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*Photo credit: TOTE Maritime Alaska*

An open letter to the people of Alaska:

In times of crisis, we reflect on our past to guide our path forward. Puget Sound and Alaska share a long history of strong partnership throughout the ebbs and flows: We've made it through the 1896 Alaska Gold Rush, the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, the 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake, the 1976 Trans-Alaska Pipeline and much more.

Today, our two regions are working together to face our biggest challenge ever — the global coronavirus pandemic.

Businesses and organizations throughout Puget Sound and Washington state are doing everything they can to keep our trade and business connections with Alaska healthy and strong during these challenging times.



The importance of the Alaska trade for the Puget Sound region cannot be understated. The marine terminals at the ports of Tacoma and Seattle, managed by The Northwest Seaport Alliance, are the critical links between Alaska and the Lower 48 states. They handle essential items destined for Alaska, including groceries, consumer goods, automobiles and project-related cargo to support natural resource development, and southbound shipments of Alaskan seafood. More recently, they handle emergency equipment to respond to our public health crisis. Our ports account for 80% of container volume for the Port of Alaska in Anchorage.

Protecting the supply chain that connects our two states is critical. Thanks to the hard work of our marine terminal operators, longshore workforce, trucking community and others, the marine cargo terminals supporting our Alaska business remain open. Our ports and terminal operators have modified their business continuity plan in response to the rapidly evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Northwest Seaport Alliance and supply chain partners are also focused on mitigation efforts to slow the spread of the virus.

Alaska and Puget Sound share a dynamic and diverse economic relationship strengthened not only by shipping, but also by services such as seafood, aviation, tourism, education, and health care.

Puget Sound residents own nearly 1,000 commercial fishing vessels participating in Alaska commercial fisheries. Fishermen's Terminal — the Port of Seattle's first property purchase in 1914 — is home to the North Pacific Fishing Fleet, currently gearing up for another bountiful season in Alaska's waters. Working under new health guidelines, crew members are fixing nets in the old net yard and stocking up their vessels for the trip north, as they have for generations.



In better times, more than three million air passengers come and go through Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on planes bound for Alaska communities each year. Moreover, Seattle hosts over half a million Alaska cruise passengers each season. While these connections have been disrupted by the current pandemic, we look forward to the day when tourists from around the globe will flow through our airports and cruise terminals, bringing prosperity to our two states.



And as we face this public health crisis head on, we are reminded that health care is a small but literally life-saving segment of the Alaska-Puget Sound relationship. Alaska patients receive services in Puget Sound for a variety of reasons including proximity, physician and patient preferences, disease severity, and occasionally economic factors. As the most

populated area in the Northwest United States, our state is the natural home to specialized medical services. Some conditions, such as major burns, complex orthopedics, and specific cancers, require services unavailable in Alaska.

We live in a fearful time but are comforted in knowing that we are not alone. Alaska and the Puget Sound region are mutually dependent. We are in solidarity with our Alaska partners. Our economies are intertwined, and we are all in it together for the long haul.

Sincerely,

[The Northwest Seaport Alliance](#)

[Port of Tacoma](#)

[Port of Seattle](#)

[City of Fife](#)

[City of Tacoma](#)

[Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County](#)

[International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 19](#)

[International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 23](#)

[International Longshore and Warehouse Union Washington Area District Council](#)

[Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber](#)

[Pierce County](#)

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### **About The Northwest Seaport Alliance**

The Northwest Seaport Alliance is a marine cargo operating partnership of the ports of Seattle and Tacoma. Combined, the ports are the fourth-largest container gateway in North America. Regional marine cargo facilities also are a major center for bulk, breakbulk, project/heavy-lift cargoes, automobiles and trucks.

### **Media contact**

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