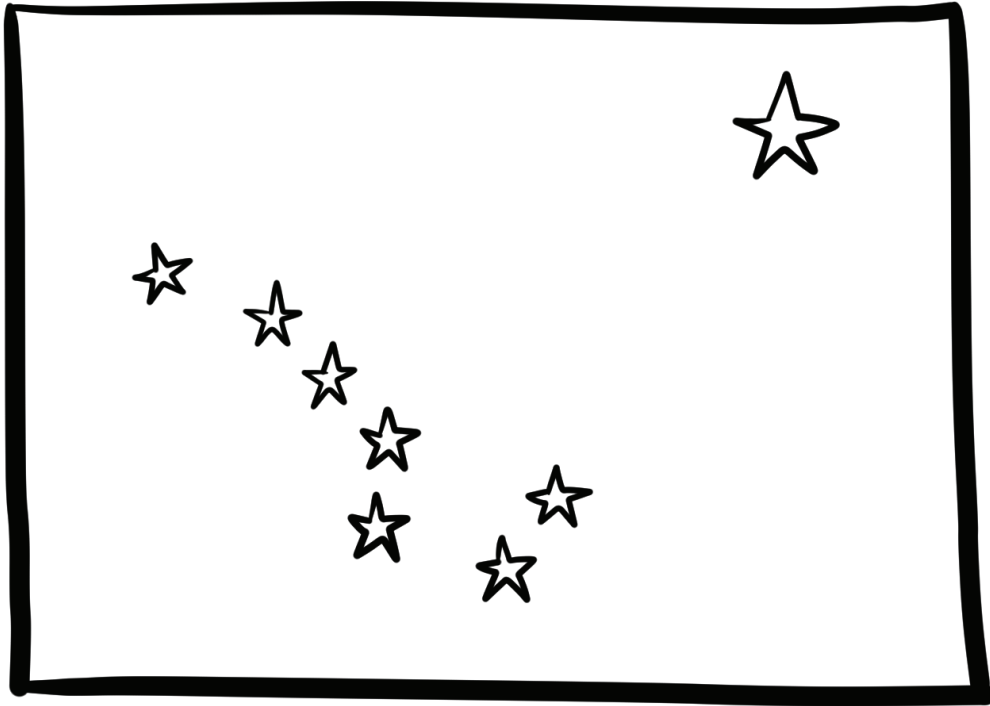

ALASKA'S GOVERNOR 2026

Let's not mess this up again.



“All political power is inherent in the people. All government originates with the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted solely for the good of the people as a whole.”

~ Alaska Constitution Article I § 2

Introduction

The executive branch in Alaska offers a great deal of promise and peril.

A terrible governor can set us back decades by inviting corruption, acting as a roadblock to progress, or by being completely checked out. A decent governor has the opportunity to build foundational policies that will serve the state for generations to come.

