rights for Alaska Native peoples, passed 19 years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964! We hope you will take the time to learn more about this amazing story of triumph as Elizabeth battled injustices that existed in this state not so long ago.



### ***Alaska Forum on the Environment***

This month, the Denali Commission participated in the Alaska Forum on the Environment, which has grown into the second largest gathering of rural Alaskans and public decision-makers after the annual AFN Convention. We reflected on the Commission's "10 Years Of Progress" since passage of the Denali Commission Act in 1998 and focused on the numerous challenges yet to be completed. Although we are an independent federal agency, we rely on the numerous partnerships that make our program delivery the success it has been over these past ten years. We convened two panels of experts reviewing lessons learned in investing in rural infrastructure – one from the point of view of the funder; the other from the perspective of the local recipient. Commission staff also participated in conference sessions on the challenges faced in rural communities

February 2009

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**March 2, 2009** - The *Denali Commission Economic Development Advisory Committee* will meet. Watch our [website](#) for meeting times and location. Contact [Ms. Adison Smith](#) for details on this meeting.

**March 16, 2009** – The application deadline for the *2009 Denali Commission Summer Internship Program*. For further information, please contact [Janet Hall](#) at 907-271-4990.

**March 18, 2009** - The Planning Workgroup will meet at the Denali Commission offices from 10:00 a.m to 11:30 a.m. Watch our [website](#) for details on this meeting.

**March 18 and 19, 2009** – The *Denali Commission Quarterly Meeting* will be held at Centennial Hall, Egan room, Juneau. On March 18 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. On March 19 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Watch our [website](#) for an agenda. Teleconference call in will be available. Contact [Ms. Adison Smith](#) for details on this meeting.

**March 24, 2009** - The *Denali Commission Health Steering Committee* will meet. Watch our website for meeting times and location. Contact [Ms. Adison Smith](#) for details on this meeting.

**March 26, 2009** – The *Denali Commission Training Advisory Committee* will meet. Watch our [website](#) for meeting times and location. Contact [Ms. Adison Smith](#) for details

regarding climate change, backhauling old tank farms, Arctic coastal infrastructure and many other issues. We look forward to sharing outcomes and results in the weeks to come.

Examples of Smart Grant-Making - I'd like to highlight two of the many grants we issued in January that are particularly noteworthy:

- St. Paul Small Boat Harbor. Four major organizations teamed up to fund a \$17 million major improvement to the St. Paul Small Boat Harbor on the Pribilof Islands: Denali Commission (\$600,000), State of Alaska (\$4.2 million), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (\$6.6 million) and the Central Bering Sea Fisherman's Association (\$6.2 million). This team approach helps assure the project is well conceived, necessary and being funded in the best practicable way.
- Toksook Bay Teacher Housing Project. Providing quality housing is a major incentive for teachers to remain in remote communities. The Lower Kuskowkim School District is providing a \$241,000 match to Denali Commission's \$241,000 grant to renovate the outdated elementary school into teacher housing. Renovation, in this case, is less expensive than new construction and reuses an existing community asset.

#### ***In Closing...***

The Denali Commission Quarterly Meeting will be held in Juneau on March 18 and 19th and we hope to see you there. Important agenda items include the adoption of our FY09 Work Plan. Thank you to those of you who took a moment and provided us with your comments on this important public process. We look forward to seeing you in Juneau.

Best Wishes,



George J. Cannelos,  
Federal Co-Chair

on this meeting.

**April 20 – 24, 2009 – *Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change*** will be held at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage. Details can be found on their [website](#) or by emailing [info@indigenoussummit.com](mailto:info@indigenoussummit.com)

#### **PROGRAM UPDATES**

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**View [Monthly Program Updates](#) to get the latest program activities.**

#### **Procurement at Denali Commission**

In our continuing efforts for efficiency at the Commission, we use the Procurement Team at the US

Treasury Bureau of Public Debt (BPD) to conduct our major purchasing initiatives. This team of professional acquisition specialists assists us with contract solicitations, awards and administration. Open market requests for quotes or proposals valued over \$25,000 are advertised on the national federal website FedBizOpps at [www.fedbizopps.gov](http://www.fedbizopps.gov)

Upcoming solicitations include:

- None at this time.

To give all potential contractors the same information, all questions about these or other procurement opportunities for the Commission should be directed to: Lisa Gossett or Gina Hanna at [psb3@bpd.treas.gov](mailto:psb3@bpd.treas.gov)

### **In Focus: Elizabeth Peratrovich Day**

The Denali Commission would like to take a moment this month to reflect on an important person in history and an important day, February 16, Elizabeth Peratrovich Day. In 1988 the Alaska State Legislature established February 16 as Elizabeth Peratrovich day to commemorate the signing of the Anti-Discrimination Act and the work done by Elizabeth Peratrovich to make this happen. This day provides an opportunity to remind the public of the invaluable contribution of this Alaskan Native leader who was an advocate for Native citizens and their rights. This courageous woman could not remain silent about injustice, prejudice and discrimination.



Upon returning to Alaska in the early 1940's, Elizabeth and her husband Roy were astonished to discover signs in business establishments revealing blatant discrimination against Alaska's Native people. With the help of then Governor Ernest Gruening and Congressional Representative Anthony J. Dimond, legislation was sponsored and introduced in the Legislature in 1943, the nation's first anti-discrimination bill. The bill which mandated equal rights for Natives, who were at the time being denied admission to establishments such as restaurants and hotels, did not pass until the next legislative session in 1945.

Elizabeth provided the crucial testimony that cultivated passage of the Anti Discrimination Bill. When questioned by the Senate -- Will the equal rights bill eliminate discrimination in Alaska? Elizabeth answered, "Have you eliminated larceny or murder by passing a law against it? No law will eliminate crimes but, at least you as legislators, can assert to the world that you recognize the evil of the present situation and speak your intent to help us overcome discrimination."

As Elizabeth stepped down from the Senate platform, the galleries and some of the senators gave her a rousing acclaim. The Senate passed the bill 11 to 5. A new era in Alaska's racial relations had begun.

Elizabeth Peratrovich died on December 1, 1958 after a battle with cancer. It was not until many years later that Elizabeth's efforts to secure equality for all Alaskans won recognition. In 1988, the Alaska Legislature established February 16 as "The Annual Elizabeth Peratrovich Day," the anniversary of the signing of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Every year since that day, Alaskans pause to remember her, dedicating themselves to the continuation of her efforts to achieve

equality and justice for all Alaskans of every race, creed, and ethnic background.

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