



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

AKPIRG's works to ensure the rights of people that are often sidelined, and help make possible healthy and thriving communities. Our work is done with the understanding that corporations should not have undue influence in our government, especially as corporations are recent constructs and many different types of government have existed on this land for tens of thousands of years. Alaska is an Indigenous place, comprised of 227 federally recognized Tribes, and our work takes place on unceded sovereign land. This fact informs our work and our lives. AKPIRG staff and board currently live on Sugpiaq, Dena'ina, Auk Kwáan, Taku Kwáan, Yup'ik, and Lower Tanana Dene lands.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

While we don't know what the next year holds for us, we know that the challenges faced will not be borne equally. As the pandemic wreaks havoc on the economy and makes existing inequalities even more acute, we know that AKPIRG's work is vital. We will continue to advocate for consumer protection and good governance, as we have since our founding in 1974. Now, when corporations seem to hold all the power, we make sure that consumers have a voice and are not continuously sidelined. When elected and appointed authorities abuse their power, we seek transparency so that decision-makers can be held accountable to Alaskans. Our values form the bedrock of this work, and at this moment it is clear how very necessary our mission is.

Our work is not just a fight—it is a celebration. We are not alone, and we are extraordinarily lucky to work among such amazing people and organizations. Our path is not just stopping bad, corrupted actors, but also building a new vision, for a thriving Alaska, governed by its people.

There is so much happening, but we want to collectively take a breath, together, and say thank you. From the AKPIRG staff and board, we are so extraordinarily grateful for your commitment to accountability and care in extremely difficult times.



Nelta Edwards

WHO WE ARE

Our Mission

Created in 1974, AKPIRG is a non-profit, non-partisan, citizen-oriented statewide membership organization, researching, educating and advocating on behalf of the public interest. AKPIRG advances the public interest by providing individuals with the opportunity and the information to participate equally in and be treated equally by the economic, social and political systems.

Core Values

- Justice
- Community
- Accountability

Our Vision

We are working towards a world of self-determined, thriving communities governed by people, not corporations.

AKPIRG BY THE NUMBERS



12 FULL & PART-TIME STAFF



14 GRANTS AWARDED



20 WEBINARS HOSTED



87 SUSTAINING DONORS*



563 GRASSROOTS COMMENTS GENERATED



34 NEW DONORS



18 OP-EDS PUBLISHED



TIMES OF "YOU'RE ON MUTE":
Unknown...but a lot

AKPIRG UPDATES

Board Activity

AKPIRG's board had a busy year! We have been shaping our Finance, Governance, Development, and Policy committees, we have revised our bylaws, and we made a new strategic plan through 2025. Additionally, we added board term limits and held a board recruitment process that led to the welcome addition of Will Kronick and Clay Venetis.

We hosted Melissa Shaginoff to do an incredible Land Acknowledgement training, where we discussed the meaning of community and our organizational and individual role in ongoing colonization. We talked about racial justice and how our internal and external work is (or isn't) aligned with these goals.

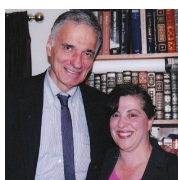
Staff Activity

Our staff grew significantly this year. We added seven new employees and brought on 27 contractors to help us on our projects. Those contractors, along with two staff (Erin Willahan and Rochelle Adams) helped translate the Census into seven Alaska Native languages for the first time. As always, our fabulous accountants are The Tax Associates. Thank you for your help over the years!

AKPIRG STAFF



Alyssa Sappenfield
Energy Analyst, shared staff with Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition



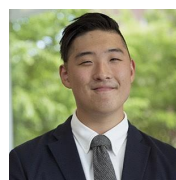
Andrée McLeod
Good Government Director



Ashlyn Johnson
Research Analyst, Intern



Ben Boettger
Editor, Alaska Energy Transparency Project (AETP)