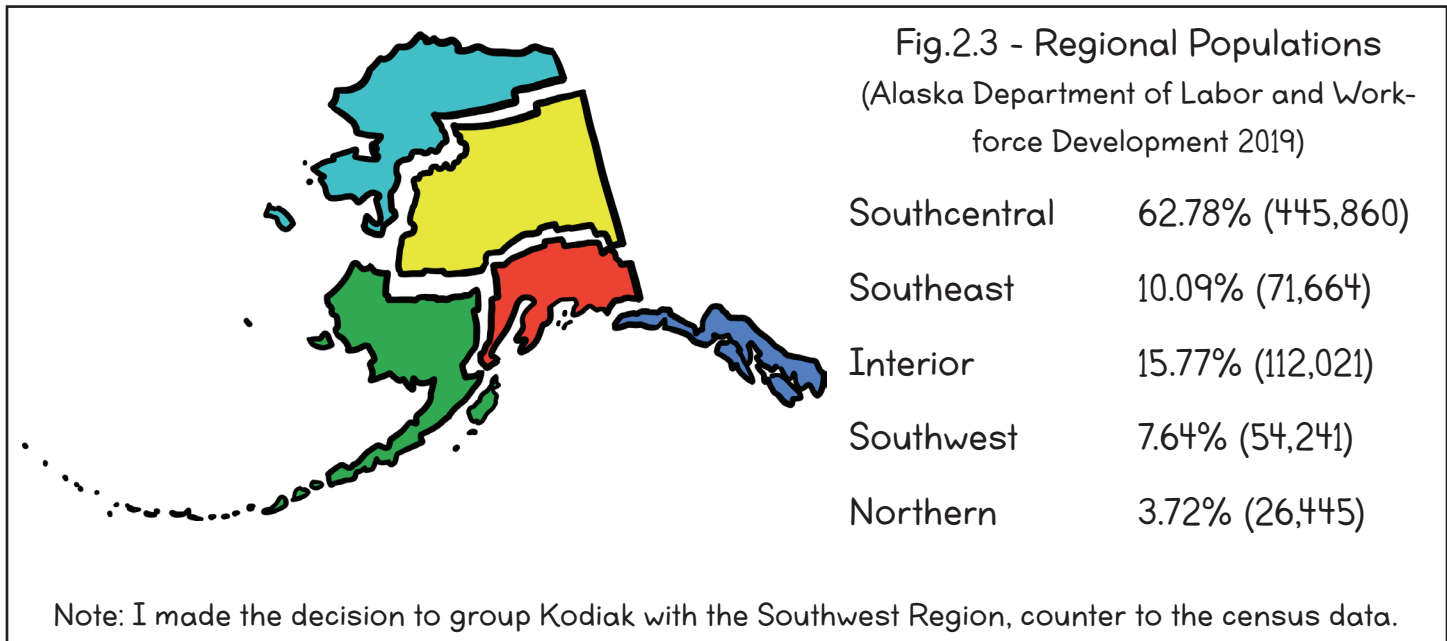
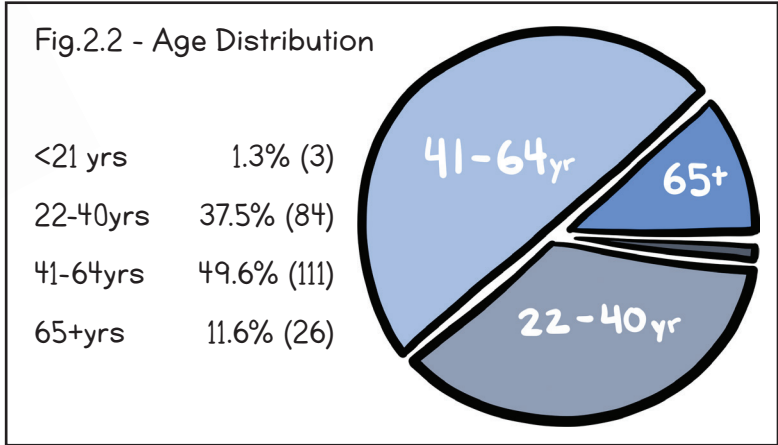
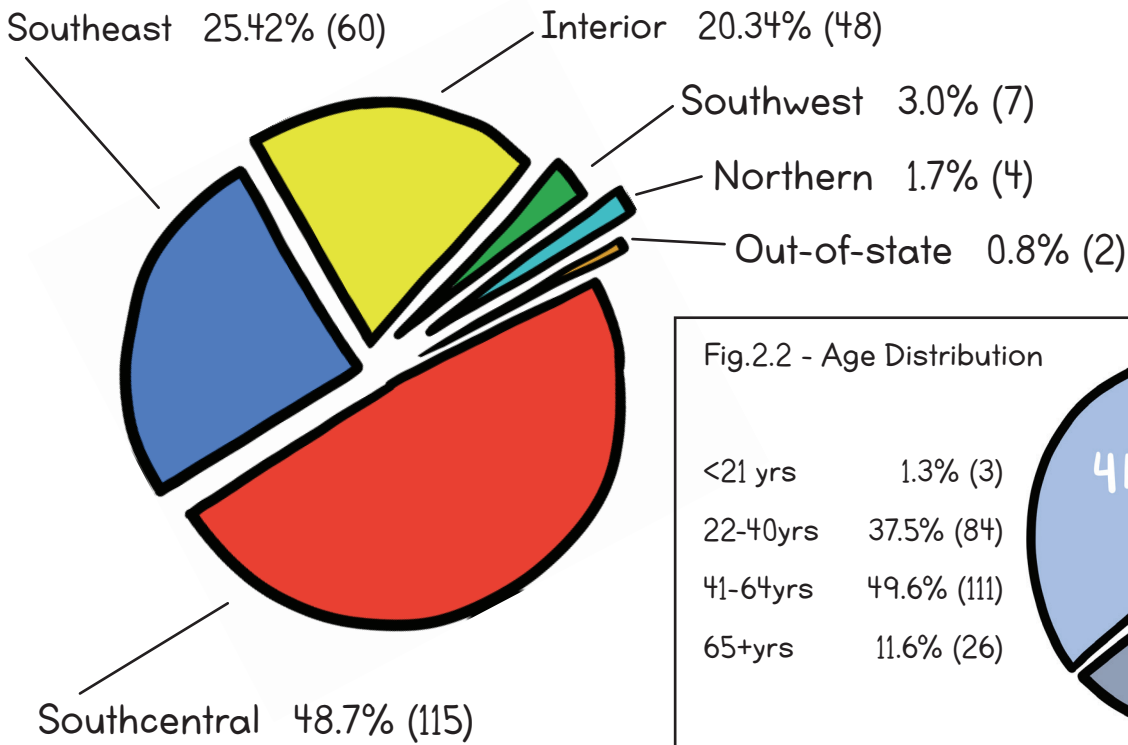
This report is meant as a conversation starter on this one important topic. It isn't statistically representative of Alaskans on the whole, but it is significant in that it contains the views of 224 Alaskans, many of whose names I recognized as business leaders, legislators, laborers, lawyers, parents, teachers and trusted friends. It's a great circle of folks I'd primarily class as people-who-would-fill-out-a-survey-I-sent.

At any rate, I hope you enjoy this light reading sprinkled with a bit of editorial noise. I hope you'll share it with other Alaskans and have conversations of your own that bubble up into the bigger evolving discussion of what path we want to set ourselves on and who should lead us there.

Good government is a community endeavor. It can be all of us at our best, or a lot of us at our worst. Either way, it's our decision to make and our result to bear.

So, who even filled out this survey?

Fig.2.1 - Survey Respondents by Region



Survey responses came from all regions of Alaska but we can see from fig.2.1 and fig.2.3 that the Southeast and Interior regions are overrepresented while the Northern, Southwest, and Southcentral regions are underrepresented.

In terms of party politics, respondents most identified as Non-Partisan, Undeclared and Democrat voters. Republicans are woefully underrepresented and they make up nearly 25% of voters.

Survey Respondents by Party

Democrat	33.93% (76)
Non-Partisan	32.14% (72)
Undeclared	27.68% (62)
Green	1.79% (4)
Republican	1.34% (3)
Other	3.13% (7)

I'm content with leaving this data skewed but I think it's important when wading into the rest of the results to remember that we're only hearing from a self-selecting subset of Alaskan voters and not the entirety of the state.

Just for fun, I've included fig.3.3 which shows the party makeup of the 34th legislature. It's plain to see partisanship is over-represented in Alaska but nice to see the legislative coalitions that have emerged anyways.

Registered Voters & Legislators by Party

Party	Reg. Voters	%	AKLEG
Other	30,606	5.13%	0
D	72,992	12.24%	23
NP	82,871	13.89%	0
U	264,387	44.32%	4(+1)
R	145,637	24.42%	32
Total	596,493		60

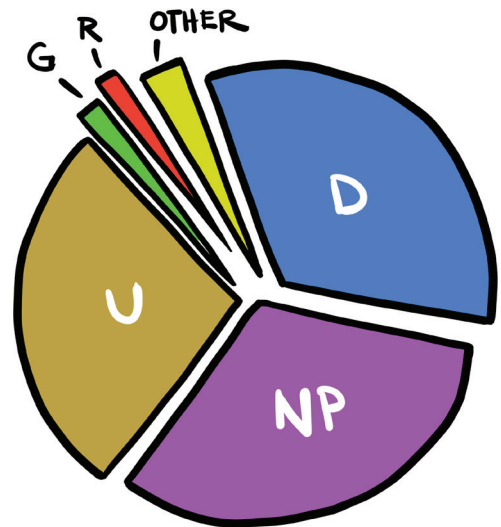


Fig.3.1 - Survey Respondents by Party

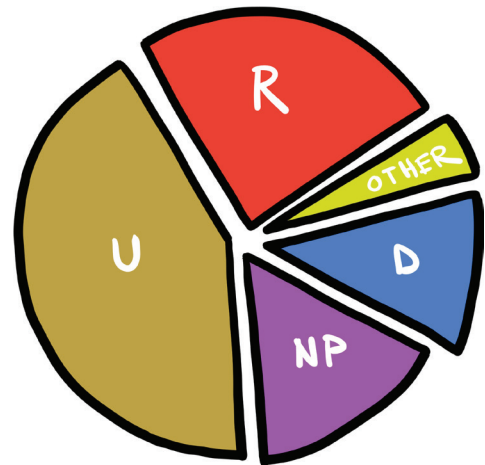


Fig.3.2 - Party Registration Actuals (DoE 3/25)

