

Jan 2025 DC Trip Summary - Brian Taylor - Gustavus City Councilmember

From January 20 - 27, I was privileged to travel out and back from Gustavus to Washington DC to attend a National League of Cities (NLC) Grant Cohort Convening. While there I was able to meet with Alaska senator Dan Sullivan, as well as aides from Lisa Murkowski's office, to discuss several city concerns.

I want to thank the National League of Cities for the opportunity to participate in their grant cohort convening. They'll be reimbursing my travel costs for the trip, and they covered the lodging costs for three of the five nights I spent in our nation's capital.

NLC Grant Cohort Convening

The National League of Cities invited me out to attend their convening of grant recipients from their *Advancing Economic Mobility Initiative Rapid Grant Program*. This two day assembly of grant recipients was inspiring and invigorating. I was able to share stories and experiences with mayors, municipal managers, and economic development specialists from around the nation.



My biggest takeaways from the event are:

- Child care needs are essentially a universal element across cities of all sizes.
- Other municipalities take a more active role than Gustavus does in the economic development of their cities.
- Many other cities in the USA are gracefully working across language and cultural barriers to integrate a significant number of refugees into their population.
- Climate change adaptation is a persistent theme in coastal cities.
- Our problems in Gustavus are relatively simple and small by comparison in most cases.

Meetings with our Alaska Senators

I brought a number of issues to our senators and their staff in DC. Largely I presented them as **Dock Issues, Airport Issues**, and other issues. These were two separate meetings on different days with the different offices, but to avoid repeating myself I've consolidated them below.

Dock Issues

Funding for Breakwater planning at ferry dock -

- PIDP funding takes on average 5 years to be approved, keep applying.
- Senator Sullivan admonished me for not having gotten a letter of support from him for our first PIDP application. Let's be sure to get letters from our complete federal congressional delegation.
- A Murkowski staffer gave me a contact at the Army Corps of Engineers to connect with about their process and to see if they could be of service for this work.

Onerous insurance requirements for contractor use of the Gustavus "ferry" dock

- Despite there being an MOU in place that directs the State to negotiate the multi-modal use of the "ferry dock", recently contractors have been told they cannot use the dock, or have been burdened with unrealistic insurance requirements as a precondition of use.
- Generally, the senator's aides viewed this as a state issue, since AK DOT owns the dock and is responsible for negotiating the terms of its use.
- Kathy has collected more information about this issue and we'll share it with the senators in case there's an avenue they can help us pursue to alleviate this issue.

Airport Issues

Intermittent issues with the PAGES AWOS 3 weather equipment

- The reason the Alaska Airlines jet can't land when the station isn't broadcasting is because of a requirement with their insurance provider
- If this becomes an issue in the coming season we may be able to mitigate it by getting an NWS certified weather observer here in town who can help Alaska Airlines.

- Senator Sullivan said he is pursuing federal funding to get weather stations like this one fixed.
- This is a persistent issue spread widely across Alaska, with nearly the majority of them having issues, according to one of Murkowski's aides
- I'm gathering more information to share with one of Senator Murkowski's aides, for them to pass to the FAA

Law enforcement issues, TSA requirements

- Both senator's offices were interested in helping us come to a more stable and long term solution to this problem
- I'm collecting more information to pass to one of Senator Sullivan's aides, they'll coordinate with aides in Murkowski's office and reach out to the DOI to see if they can get more information on how this decision was reached internally at the NPS.

PFAS pile in "Temporary Storage" from airport resurfacing

- Senator Sullivan has an aide who is focused on PFAS work and was interested to find out about this.
- They reiterated that varying guidance between state and federal organizations has been a stumbling block here
- Senator Sullivan expressed a strong interest in helping develop a capacity to process PFAS contaminated material inside the state, to avoid the need to ship it south.
- Senator Murkowski's aides noted that previously a Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) request has been funded to assist with removal of PFAS contaminated materials in Fairbanks.
- Action on this issue falls to the state, but I urged the senator's offices to keep us apprised of any progress on this issue at the federal level.

Other Issues

Hydrology mapping for drainage work using LIDAR data

- We have some LIDAR data, but it's not processed into a useful format for us to use for drainage engineering work.
- Senator Murkowski's aides were excited to share about a class at UAF where students have been taking LIDAR data to help create maps for various uses and organizations.

Uncertainty around the orders of the new administration

- Things are still developing, it's best to continue to work as though funding that has been allocated is going to be received.