David Song
Economic Justice Organizer, shared staff with Native Movement



Erin Willahan
Language Access Consultant



Kelsey Schober
Grants Manager



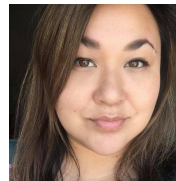
Maisie Thomas
Writer, AETP



Nathaniel Knapp
Software Analyst



Phil Wight
Policy Analyst



Rochelle Adams
Indigenous Language Specialist



Veri di Suvero
Executive Director

Program Highlights

COVID-19 RESPONSE

When COVID-19 hit Alaska, every single piece of our work went into overdrive. Predatory lending, garnishing stimulus checks, utility shut-offs, residential evictions and the state's economy were all an imminent threat to Alaskans. We started by creating a living list of resources. Volunteers added and updated information as more resources came online. We worked with Native Movement to jointly hire an Economic Justice Organizer, David Song, who tracked information on bank loan forgiveness, debt collection, and policy. We had intense discussions with legislators on the passage of SB241, ensuring rent and utility deferrals, halting automobile repossessions, and more. Then, we made a step-by-step guide on how to request a deferral for consumers struggling to pay rent or utilities. Recently, we've encouraged the Executive and Legislative branches to extend an eviction moratorium, and are working on longer-term solutions to make sure that this crisis is borne by the government rather than private entities like renters or landlords.

Activities include:

- Fiscally sponsoring the Mutual Aid Network of Anchorage, a grassroots network that was created as a direct response to the health and economic crisis created by COVID-19. MANA is a collective of neighbors building connections in their community to make sure everyone's basic needs are met. MANA's goal is to develop a culture of mutual aid in Anchorage neighborhoods both in response to COVID-19 and as preparation for our shared future.
- Advocating for rental assistance and an eviction and foreclosure moratorium to ensure public safety, by going directly to the Governor and Lt Governor with nine other organizations.
- Urging our Congressional delegation to prevent debt collectors from garnishing economic impact payments (stimulus checks)

MOVEMENT BUILDING

The work we do is not done in a vacuum. Our supporters are part of a larger movement: building towards a better, healthier world. This includes a world without toxics poisoning our communities, Indigenous communities self-determining their resource management, and explicit anti-racist practices ensuring equitably healthy and safe communities. Just as we rely on partners to support the work we do, we recognize that our participation in their work is critical to ensuring solidarity, trust, and progress. For this reason, we joined the Alaska Just Transition Collective (AJTC). The AJTC [MISSION STATEMENT].

Activities include:

- Stewarding, with Native Movement, a Police Violence story bank, to help gather data and eyewitness accounts of how our public safety system could be improved.
- Participation in the Save Our State coalition, a coalition of many organizations to protect essential state services and call for a responsible budget.
- Appointment to Renewable Energy Alaska Project's (REAP) Public Policy Committee, to discuss green investment and energy issues impacting consumers.

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

The State of Alaska approved the BP-Hilcorp deal, Alaska's largest sale in a generation. AKPIRG was a powerful voice urging for public scrutiny in this deal, particularly since almost all financial documents were kept confidential in an unprecedented level of secrecy for the largest corporation operating in Alaska. The sale of these critical oil assets to a small, private company with one of the worst safety and environmental records of any oil company operating in Alaska is not simply concerning, but sets a scary precedent for the State's commitment to transparency and public process.

To combat this, AKPIRG established a coalition to work on the BP-Hilcorp sale. Though this coalition successfully elongated the comment period from 21 days to 70 days, despite overwhelming public concerns expressed during this period, the State is allowing the sale to continue without full transparency and accountability measures. AKPIRG has joined with the City of Valdez to appeal the Regulatory Commission's decision to keep Hilcorp's finances – and thus the opportunity for public scrutiny and Hilcorp's ability to follow environmental regulations – private.

Activities included:

- Filing an ethics complaint under the Executive Branch Ethics Act for the auctioning off of a breakfast at the Alaska State Governor's Mansion at a Republican fundraiser.
- Establishing the Alaska Energy Transparency Project (AETP) which aims to be a clearing house of information, reporting and opinions about the democratic processes that drive Alaska's member-owned electrical cooperatives.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

As a member of the Alaska Census Working Group, a multi-sector coalition working to ensure a complete and accurate Census count, AKPIRG hosted a week-long convening in early December 2019 and translated, for the first time ever, the Census into seven Alaska Native languages. We also created Know Your Census Rights cards which were translated

into 11 world languages. AKPIRG's Executive Director, Veri, was appointed as a Commissioner to the Anchorage Complete Count Committee, and AKPIRG's Erin Willahan helped out at farmers markets to help people answer to the Census on the spot.

