

Inside Today

Health experts warn worst of the flu season is yet to come. **Page B3**

Senators hail passage of defense budget bill

By Jack Barnwell

Alaska’s congressional delegation celebrated the passage of the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, which includes key provisions for the state.

According to U.S. Sen.

Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), the bill contains \$292 million in military construction projects, including \$88 million for Fort Wainwright and nearly \$30 million for Eielson Air Force Base.

“It’s a long and involved process and really

important,” Sullivan said during a brief interview on Friday. “These bills focus a lot on taking care of our troops.”

Construction projects Military construction projects for Fort Wainwright include \$80



U.S. Marines conduct a raid during exercises on Adak on Sept. 20, 2019. The 2026 National Defense Authorization Act contains key provisions for Alaska, including \$115 million to reopen the Adak Island military installation.

million to upgrade Army barracks and \$8 million for the design of a dining facility. Eielson will

receive \$1.75 million for a coal thaw shed addition, \$13.2 million for the design of a consolidated

munitions complex, and \$15 million for a

DEFENCE » A5

SMELLS LIKE TEEN CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



KRIS CAPPS/NEWS-MINER

The Freshman Class won the West Valley High School Christmas Tree decorating contest with an “Elf”-inspired tree, at left, and will have first pick of music for the annual spring Air Band contest. At right is the Junior Class’s Lorax Christmas tree.

How a Christmas tree contest turned into West Valley’s most spirited tradition

Kris Capps
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Four years ago, West Valley High School student body vice president Shelby Seekins pondered ways to promote school spirit. She wanted to find something that every class could be involved in.

The school was just emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic and she felt like the student body needed a jumpstart. A cousin who attended Kodiak High School suggested she try planning a Christmas tree decorating contest between classes.

She did, and the contest has been happening ever since. Plus, the results of this contest are tied to the traditional and



KRIS CAPPS/NEWS-MINER

The tree created by West Valley seniors featured a miniature skating rink.



COURTESY MORGAN CLAY

West Valley High School sophomores took second place in the Christmas Tree decorating contest. Their theme, “Stranger Things,” featured an upside down tree.

Deadline extended to apply for Typhoon Halong disaster assistance

By Corinne Smith
ALASKA BEACON

The State of Alaska and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have extended their deadlines to apply for individual disaster assistance for those impacted by storms in Western Alaska, including Typhoon Halong.

State and federal officials are continuing to encourage residents to register for both state and federal assistance programs to maximize their potential benefits. The new deadline for applications is February 20, 2026.

“We know that there may be more people out there, and we want to give them this opportunity to register,” said Jeremy Zidek, a spokesperson for the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.


Zidek urged residents to apply for both assistance programs if they have experienced any level of storm damage. He said registrations can be updated once they have been filed.

“We always say that if people are unsure about their damages or unsure if they want to apply, to just go ahead and apply,” he said. “They can always amend their application at a later date. But after those deadlines, it becomes very difficult for us to register people, so we really urge anyone that had damage, even if it was a little bit of damage, to apply and go through the process.”


The state has received 1,920 aid applications and FEMA has received 1,630 applications for assistance as of Dec. 10.

DEADLINE » A5


GOOD MORNING



The weather
Clear skies and cold temps are here.
High today -28
Low tonight -38
Sunrise: 10:58 a.m.
Sunset: 2:40 p.m.
WEATHER » A3



The aurora
High aurora activity forecasted. If skies are clear, highly active auroral displays may be visible overhead from Utqiagvik to Bethel, Dillingham and Ketchikan, and may be visible low on the horizon from King Salmon.



SOURDOUGH JACK:
“Back in my day, our Christmas tree contest was ‘does it fall over in a blizzard?’ Winner got bragging rights and frostbite.”