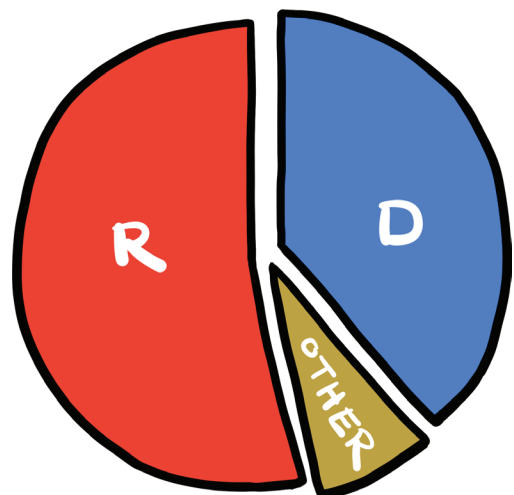


Fig.3.3 - Party Registrations for 34th AKLEG

What work experiences do you find most essential for an Alaska gubernatorial candidate?

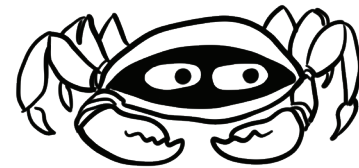
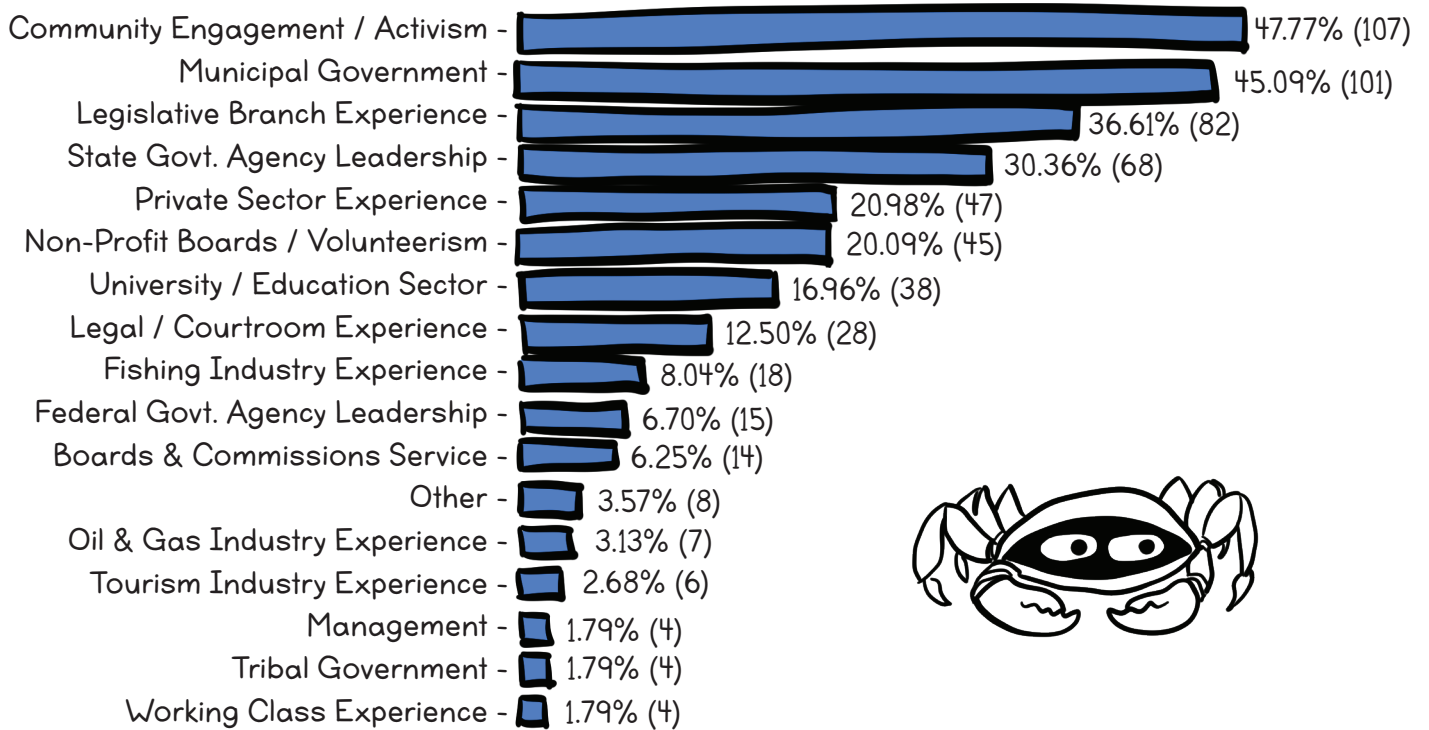


Fig.4.1 - Work Experience

This survey begins with questions about general qualifications rather than specific candidates because I wanted to get people thinking about those experiences and qualities before naming names.

"Community Engagement / Activism" topped the list with 47.77% of respondents noting that as a preferable quality.

Municipal, state agency and legislative leadership experience all fared similarly well. I like to think that demonstrates a bit of a hunger for competence.

This was a pre-populated list with fifteen options and room to add "Other."

Items listed under other included Tribal (2), Climate /Renewable Energy Expertise (2), Alaskan Longevity (2), Health Care (1), Military Experience(1), Economist (1).

What are the most important leadership qualities for an Alaska Governor?

