

Charlie Pierce says “Let’s Put Alaskans First”

Description

(2022@donnliston.co)

Charlie Pierce is currently Kenai Peninsula Mayor with a vision for Alaska.

The political gridlock in Juneau must end, and in this exclusive interview Pierce said as governor he will move our ship of state out of the doldrums.

I am tired of waiting for Alaska elected officials to do the right thing, declared Pierce. As governor I will impress upon elected officials who are trusted to make decisions on behalf of all Alaskans they must make something happen. Alaskans are tired of waiting! I will be the Governor who says: “Look, let’s produce results. Let’s set our differences aside, let’s look at what must be done and compromise when necessary.” I will constantly work on relationships—sometimes agreeing to disagree—while encouraging elected officials to listen to the voice of the people.

Pierce continued: *How many hearings do you have before being convinced that the people of Alaska mean what they are saying?*

Pierce is passionate. Our interview was succinct, and he stands on a record of private sector accomplishment and local government success.

*In the private sector you have a week or days to make a decision and you need to make the right decision; gather the information to make the decision quickly and execute because there is a constant awareness of the time-value of the money you are tying up! You make something happen, explained Pierce. I believe the **State of Alaska** should be no different; we have a lot of money tied up and we have wasted a lot of money on process versus progress.*

Pierce describes himself as a fiscally conservative Republican but an Alaskan First.

*Here is the story about Charlie, explained Pierce: I graduated **Bartlett High School** in 1977, went to work for **Enstar Gas Company** and worked there 39 years. I was elected to the **Kenai Borough Assembly** and served between 2008-2014 while working as Division Operations Manager for Enstar on the Peninsula. After retiring from Enstar in 2016 I ran for Borough Mayor and today I have completed four and one-half years service as mayor.*

Bartlett High School was a new school in 1977 and Alaska graduates could go right into the workforce with basic skills. Pierce gained additional training through the *University of Alaska* but his innate common sense and can-do attitude have served him well in his career and in local elected office.

*I inherited a Borough with over-spending issues, similar to the issues of the **State of Alaska** today, said Pierce. Government tends to spend more than it has coming in. In my first eight months as mayor, I inherited the former mayor’s budget and at the end of that fiscal year—end of June—I found myself with about a \$430,000 deficit rather than a \$4 Million deficit that was expected. We did pretty good in*

eight months, right? We were able to pick up some extra health money from the federal government, some extra revenue sharing money from the State, and we had about a \$2 million savings in that eight months. Working closely with the Borough employees in the 4-1/2 years I feel we have accomplished much.

Pierce has been a union member himself and understands the role of organized labor in government. Since our state is controlled by unions this will give him insight into what possibilities exist for managing the State of Alaska workforce with a carrot, a stick, and bear spray.

One of the things I have done at the Borough, is as people retired and left we have established committees to evaluate vacant positions and determine whether we replace them, explained Pierce . In some cases there was no need to replace those individuals.

Nobody is hurt in this process, continued Pierce. Also, when I became mayor one of the things I said to all of the directors was: "You can stay. Don't turn in your resignation, but what you must agree to is working as hard as I am going to work. If you want to work with me, we can partner; I will get to know you and I will earn your respect as a leader, and I encourage you to do your very best. I will be a good boss—whom you can respect—and I will build a strong working relationship with you for service to the People of the Borough."

That's what I think Alaskans are looking for, added Pierce, a leader who can produce good results; a leader who will do what they say they will do with our considerable state workforce.

Q: Some believe the biggest issue today is the Permanent Fund. Where do you stand on paying Alaskans the \$13,000 owed for unfulfilled statutory requirements denied since the Bill Walker Administration?

A: I am a statutory guy; I'm a guy who has followed the law my entire life—in the industry where I worked and again when I took the oath of office to serve as an Assembly member, and as Borough Mayor. I don't manipulate the laws or ignore them, I follow them. I follow code and I am very consistent with a track record of predictability. I feel that Alaskans are entitled to have our legislature respect laws originally agreed upon. If we cannot afford to do that then the legislature has an obligation to bring an initiative before the people of Alaska and allow them to vote on whether to change the laws.

Pierce continued: I won't make any grandiose promises as to whether Alaskans will get a full PFD or whether there will be a payback. But what I will tell you is I will work hard every day to achieve those results. I would like to see the PFD placed within the constitution and a spending cap also in the constitution. I think that there is a will to do that but certainly some of players there now need to go in order to break this political gridlock.

We also need to make land available for food security, continued Pierce. Here at the Kenai Borough we are looking at ways to clear land where forests have suffered beetle bark infestation. We are talking about a plan right now to allow the private sector to take the lead and produce wood and wood products out of these trees. Our lands department is busy with these types of plans. We have just introduced a new program to lease land to the private sector for this purpose. For example, in Homer there is an individual who is grazing cattle on Borough Land. We are encouraging that and have entered into some long-term lease agreements with attractive terms. Certainly, the borough has land available, and the State has land that could also be made available.

