

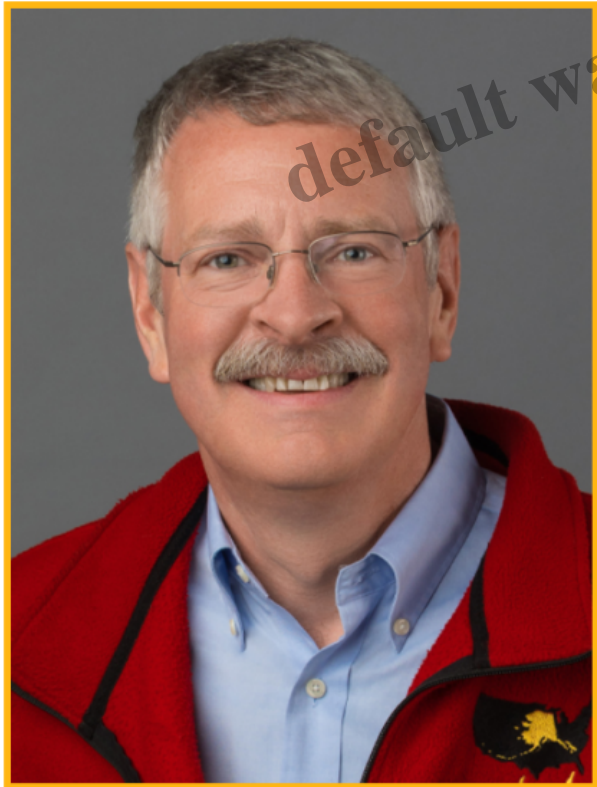
Eagle River’s Born-Again Legislator:

Description

No More Excuses for Dan Saddler

March 23, 2023 update on story first appearing October 26, 2017
ECHO Magazine title: *Dan Saddler on Kicking Crime in the District*

HOUSE
DAN SADDLER
27TH-33RD LEGISLATURE (2011 -2024)



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Now Majority Leader in the **Alaska House of Representatives** Rep. **Saddler** won’t be able

to blame others for shorting the PFD, caving to public sector union thugs for failed government schools, or passage of the next out-of-control budget.

What can voters expect from electing re-tread legislators who were not very effective in the past? To answer this question watch **House Majority Leader, Dan Saddler** in the closeout of this first session of the **33rd Alaska Legislature**.

How Republicans were Rolled on the State Budget

In 2017, legislative attempts to address increasing crime rates, the State budget, and voting to cap the **Permanent Fund Dividend** payment to Alaskans for the second time, were some of the topics District 13 (Chugiak/Birchwood) Rep. **Dan Saddler** talked about with this writer in an exclusive interview for **The Echo News** regional magazine. All legislators were about to soon be heading back to Juneau for Gov. **Bill Walker's 4th Special Session** during the **30th Session of the Alaska Legislature**.

I Reported: *Buckle up, kids, we are in for a ride.*

The special session began October 23 at 11 a.m. at the capitol. Discussed first: "SB 54 – Crime and sentencing." Second: "An act or acts enacting a tax on wages and net earnings from self-employment..."

At the time I wrote: *We will see if establishment Republicans, like Rep. Saddler, will be rolled again. That's been the story since the house is now run by Democrats.*

When Republicans were in the majority during the previous **29th Legislature (2015-2016)** Saddler served as Vice Chair of the **House Finance Committee**; Chair of the **House Health & Social Services (Finance Subcommittee)**, and Chair of the **House Law (Finance Subcommittee)**. Saddler was also a member of the **House Armed Services Committee** and served as a member of the **House Conference Committee on SB 196** (having to do with the State's Power Cost Equalization to subsidize living in the bush.)

Saddler knows how to spend other people's money!

But, but, but, blowback from the passage of SB 91 earlier this year created the political need to meet NOW; so the governor (Walker) asks: why not use this opportunity to find a way to tax Alaskans, too?

[*]Sponsor statement on SB 91

Saddler: *Representatives are simply representing the desires of their constituents, as they should, and there is not a general agreement in Alaska, he explained. Some folks say we should tax those who have, (in order) to benefit those who have not. Others say we should all take the hit totally. So we have reached an impasse; I'm not going to support an income tax; the people of my district don't want it. Bryce Edgmon's people want to "tax those rich people in the city." So we're doing our job, but it takes time to determine what we want to do.*

A rural Democrat, Rep. Edgmon is **House Speaker**. Later Edgmon declared himself an "Independent"

to try to fool the same reluctant Democrats Gov. Walker tried to fool, even recently.



It will take courage to buck the majority AND the governor. What elected legislators say through clenched teeth when they are home in their districts, and what they do when they are in our backwater capital in Southeast Alaska, might be hard to correlate, but actions can be verified. I know how it works from 20 years tracking these phenomena as a resident of Juneau.

A former journalist himself, Rep. Saddler also

knows this dynamic well.

The crime bill problem started with SB 91, which Rep. Saddler voted for. This probably contributed to Saddler losing re-election and serving as appointee in the administration of **Gov. Mike Dunleavy**. As a government service revolving door, someone not familiar with how it works might think from Saddler's Legislative posting above that he has served in the legislature continuously since 2011.

In fact Saddler lost in a bid four years ago for

the Senate and this return is an act of

recidivism.