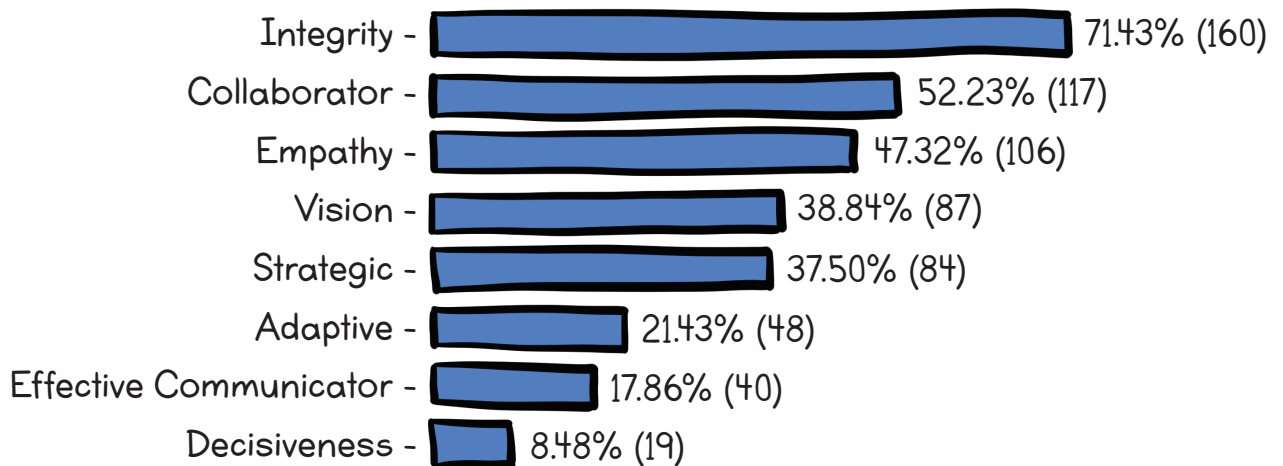


Fig.5.1 - Leadership Qualities

Integrity: A commitment to honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct.

Collaborator: The ability to work effectively with legislators, community leaders, citizens, etc.

Decisiveness: The ability to make tough decisions in a timely manner.

Vision: A governor who can articulate a compelling vision for the future of Alaska.

Strategic: The capacity to think strategically and prioritize initiatives that will have the greatest impact.

Empathy: A governor who understands the needs and concerns of Alaskan residents, including marginalized and underserved populations.

Effective Communicator: The skill to communicate clearly and persuasively, and to build consensus.

Adaptive: Explores innovative new ideas and approaches. Adapts to changing circumstances.

A few off-menu suggestions from respondents:

“This job is mostly hiring other people who are effective to carry out your direction... Can you attract a good team?”

“Puts Alaska conservation of natural resources and environment as a top priority.”

“Courage to support the agenda Alaska actually needs and campaign in a way that educates voters. Candidates trying to be all things to all people end up being nothing to no one.”

What do you consider to be the top policy issue(s) facing our state. And what solutions would you like to see from a gubernatorial candidate?

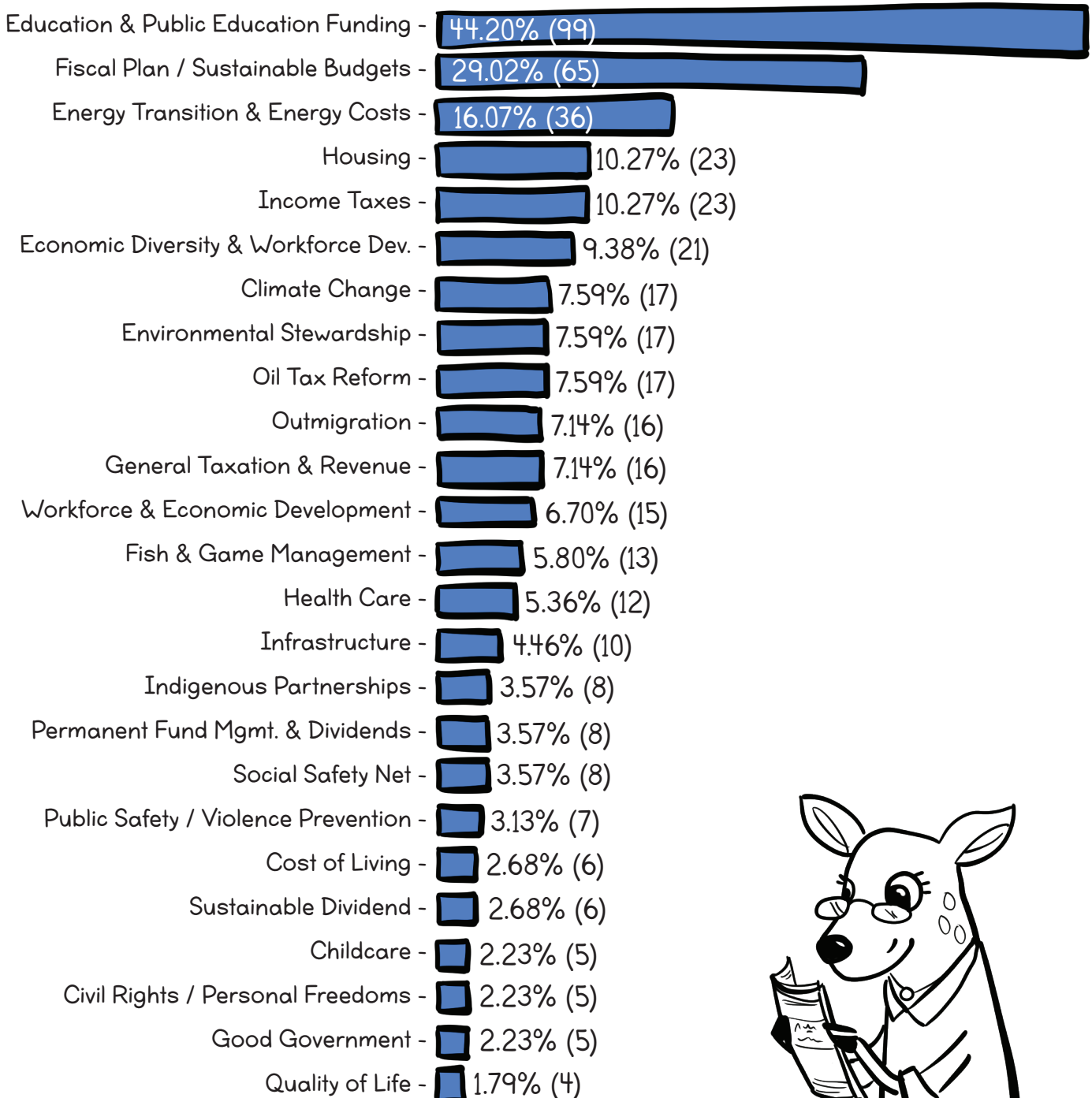


Fig.6.1 - Policy Issues

This was an open-ended question and it took a lot of time to read through and sort these answers into meaningful buckets. It was clear from the start that public education funding and the issues related to education funding were the top priority of this group of Alaskans. A sustainable fiscal plan was a solid second.