But that isn't all: As governor I would want to pursue the possibility of exchange of gaining land for some portion of an Alaskan's PFD. So a family with several PFDs could gain land under some formula. We can be creative!

*I also think Alaskans should have the opportunity to invest in the **Permanent Fund Corporation** ; private investments by individual Alaskans, to reap the benefits of saving and investing your money rather than receiving a distribution. There are a lot of value-added things we could be creative on with the PFD.*

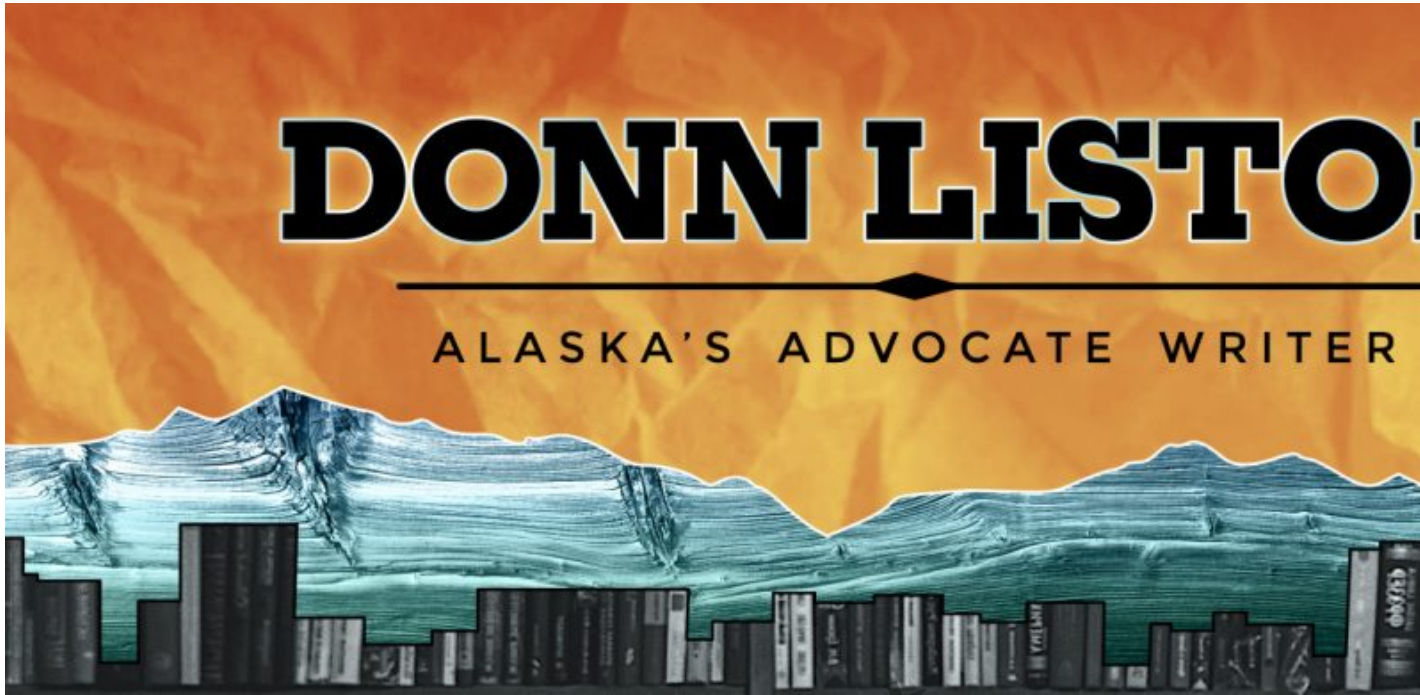
My administration will be looking at creative opportunities for Alaskans. I haven't seen a lot of urgency for State government in a long time. I want do things to help Alaskans and that is what I will do.

During the Covid crisis I was the mayor who stood on the bluffs of the Kenai River and told Alaskans "we are all essential and we were open for business on the peninsula." I encouraged folks to relocate to the peninsula, as a great place to live and a great place to run a business with a high quality of life.

Pierce concluded: My business experience and my expectations for results are not being met by the current administration. I think many Alaskans look at what is currently going on and I encourage those Alaskans to look at my candidacy closely, get to know me, ask questions, and if you are a person who is tired of mediocrity and "close enough" performance, settling for sub-standard results, I ask for your vote, I think Alaskans would agree with me that for too many years we have had gridlock in Juneau—with Republicans, Independents and Democrats all at loggerheads. They aren't getting a lot done and frankly not making any decisions or not producing results is a decision. It can be a very expensive decision and it is very frustrating to many Alaskans to see this happening at this critical time.

State politicians must join me in "Putting Alaskans First"

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Date Created

April 2, 2022

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