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Opinions

Opinion: Why women are supporting Tom Begich and Julia Hnilicka on Aug. 18

By Fran Ulmer, Eleanor Andrews, Beverly Hoffman and Margaret Pugh

Updated: 36 minutes ago

Published: 1 day ago



Democratic candidate for Alaska governor Tom Begich selected Julia Hnilicka, left, as his running mate on May 27, 2026. (Photo provided by Tom Begich's campaign)

We are women who have lived in Alaska a long time, and we have been teachers, fishermen, pilots, business owners, elected officials, volunteers, mothers and grandmothers. We do not agree on everything, but this year, we can agree on this: Tom Begich is the candidate we trust to fight for Alaska women — for our rights, our families and the communities we call home. We are asking you to vote for him in the Aug. 18 primary.

In June, Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates Alaska gave Tom its sole endorsement for governor, alongside Julia Hnilicka for lieutenant governor. That endorsement came on the fourth anniversary of the fall of Roe v. Wade, and it did not come lightly. Tom has been consistent, in public and in private, that a woman's healthcare decisions belong to her, her family and her doctor — not to politicians in Juneau. That is not a position he adopted for this campaign. It is one he has held his whole career.

But this fight is not only about reproductive freedom. It is about whether Alaska works for women who are raising kids, running households and trying to make a paycheck stretch through a Fairbanks winter or a Kodiak fishing season.

This fight is also about whether Alaska women are safe. Alaska has [led the nation](#) in sexual assault for more than a decade, and 59% of Alaska women have experienced intimate partner violence, sexual violence or both. Tom will fully fund the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault to the \$20 million level advocates say is needed after seven years with no increase in core funding. And he will not treat the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls crisis as someone else's problem: Alaska Native women are 19% of our state's population but [47% of its reported rape victims](#). Tom will establish Missing Persons Rapid Response Teams that activate within hours of a high-risk disappearance and

create a statewide Indigenous Family Liaison Program so no family searches for a missing daughter, sister or mother alone.

This fight is also about access to healthcare. Tom will expand DenaliCare to cover working Alaskans caught between Medicaid and unaffordable private insurance, and he will negotiate drug prices directly with manufacturers instead of letting pharmacy middlemen set the price at the counter. He believes in individual medical freedom, ensuring the state government cannot block access to essential, lifesaving treatments. He talks about the women in Kake who lost their yearly shot at a mammogram because the mobile screening unit was on a ferry that got canceled. That is not an abstraction to him. That is the whole reason he is running.

Education has been and will continue to be a major focus for Tom and Alaska's future. He successfully fought for pre-K options in schools and will raise the base student allocation by \$1,200, forward-fund it every year by the statutory deadline so districts stop issuing layoff notices every spring and restore a real defined benefit pension so Alaska keeps its teachers instead of losing them to the Lower 48. He co-authored the Alaska Reads Act. He understands what our kids need because his own family has spent generations teaching in Alaska classrooms.

We have until Aug. 18 to vote. We encourage you to talk to the women in your life about what is at stake and why you are voting for Tom Begich and Julia Hnilicka.

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***Fran Ulmer** has spent decades in public service at the local, state and national levels. She served as mayor of Juneau, served four terms in the Alaska House of Representatives and was lieutenant governor from 1994 to 2002, becoming the first woman elected to statewide office in Alaska. She later served as chancellor of the University of Alaska Anchorage and chaired the U.S. Arctic Research Commission, focusing her career on Arctic policy, education and public service.*

Eleanor Andrews is a distinguished Alaska businesswoman, civic leader and philanthropist. After moving to Alaska in 1965, she worked in state and municipal government and labor relations before founding The Andrews Group, a service-contracting firm that managed federal projects. Andrews is widely recognized for her decades of community service, mentoring and philanthropy, and she was inducted into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame.

Beverly Hoffman was born and raised in Bethel and is a longtime subsistence advocate and community leader. A champion for the Kuskokwim River and its salmon, she has spent decades serving on state and federal fisheries advisory groups. Hoffman was an early organizer of the Kuskokwim 300 sled dog race, served on the Bethel City Council and was inducted into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame.

Margaret Pugh is a longtime Juneau public servant and former commissioner of the Alaska Department of Corrections, serving from 1994 to 2002. She previously served as superintendent of Lemon Creek Correctional Center and was a leader in establishing Alaska's first correctional facility for women. She was inducted into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame in 2019 for her leadership in corrections and community service.

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