I wasn't surprised to see a lot of discussion of energy, jobs, and outmigration but I was gob smacked at how many people specifically mentioned an Income Tax. The real impacts of a forty-five year tax holiday are coming home to roost and I think some Alaskans are also realizing that any increase of population from climate refugees will spread state services even thinner.

I grouped comments related specifically to climate change in a different category from environmental stewardship. There was a difference in comments between taking care of what we have and preparing for more global consequences and changes. But group those two items together and environmental concerns outpace energy concerns.

The topic of energy wasn't solely driven by heating oil costs and our impending reliance on liquid natural gas imports. Some comments shared concerns more specifically about the opportunity for an energy transition.

Selected Comments:

"Where do I start?"

"Issue: Chronic defunding of schools and siphoning of funds to religious private schools."

"Too many people are leaving Alaska for education. Similarly, businesses do not want to start or innovate in Alaska without a skilled and educated workforce."

"I am most concerned about oil tax credits causing a budget deficit and inability to deliver state services."

"... Just encourag(ing) more oil development and mining will never make us financially solvent. Bring new ideas to the table, please."

"Solution: Massive public reinvestment in education, ferries, deferred maintenance, colleges, infrastructure, housing, shelter (including low/no barrier shelter), and treatment centers."

"We desperately need new sources of revenue."

"Arctic climate change: this is happening, like it or not."

"Prepare to be a refuge for thousands of internally displaced persons fleeing the many global climate change driven dangers, including rapid sea level rise."

"Addressing the implications of President Trump's executive orders for Alaska, including the threats to ANCSA."

"Decolonization."

Potential Candidates: Let's name some names!
 Which individual Alaskans do you think are practical
 and exciting options that Alaskan voters can get
 behind for a 2026 gubernatorial campaign?

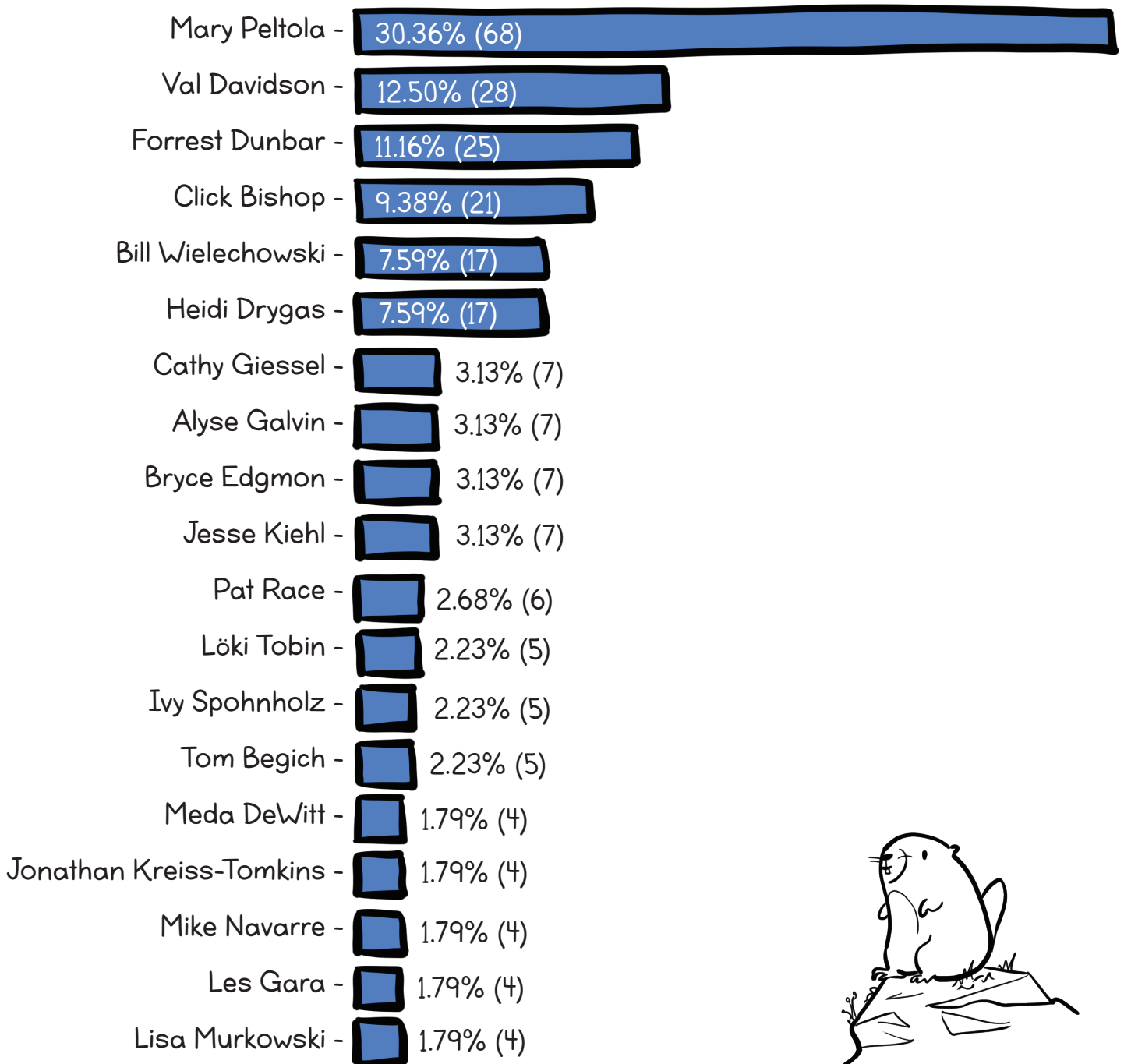


Fig.8.1 - Candidates

There were over 90 unique names suggested as candidates. It was a mix of wish list candidates and more practical, strategic choices.

