

**Kate Ripley, Director**  
Office of Public Affairs  
206 Butrovich Building  
P.O. Box 755340  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-5340  
(907) 474-6311  
FAX (907) 474-7273  
email: syserve@alaska.edu



## News Release

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For Release Friday, Nov. 12, 2004

### **Constitutional convention delegates to speak at banquet**

The University of Alaska, in conjunction with the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, will kick off a yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Constitutional Convention during the chamber's annual awards banquet at the Westmark Hotel in Fairbanks Tuesday night, Nov. 16.

Creating Alaska is a special project of the University of Alaska to commemorate not only the upcoming 50th anniversary of the state's constitutional convention, held on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus in 1955-56, but also the 50th anniversary of statehood in 2009.

The project's main components include recording oral histories with important figures from the statehood era; producing a one-hour documentary on the origins of the state's constitution; collecting artifacts and materials important in the statehood movement; and creating public awareness of the upcoming anniversaries.

Three of the original delegates to the constitutional convention – Jack Coghill, Vic Fischer and George Sundborg Sr.—will speak at the Tuesday night banquet and attend a business meeting of the Creating Alaska Advisory Board the following day. Other honored guests include former territorial Gov. Mike Stepovich; retired judge Thomas Stewart, secretary of the convention and co-chair of Creating Alaska; chief clerk Katie Hurley; and economist George Rogers, a convention adviser.

In addition to the delegate speeches, organizers also will show a pilot video about the statehood battle, produced by KUAC/AlaskaOne Public Television.

“We’re really lucky in Alaska to have some of the people who shaped our state’s constitution guide this project,” said Karen Perdue, a UA associate vice president who leads the Creating Alaska project on behalf of the university. “With the exception of Hawaii, there aren’t many places where this could even be possible.”

The chamber will present five awards following the delegate speeches Tuesday night. The George Nehrbas Award, the chamber’s longest running and most prestigious award named after the late George Nehrbas, will go to two recipients—Hugh “Bud” Fate, a former state representative and chairman of the Board of Regents; and Fairbanks businessman Dan Gavora, president and chief executive officer of Golden Heart Utilities.

In addition, the chamber will present awards to Eduard Zilberkant, a music professor at UAF and conductor of the Fairbanks Symphony; and Dr. Cary Keller, of Sports Medicine Fairbanks. An award also will be presented posthumously to former chamber employee Joanne Dunbar, who recently died following a long struggle with cancer.

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"It's really a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get to hear from those who were part of creating Alaska 50 years ago, while at the same time honoring those who are helping create the future of our state," said Kara Moriarty, the chamber's president and chief executive officer.

Brian Rogers, current chairman of the Board of Regents and co-chair of the Creating Alaska Project, will emcee the banquet, which starts at 6 p.m. Tickets for the event, at \$50 each, are available by calling the chamber at 452-1105.

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**Media Advisory:** The agenda for Wednesday's Creating Alaska Advisory Board meeting is attached. The public is invited, though no public testimony will be taken. The Advisory Board meeting will be held in the Yukon Room in the Westmark Hotel from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 17.

For more information on the chamber awards, call Kara Moriarty at 452-1105.

For more information on Creating Alaska or to arrange interviews with convention delegates, call Kate Ripley with UA's Office of Public Affairs at 474-6311. You may also check out [www.alaska.edu/creatingalaska](http://www.alaska.edu/creatingalaska).

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