Activities included:

- Bringing two lawsuits against the Division of Elections, one for discriminating based on age who would receive absentee ballot applications, and the other for refusing to provide a period of time for Alaskans to correct any administrative mistakes (like a signature) on their ballot.
- Standing up a poll watcher program, supporting an Election Protection program, and producing Get Out The Vote videos in Alaska Native languages for the 2020 General Election, in partnership with the newly formed Alaska Civic Engagement State Table.
- Working with Yup'ik language expert Dorie Wassilie to translate information about the Democratic, Republican, and non-partisan presidential primaries.

RATEPAYER ADVOCACY

AKPIRG Executive Director Veri di Suvero has been appointed as the Consumer Advocacy representative to the Railbelt Reliability Council (RRC). The RRC was established in the wake of SB123, a historic, bi-partisan bill that established an Electric Reliability Organization in Alaska's railbelt region (from Homer to Fairbanks). This Electric Reliability Organization (or, the RRC) will be able to better coordinate infrastructure and operation across the grid, as well as allowing a more diverse array of energy producers to power the grid—saving ratepayers money and diversifying our energy portfolio in a time of great uncertainty around fossil fuel prices.

Activities included:

- Providing updated information on COVID-19 utility deferrals, with AKPIRG and Native Movement's Economic Justice Organizer calling each electric utility in Alaska.
- Testifying on SB83, a bill related to telecommunications, and advocating for more transparency in meetings.
- Producing a report on ongoing Broadband issues, authored by Ashlyn Johnson, a current UA student and AKPIRG Research Analyst.

CONSUMER FINANCE

AKPIRG joined the Alaska Just Transition Collective to focus on what healthier financial systems could look like. Like many Americans, many Alaskans are burdened by inescapable debt which force them into alternatives that often hurt them and/or their communities. The

first step toward building better financial systems starts with recognizing the problems that trap people in endless cycles of debt and moving toward systemic solutions rather than miring individuals in shame.

Activities included:

- Partnering with Alaska Legal Services Corporation and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium to create a debt collection training.
- Giving a Keynote speech about debt collection at First Alaskans Institute's Elders & Youth, an event that celebrates Alaska Native peoples, provides cultural practice workshops, and builds community for Alaska Native peoples across the state.
- Running a competition for consumers to join the savers program, Alaska Saves.
- Serving as the chair of the Alaska Financial Partnership Network
- Offering free Know Your Rights: Debt Collection trainings to all who request them

CONSUMER SAFETY

Corporations are not required to disclose or test for toxins in their products. To hold them to account and ensure healthier communities, AKPIRG assisted with data collection for a nation-wide *Packaged in Pollution: Are food chains using PFAS in packaging?* study of [PFAS]. The results, released in August 2020, prompted several large corporations including Lowes, Amazon, and Taco Bell to pledge elimination of PFAs in their products.

Other Activities included:

- Working with Alaska Community Action on Toxics to prevent the nomination of Nancy Beck, a chemical industries insider who would have been Chair of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.
Advocating against Alaska Airlines' purchase of the Boeing 737 given ongoing safety lawsuits.

LOOKING FORWARD

As we wrote in a joint op-ed with other Alaska Just Transition Collective leaders: “This pandemic has abruptly shifted our individual and collective life; the silos between work, home, food and health are collapsing. We are experiencing [just how fragile](#) an economy based largely on extraction and consolidation of wealth is. Yet, in this moment of global transition arises the opportunity to create a new “normal,” crafted with intention, ensuring justice and equity for all. In this moment of transition, we must ask ourselves: How can we shape this moment to build stronger, more resilient, more just communities?”