Mary Peltola was a clear front runner named by about 30% of survey respondents but she also tied with Sarah Palin on the flat tire list. It appears she would have some reputational fix-it work ahead of her but maybe not enough of a headwind to matter, the numbers on the flat tire chart are comparatively very small.

Val Davidson remains quite popular despite her short time as Lt. Governor. Forrest Dunbar scores just above Click Bishop, a Republican who seems to have fairly strong support from the center-left crowd taking this survey.

The Dunleavy crowd litters the flat tire list but there's also some heavy resistance to "Any Begich" since Nick's win.

Potential Flat Tires: Is there anyone gearing up for a potential run who should just stay home?

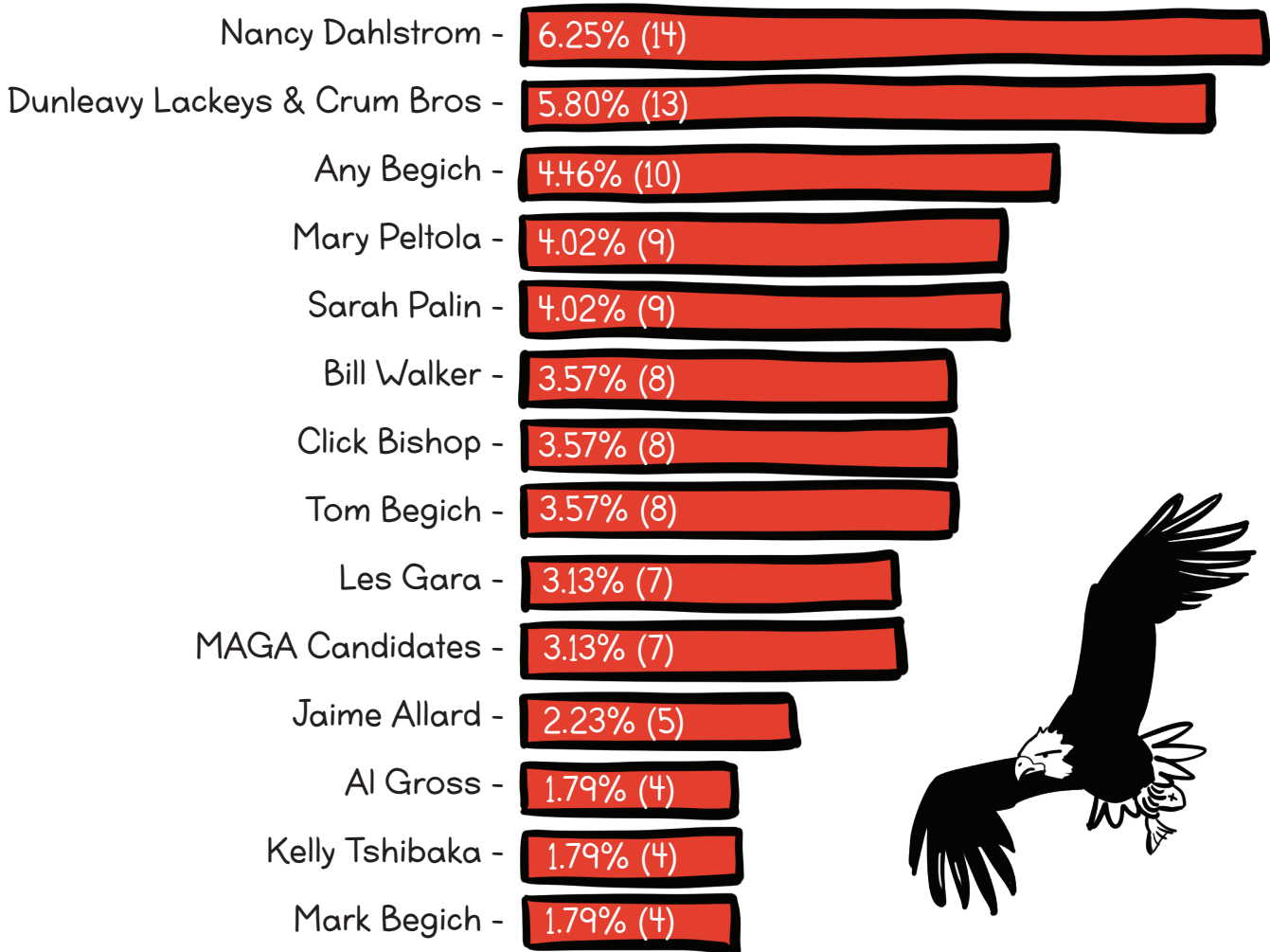


Fig.9.1 - Flat Tires

Who are the groups of Alaskans or individual leaders you see as important voices in influencing a 2026 gubernatorial election?

