



February 4, 2021

President Joseph Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As the convention and visitors bureau of Alaska's state capital, Travel Juneau represents over 200 local visitor businesses and our convention center, all feeling the financial and emotional upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Juneau's remote geography, wilderness, and wildlife make it a prime destination for visitors. However, unlike many of our sister destinations in the Lower 48, we have a very short visitor season, running for just over five months between late April and early October. In 2019, in addition to our cruise traffic, Juneau hosted more than 80,000 fully independent travelers all of whom arrived by plane or ferry, supported about 20% of Juneau's sales tax revenues, and kept over 2500 people employed during the season. Juneau also hosted a number of meetings and conventions, providing more economic benefit to our community.

With the onset of the pandemic, the state of Alaska used CDC protocols and instituted travel restrictions including mandatory quarantine, strict social distancing, and testing before and/or upon arrival. One of Juneau's features – its landlocked location – also protected our community from huge spikes in COVID-19 cases. However, in 2020, without the industry, our partners lost as much as 95% of their annual revenues. This is true up and down Alaska's Inside Passage. While our sister destinations in Interior Alaska managed to eke out about 40-50% of their usual visitor revenue, Southeast Alaska continues to suffer.

A President has never visited Juneau, Alaska, and right now more than ever our community needs support and understanding. We would greatly appreciate you and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden considering a personal visit to Alaska's capital to help shine a spotlight on this catastrophic loss and talk with people affected and give hope for the future.

The fully independent travelers and meetings industries are crucial to Juneau's economic health. As the country makes strides toward immunization and the slowing of infection rates, the CDC must quickly develop and communicate the benchmarks by which Alaska's Department of Health and Social Services, as well as other states, can lift traveler arrival restrictions. The CDC has lagged in this regard. Every day the CDC delays these critical determinations puts Southeast Alaska's excursion operators, charters, caterers, hotels, restaurants, and their networks of vendors at risk of permanent closure, as they have no timeframe to reopen.

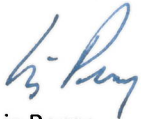
Now Canada has announced that cruise ships will not be permitted in their waters for the next year and this – because of the outdated Passenger Vessel Services Act – will strangle Southeast Alaska's industry this summer. Combined with the ongoing Canadian highway border closures, Alaska is effectively cut off from almost all visitor traffic, putting us at a severe disadvantage against drive-to destinations in the Lower 48. There are solutions to this, including a temporary waiver of the provisions of the PVSA. President Biden, Southeast Alaska needs your help and vision to guide us forward.

To be clear about this dire situation: Juneau is a town of only 33,000 full-time residents. Travel Juneau partners are overwhelmingly sole proprietorships, small, family-owned concerns that have built their market and businesses over the last 25 years. Unlike many destinations, Juneau's visitor businesses don't take their cash and leave town at the end of the season. The owners and their employees are our friends and neighbors; they have mortgages, pay taxes, and give generously to local causes. Thousands of our kids have put themselves through school working for these local businesses. And if we have a 2021 season like 2020, we will be saying goodbye to many visitor businesses that normally made up approximately 12% of Juneau's overall economy. They are losing hope and Alaska risks losing homegrown businesses dedicated to fully independent travelers and convention hospitality.

On behalf of our board of directors and local visitor industry partners, I urge you to request that the CDC immediately issue guidance toward lifting travel restrictions so that we can aim toward a 2021 visitor season and restore our meetings business. Travel Juneau continues to communicate directly with Sens. Murkowski and Sullivan, as well as through our statewide organization, the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) on this matter.

I again respectfully invite you and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden to visit Alaska's state capital to see for yourselves both the tremendous opportunity we have and the economic cliff we're trying to avoid.

Sincerely,



Liz Perry  
President & CEO  
Travel Juneau – Juneau Convention & Visitors Bureau

cc: Sen. Lisa Murkowski  
Sen. Dan Sullivan  
Rep. Don Young  
Beth Weldon, Mayor, City & Borough of Juneau, Alaska  
Rorie Watt, Manager, City & Borough of Juneau, Alaska