We take this question with us into this new year. As we rebuild from disaster, we must ensure our economy is working for everyone. Here are a few things we’re planning:

- **IN THE OFFICE:** In 2020, we secured health care for our staff. In 2021, we’re hoping to bring more staff up to full-time so they can affordably access that critical need.
- **WITH OUR PARTNERS:** In 2020, we hired two shared staff positions. In 2021, we’ll continue deepening these relationships through shared positions and collaborative work, like the newly formed Alaska Coalition for Justice, which is working to transform Alaska’s public safety system by seeking accountability, ending racial and systemic injustice, and eradicating harm from our criminal justice and policing systems.
- **ON THE ISSUES:** In 2021, we are working to ensure the COVID-19 vaccine is accessible for all and that good information is widespread. And on the economic impact side of COVID-19, we are working to ensure there is rental assistance available to Alaskans. As the Census has concluded, we will work to build a broad-based, non-partisan coalition advocating for a fair and equitable redistricting process, ensuring everyone’s vote matters equally. We are working to stand up the state’s first Electric Reliability Organization, ensuring electric utilities are keeping rates low for ratepayers. We are hoping to ensure a common-sense future for our state’s economy, with remediation costs built into corporate extractive industries financial models. We are continuing to work on holding our government accountable to its people, through public process and legislative advocacy.

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

Memberships

Railbelt Reliability Council, Implementation Committee – Consumer Advocacy Representative

Alaska Just Transition Collective - Member

Alaska Financial Partnership Network – Chair

Anchorage Complete Count Committee – Commissioner

Alaska Civic Engagement State Table (AKCES) - Steering Committee

Alaska Coalition for Justice - Coordinator

Alaska Renewable Energy Coalition (AREC) – Coordinator

Alaskan Artists for a Just Transition – Arts in Action event planning member

Alaska Census Working Group – Core group member

Justice For All - Alaska Courts System Legal Navigator – Steering committee member

Save Our State - Member

Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP) - Public Policy Committee

Organizational Partners

We couldn't do the work we do without incredible support from our partners. Below is an incomplete snapshot of the different partners we have in the various work we do. These organizations are doing amazing work.

- AKC
- ACAT
- Native Movement
- AFL-CIO
- ACLT
- NPA
- Money Management International
- Alaska Poor People's Campaign
- Cook Inlet Housing Authority
- Foraker Group
- Alaska Legal Services Corporation
- Alaska Courts System
- REAP
- Cook Inletkeeper
- Susitna River Coalition

- NAACP, Anchorage Chapter
- Alaska Black Caucus
- Gwich'in Steering Committee
- ACLU of Alaska
- Planned Parenthood Votes
- Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
- YWCA of Alaska
- Refugee Assistance and Immigrant Services (RAIS)
- Doyon Foundation

THANK YOU

We're continuing to work around the clock to support Alaskans and our community members (that's you!). There is so much happening, but we want to collectively take a breath, together, and say thank you. From the AKPIRG staff and board, we are so extraordinarily grateful for your commitment to accountability and care in extremely difficult times. Here are the people and partners who make our work possible:

Our Funding

Our work is made possible by community support as well as grant funding.

Alaska Counts - Census

FairVote - Voting Language Access

Movement Voter Project - Voting Rights

Native Peoples Action Community Fund - Voting Language Access

Tortuga Foundation - Utilities and Just Transition

Alaska Community Foundation, Social Justice Fund - Consumer Advocacy

Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund - Consumer Advocacy

Alaska Conservation Foundation - Utilities, Just Transition, and AETP

Our Donors

Aaron and Chandra Poe

Alan Davis

Alex Lee

Alexa Lawson

Alyse Loran

Andrew Thoms and Maite Lorente

Audrey Renschen

Benjamin Rowe

Beverly Short

Bob Shavelson

Brian Beckwith

Britta Hamre

Brittany Vancil

Charles Baldwin

Chris Backstrum

Christina Neal

Clay Venetis

Cody Carver

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Qunmigu Kacey Hopson
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Ruby Fried
Ruth Galaviz
Haley Sharman
Shea Siegert
Shevaun Meggitt
Stephen Day
Veri di Suvero
Vicki Clark
William Kronick
And five other anonymous donors!