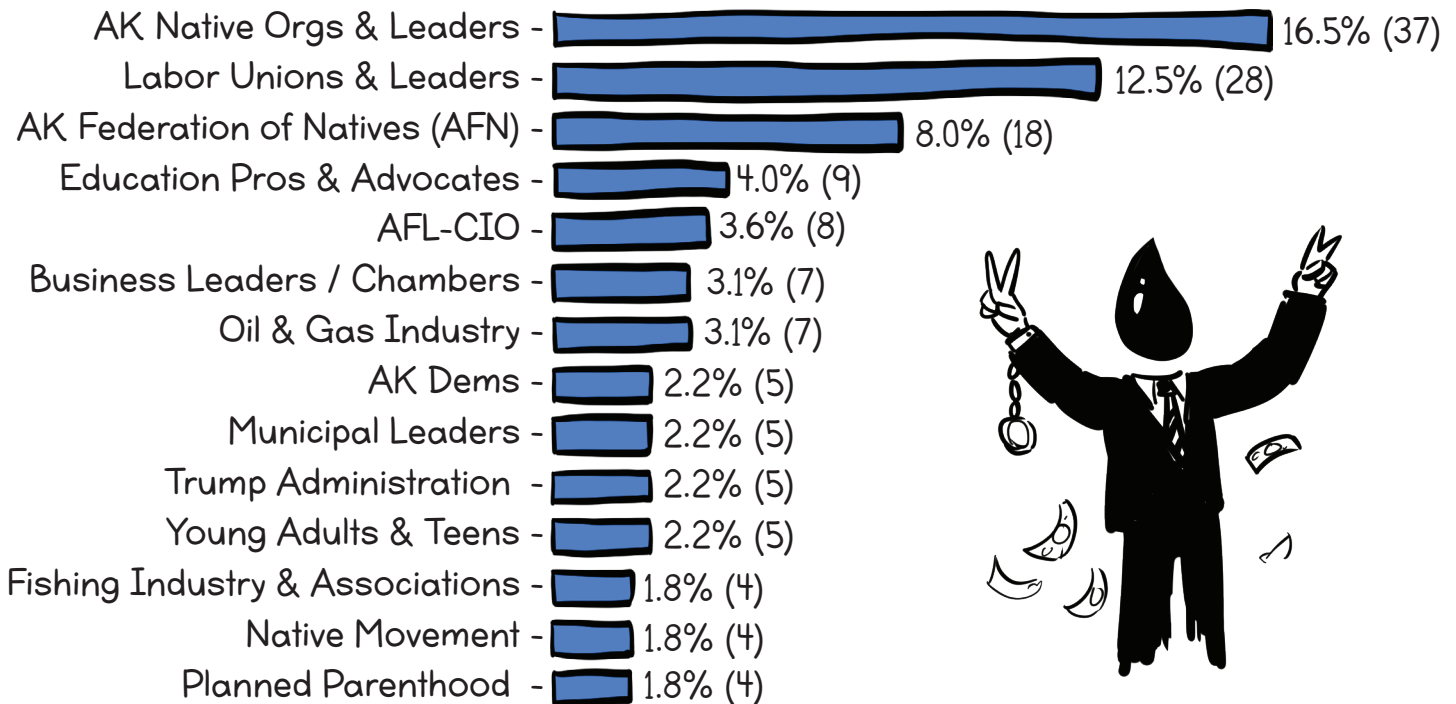


Fig.10.1 - Influential Groups

I ended up excluding individuals from fig.9.1 but there were several notable Alaskans whose names came up as being important taste-makers in the 2026 elections. The top four individuals named were Sen. Lisa Murkowski 1.8% (4), Mary Peltola 1.8% (4), Gov. Mike Dunleavy 1.3% (3), Rep. Genevieve Mina 1.3% (3). These aren't deep numbers but Rep. Mina stands out to me here.

Here's everyone else who got at least two call-outs in the survey results: Andrew Gray, Bill Walker, Bruce Botelho, Dan Sullivan, Grier Hopkins, Jim Sampson, Joelle Hall, Mark Begich, Suzanne LaFrance, Tony Knowles, and Willie Hensley.

In terms of influential groups, Alaska Native organizations are out front with the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) receiving top mention as well. Labor Unions & Leaders along with specific mention of AFL-CIO also ranked high. These aren't big surprises, the three common pillars of political power in Alaska have been considered Alaska Natives, Unions, and Oil.

I'd say "Education Advocates," is a rising power to keep an eye out for, they had a huge impact on the 2024 elections. If this survey had included more Republicans, I'm certain business leaders and the AKGOP would have got more love from respondents, important to keep survey demographics in mind here. Candidates take note!

Ranked Choice Strategy

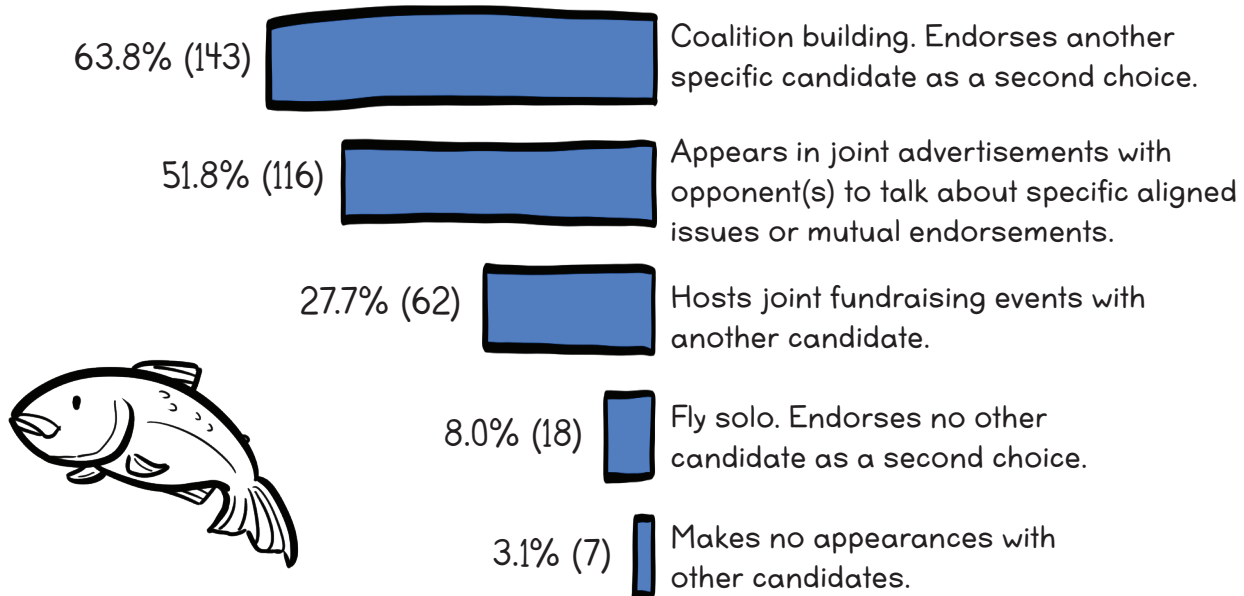


Fig.11.1 - RCV Strategy

I see open primaries as a critical end-run around gerrymandering. Simply put, a district that only votes 51% Republican or Democrat shouldn't have to endure the most extreme version of that philosophy spilling out distilled from a primary election.

As fig.3.2 showed us, Alaska is overwhelmingly populated by unaffiliated, undeclared, non-partisan voters who are much better served by a moderate representing a breadth of community views rather than serving a party to which very few Alaskans actually belong.

So here we are, we've successfully implemented a new voting system that takes big decisions out of closed party primaries and pushes them into the daylight of the general elections. More constituents can weigh-in and have an impact.

With new systems of voting, come new campaign strategies. I thought it would be a good opportunity to ask what people want to see from candidates in 2026.

Coalition building is the clear preference here and that makes sense to me. Policy making is about alliances and friendships and trust, I want to see that same skill on display in a campaign.



