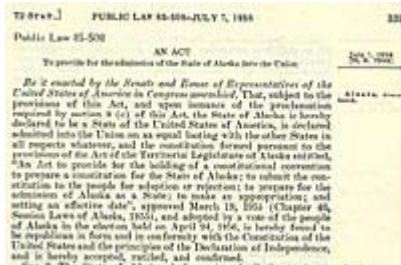


## Governing Alaska Alaska Celebrates Statehood



### **Alaska Statehood Act, July 7, 1958**

The Anchorage Times, the largest newspaper in Alaska, summed up the events of June 30, 1958 with the shortest banner headline in its history. In letters six-and-a-half inches high, the newspaper proclaimed in an extra edition: "WE'RE IN."

No one had to ask what it meant.

At about 2 p.m. that day in Alaska, phone and teletype messages to Anchorage conveyed the news that Alaskans longed to hear--after six days of debate, the United States Senate had voted 64-20 to add Alaska as the 49th state.

It was the last political hurdle to statehood. The U.S. House had already approved the measure in May and President Dwight D. Eisenhower had already given his support.

As sirens blared in towns across the territory that June afternoon, crowds gathered in the streets to celebrate the end of a political struggle that had dominated Alaska politics since the end of World War II.



### **49th star added to flag, June 30, 1958**

*US 48-star flag with additional star pinned on, Anchorage.*

At the federal building in Anchorage, members of the Anchorage Elks Club recruited enough hands to unfurl a 40-by-60-foot American flag, while the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous queen stood on a fire truck ladder to add a 49th star. In Fairbanks, a plan

to make the Chena River run gold went awry when the saltwater dye turned a stretch of the river bright green. But nothing could dampen the celebration. Leaning on his cane on a downtown street corner in the midst of the din, old-timer Ed Crawford said, "This is the greatest thing that has ever happened to Alaska."

The Shake 'n Steak restaurant in Fairbanks ran a "Move Over Texas" half-off special on all dinners, a jab at the Lone Star State, which is about half the size of Alaska.

From Anchorage to Nome and Kotzebue, Alaskans lit bonfires, while women in Skagway paraded with embroidered buttons that read "Bigger than Texas, better than California--God's Country."

For many Alaskans, statehood fulfilled a dream that symbolized the promise of a better tomorrow.

The admission of Alaska became final the following January. A statehood ratification vote attracted the largest voter turnout in the history of the territory and a five-to-one margin for statehood. Following that vote President Eisenhower signed the proclamation admitting the 49th state to the Union.

*Information Courtesy of the Alaska Humanities Forum*