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Interim President

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March 19, 2022

Dear UA Community –

The University of Alaska System lost a good friend and advocate last night when we learned of the death of Congressman Don Young.

Congressman Young had a unique understanding of the importance of education, having served as a fifth grade teacher in a Fort Yukon Bureau of Indian Affairs school. It was one of the many unique Alaska experiences he drew upon to become a fierce advocate for Alaska's people and for the state's public universities.

Because Congressman Young fought for Alaska jobs, he understood UA's important role in research and workforce training for our current and future industries. During one of his last visits to UAF, he met with the faculty and staff of the Alaska Center for Unmanned Aerial System Integration to learn more about how drones can assist in multiple Alaska sectors and scenarios.

Recently, he single-handedly secured federal funding to help UA engage in the stewardship of Cook inlet wild salmon and upgrade the Kuskokwim Health Sciences Facility in support of the School of Nursing to enable more Native and rural Alaskans to earn nursing degrees.

UA's need for financial stability and still-unfulfilled land grant promise was high on the Congressman's list of priorities. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, he helped secure CARES Act funding for higher education, and last year he introduced legislation that would have provided the unfulfilled land grant to UA to generate revenues in support of our students and operations.

In his 49 years in office, Congressman Young stepped up for Alaska and the University of Alaska System time and again.

I send my sincere condolences to his family, his colleagues and his many, many friends. He will be missed.

Sincerely,
Pat Pitney