Saddler explained his SB 91 folly this way: *SB91 was an effort by the legislature to look at the resources we have—financial resources—and find ways to not spend irresponsibly. We have just gone through the drill of building the \$350 million **Goose Creek Prison**, and realizing the recidivism rates—66 percent of people going back to jail within three years of their release—the revolving door that is not working; at great cost, it is not working.*

mea culpa

At the end of the last session, in which Saddler was vice-chair of the **House Budget Committee**, SB 91 transcended from several committees: *I wasn't on those committees, so it was kind of new to me, he said. I supported that bill with reservations. It now looks like there are places where there is evidence we should go back and fix things.*

Gov. Mike Dunleavy finally fixed SB91 by repealing what was left of it when he took office.

A work in progress.

According to Saddler in our interview, Alaska crime rates were rising before SB 91, and the causes of crime rates increasing may be more related to our economic downturn and the epidemic of opioid abuse.

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McGruff the Crime Dog

SB 91 began as a 21-page omnibus bill that even **McGruff the Crime Dog** could love.

Now everybody is kicking it.

The fix is hopefully:

*SB 54 is essential. It should have been addressed months ago, said Saddler. The title of SB 54 is broad enough that almost anything that was addressed in SB 91, in my opinion, can also be addressed in SB 54. It is sponsored by **John Coghill** in the Senate—as was SB 91. But the politics are so strong that it is difficult to anticipate what is going to happen.*

This was Coghill's attempt to save his bacon but in the next election. Coghill was one of two Senators who did not get re-elected:

[PAST Legislative Hopes](#)

Some were saying cut it out root and branch. Saddler said it might be repairable.



Previously, Senate President, Cathy Giesel also lost re-election, and as another retread legislator she is now now Majority Leader of the upper house.

So explain your vote on capping the PFD...

The vote on the budget required us to agree to a Capital Budget. We had to avail ourselves of the 9-to-1 match the Federal Government offers. So we put up \$100 million, and they put up \$900 million to maintain our roads, build ports, airports and all the stuff for our transportation infrastructure, Saddler explained. It is difficult to take any one vote in isolation—especially in the budget—so we did compromise (to pass the capital budget).

In the operating budget we had to avoid a government shutdown, to avoid the negative impact on Alaskans, and we had to compromise on that, Saddler continued. When it came to a vote on the Capital Budget the Republicans in the House were responsible to compromise and vote for that budget. As part of that the Democrats set us up to cut half of the dividend the first time; the governor had vetoed half of the dividend payment the first time, and given the fact we have more than \$4 billion in outgo (expenses) with about \$1.7 billion of income, the question can be legitimately asked: "What is the function of government? Is it to provide services or is it to provide money for people?"

Saddler makes the argument that says: *the Permanent Fund belongs to the government of the **State of Alaska** which can spend it better than individual Alaskans can to fund government—unless we can leverage it to get more money from the Federal Government.* Legislators like Rep. Saddler are not a bit ashamed of the fact they break statutory law THE LEGISLATURED ORIGINALLY MADE by not funding the Dividend separately from the cost of government services and 25% of available jobs for Alaskans in our dependency economy.

Saddler admitted in that interview that his answer to that question may impact his chances for re-election. And, when that authentic story was published, Rep. Saddler did something that even surprised this writer.

Saddler knows well that editorial concerns are handled by the editor and advertising concerns are handled by the advertising department. This is a cornerstone of responsible journalism. But the first thing Saddler did when he arrived to interview at the **Echo** office in Eagle River for that story was go back to the Advertising Manager and give him a check. Perhaps they had a deal I was not privy to but Saddler was noticeably uncomfortable when I asked him serious questions. Unfortunately, later when Saddler was upset at this factual story I wrote from a recorded interview, the first person he called was the **Echo Advertising Manager!** Next, Saddler called the Editor and demanded that the story be retracted and she meet with him.

I have wondered since then how Saddler must have dealt with **Anchorage Times** advertisers who threatened to pull business because they disagreed with a story he had edited and placed.

When the **Echo** editor called me and asked my suggestion before meeting with the upset august legislator, I told her: “Ask Rep. Saddler if there are any factual errors for which we must publish a correction. Otherwise, tell him to write a Letter to the Editor.”

Rep. Saddler never called me, of course.

References:

[1]Sponsor statement on SB 91

Senate Majority Leader

Joint Armed Services Committee

Co-Chairman

Judiciary Committee

Vice-Chairman

Resources Committee

State Affairs Committee

Legislative Council

Rules Committee

Alaska State Legislature



Senator John Coghill

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

Criminal Law/Procedure; Driv Lic; Pub Aid

Version H

Senate Bill 91 aims to use Alaska's limited criminal justice dollars in the most prudent possible, using cost-effective, evidence based reforms. To accomplish that, the corrections system should emphasize public safety, personal responsibility, work, restitution, and treatment.

SB91 uses a number of reforms to address the Department of Corrections' biggest drivers: an increased length of prison sentences, non-violent offenders, probation violators, and pre-trial offenders. This can be accomplished by expanding electronic monitoring, reforming probation, and providing incentives for individuals to be productive law-abiding citizens.

SB91 is an effort to be tough on crime and criminal justice spending while holding offenders accountable and giving them a shot at redemption, restitution, personal responsibility, and productivity – a vital step towards achieving a cost-effective system that protects citizens, restores victims, and reforms wrongdoers.

Category

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Author

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