Mayor Testifies on Beluga Listing, Presents Speech on Global Economy

Quote of the Week
"There's definitely a lot more room. I've competed the last four years in Fairbanks, and this is exciting for me."

-Karl Frankson, Point Hope resident and WEIO athlete, 7/19/07, commenting to the Anchorage Daily News on the extra space provided by having the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics in Anchorage's Sullivan Arena.

Coming Up...
Mayor Begich at 11 a.m. Wednesday joins a tour of the Anchorage schools that are under construction this summer.

Mayor Says Endangered Listing for Belugas Premature. While committed to protecting the habitat of the beluga whale, listing the whale as endangered is without scientific merit, Mayor Begich told a federal hearing Friday. The mayor said as an ocean city, Anchorage treasures its marine environment and is committed to protecting it. But there isn’t adequate scientific data to justify putting the beluga whale on the Endangered Species List. Doing so could cost Anchorage taxpayers millions in new standards for the Port expansion, wastewater treatment and other steps which appear unnecessary. Begich noted that the latest federal studies actually show a 9 percent increase in Cook Inlet belugas last year. "Listing of the species should be deferred," Begich testified. "We offer to join you in redoubling our efforts to study the beluga and to continue our proactive actions to reduce the impact on our beloved marine environment."

City Well Positioned for Global Market. Anchorage is well positioned to cash in on the global economy, but could do even better by making the city more receptive to international visitors and business. That's Mayor Begich's message to an Anchorage Economic Development Corp. economic forecast event at noon Thursday at the Hilton Hotel. International China expert Ted Fishman, author of the best-selling book, "China, Inc." is the featured speaker. Begich says the school district and University already do a solid job in foreign language and culture instruction, but could do even better. And he calls on the visitor industry to improve our city's appeal to foreign visitors with more international passenger flights, bilingual merchants and signs in other languages.

Anchorage Welcomes WEIO. Anchorage was alive with Alaska Native tradition and culture last week as the city hosted the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics. It was the first time the WEIO games were held in Anchorage in the event's 46-year history. Mayor Begich joined a special kick-off celebration in Town Square last Tuesday and attended the games Wednesday night. Some 500 competitors and thousands of spectators filled the Sullivan Arena every day and night to watch the demonstrations of power and finesse, graceful athleticism and fierce determination. The cultural games are passed down from generation to generation to teach important survival techniques required by a strong people who make their living from the land.

Easing Anchorage's Commute - Mayor Begich joined Gov. Palin and other state officials Wednesday at the groundbreaking of the Glenn/Bragaw interchange. The project is the first step of the city's #1 transportation priority, the "Highway to Highway Connection" which will eventually link the Glenn and other transportation routes.
Seward Highways.