

# FOREWORD

## NORTH TO THE FUTURE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHANGE IN ALASKA'S EMERGING FRONTIERS

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*"Control your own destiny or someone else will."*

*-Jack Welch*

*"When did the future switch from being a promise to a threat?"*

*-Chuck Palahniuk*

*"The future ain't what it used to be."*

*-Yogi Berra*

Planning for the future is both essential and difficult. Not only are known trends hard to extrapolate with precision, there are unknown factors that inevitably change the course of the future.

Thinking about the future has always been of great interest for Alaskans. In 1963, in anticipation of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1867 purchase of Alaska from Russia, the Alaska Centennial Commission sponsored a contest to select a state motto. Over 750 entries were submitted. The winning entry – submitted by Juneau newsman Richard Peter – was "North to the Future." When asked about his suggestion, Peter said that he intended it to be a forward-looking and optimistic statement about Alaska's bright future. It was to be a "reminder that beyond the horizon of urban clutter there is a Great Land beneath our flag that can provide a new tomorrow for this century's 'huddled

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masses yearning to be free.” In 1967, the Alaska legislature officially adopted “North to the Future” as Alaska’s official motto.

The motto’s optimistic perspective seems most apt when viewed from the vantage point of a relatively new arrival to Alaska, the person moving from elsewhere to chase dreams or escape an unpleasant reality. In 1967, Alaska was a new State with a small population. All of Alaska was included in the “North” described in the motto; many of the economic opportunities now associated with Alaska had not yet been fully realized or developed.

In considering Alaska’s future in contemporary terms, however, the focus of the “North” in the motto has undoubtedly shifted. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought a new focus on the resources and economic potential for development in Alaska’s Arctic north. The watchword in the Arctic realm is change, be it climate change or changing economic opportunities. The “promise” of new economic opportunities – such as offshore oil and gas exploration or Arctic maritime traffic – comes with greater future risks than perceived in 1967’s optimistic times – risks to the environment from oil spills in inaccessible and environmentally sensitive areas and risks to the already fragile cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. One cannot help but wonder how well “North to the Future” and its bright optimism suits the current realities as it relates to the northern Arctic regions of Alaska.

These many potential changes in Alaska’s north are raising important legal questions across a wide range of issues. Thinking about some of the implications of Arctic change for Alaska provided an opportunity for the *Alaska Law Review*. In October, 2014, we held a symposium in cooperation with the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage. This issue includes several articles presented at the Symposium. The articles provide important descriptions and proposed solutions to some of the complex problems resulting from increased economic development in the Arctic. The articles reveal the profound challenges that Alaska faces. This includes the need to develop appropriate governmental authority and regulation in the Arctic region (on state, national, as well as international level) that both provides for sensible economic development and respects the indigenous population’s rights and cultural heritage.

Undoubtedly, these articles are just the proverbial “tip of the iceberg” respecting the potential legal issues raised by the changing Arctic. There are many more legal vantage points to consider and explore. We hope that these articles will contribute to the continuing need for study and evaluation of Arctic development and its impact on Alaska.