Is retaining our current system of Open Primaries and Ranked Choice Voting important to your vision for Alaska's long-term future?

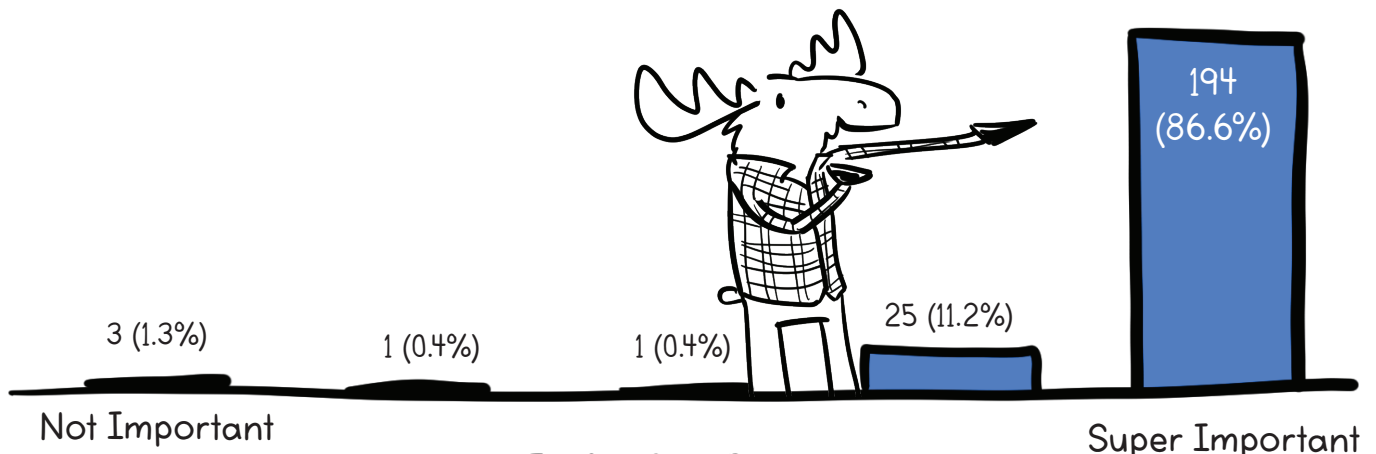


Fig.12.1 - Open Primaries

There will possibly be a ballot measure to reinstate campaign contribution limits in 2026... How do you feel about this measure?*

*Unless the legislature enacts substantially similar legislation.

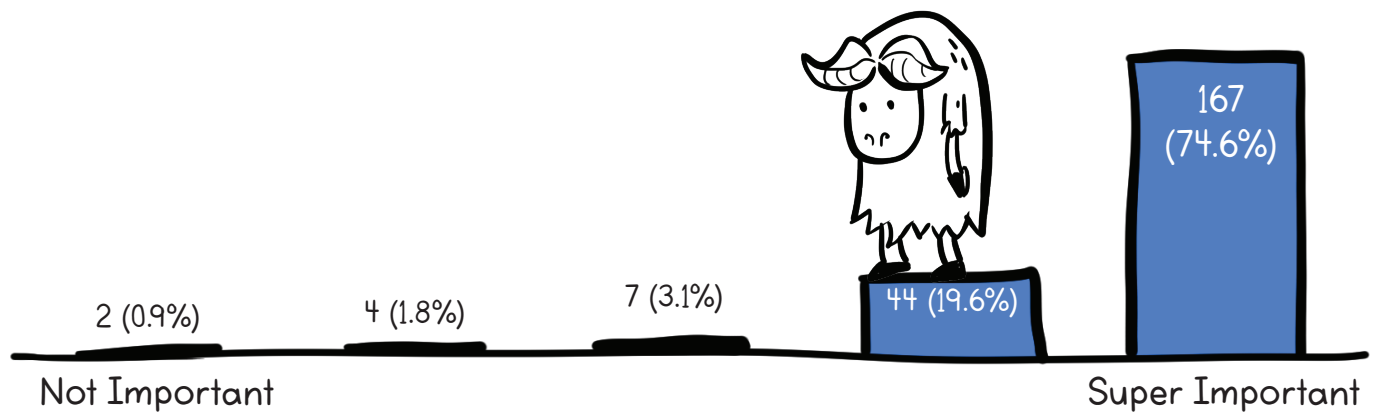


Fig.12.2 - Campaign Contribution Limits

Further Selected Comments

"Alaska prides itself on its independence. The current governor has shown his priority to be capitulating to the Trump administration instead of the interests & well-being of Alaskans. Any gubernatorial candidates should be focused on Alaska, not Trump."

"I think you hint at it, but really, who is going to get off the bullshit train and actually conduct a meaningful campaign that speaks with integrity. Solving problems isn't about demonizing the 'other guy', it is about having a vision, communicating that vision, and building the relationships and support to enact that vision. Office should be more than a popularity contest."

"Many people... Are only here temporarily and I feel have less of a connection to this place and the leaders we elect cause they aren't staying here to live with the consequences of their votes."

"I would appreciate a moderate governor. Not one that is too far from center either way."

"The PFD is an albatross. We need a candidate who is pragmatic about valuing the PFD and not sacrificing our quality of life for a high payout."

"I would (like) a candidate that is realistic about our fiscal situation rather than pontificating about the PFD and various other useless hot button rhetoric issues."

"I'm curious why Dems seem to assume military families and veterans are automatic GOP voters when they tend to be solid middle income people with children who benefit from more liberal policies."

"I think what makes a good governor and what makes a good candidate are two different questions and we need someone that is both."

"More thoughts need to be given to a unity ticket. I love the idea of Mary Peltola with a pro-labor Republican as Lt Gov. Conversely, a moderate R with a center-left Independent or similar type of combination."

"How do we get people and companies to pay their fair share of taxes. Watching slope workers tromp through the airport from Prudhoe to somewhere in the lower 48 enrages and depresses me."

"Who you work for Pat?" - Editor's note: I'm just me. An Alaskan who thinks the Dunleavy decline has been terrible. Alaska deserves and needs a not-terrible governor.

"Can we please just try and be normal? We don't need to trail behind national politics on every single issue."

"The ridiculous level of polarization in our state has to be dealt with. Party loyalty over integrity continues to be one of the two biggest wrecking balls to our government. The other, of course, is unrestrained political contributions."

