

# Can Alaska's High Health Care Costs Be Cured? Facts, Consequences, Causes, and Solutions

This series hosted by Alaska Common Ground examined the facts, causes, consequences, and potential solutions regarding the difference between Alaska's health care costs and the U.S.'s health care costs. Scroll down for information and video from events in this series. Alaska Public Media is recording all of the events and they will be broadcast throughout January on [Addressing Alaskans](#), Tuesdays at 2 pm on KSKA, 91.1 FM.

Most of the videos are also available on our [YouTube page](#).

## **Facts and Trends Regarding Alaska's High Health Care Costs Wednesday, Nov 15th**

### **49th State Brewing Company**

This event features original findings from financial analyst Mark Foster, commentary on those findings from ISER Economics Professor Mouhcine Guettabi, and audience Q&A.

**Bonus:** Special tips on how you can hold down your doctor bills and hospital bills. [Download this handout.](#)

Listen to the podcast from Alaska Public Media [here](#).

[Alaska Health Care Markets 15 Nov 2017 – Mark Foster's presentation](#)

Watch the Facebook live video [here](#).

## **Storytelling – Personal, Economic, and Fiscal Consequences Wednesday, Nov 29th**

### **49th State Brewing Company**

An evening of personal stories detailing how high Alaskan

health care costs have affected lives, business, and government. KSKA broadcast this event on January 16th. You can listen to the podcast [here](#).

Storytellers include:

- **Erin Freel's** family has health care coverage due to her husband's military service, and her son has a disease that leads to substantial expenditures for treatment.
- **Moira Gallagher** is the Live.Work.Play. Director for the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC).
- **Dr. Alan Gross** grew up in Juneau and returned to his hometown after he became an orthopedic surgeon. He now lives in Anchorage and is active in efforts to change the health care system. He also fishes commercially and practices medicine part-time in Petersburg, and he volunteers at a pediatric orthopedic hospital in Cambodia.
- **Mike Jens** sought estimates for radiation treatment to address his wife's breast cancer. He is a 72-year-old, mostly retired, engineering/construction consultant. He has been married to the same woman for 48 years and lived and worked in Alaska since 1974. He claims birth in Anchorage in the mid forties when my dad was here working for the CAA. He still remembers them landing airplanes on the Park Strip.
- **Eric McCallum** is President of Arctic Wire Rope & Supply and has been an early-stage (angel) investor and mentor for Alaska entrepreneurs.
- **Emily Ricci** is Health Care Policy Administrator for the Alaska Department of Administration and has worked on health care policy for the State of Alaska for more than five years. She previously served in the Peace Corps working to improve community health in a remote West African village, and she also volunteered in relief efforts in Sri Lanka following the 2004 Christmas Day tsunami.

- **Reed Smith** is General Director of Anchorage Opera. He used to perform that job while living full time in Anchorage and now handles those duties from inside and outside of Alaska.

## **Causes of Alaska's High Healthcare Costs**

**Wednesday, Dec 13th, 7-9 pm**

Panelists included:

- Dr. Alan Gross, orthopedic surgeon
- Dr. Robert (R.J.) Hall, orthopedic surgeon
- Bruce Lamoureux, Senior VP/CEO, Providence Alaska Region
- Jennifer Meyhoff, Legislative Co-Chair, Alaska Association of Health Underwriters
- Dr. Stanley Watkins (or Dr. Steven Compton), cardiologist
- Lori Wing-Heier, Director of the Alaska Division of Insurance
- Charles Wohlforth, author/columnist/broadcaster
- Moderated by Cliff Groh and Mark Foster

Video via Facebook live. The first video is the first 40 minutes. The second video is the remainder of the panel discussion and will reorient partway through.

You can read Charles Wohlforth's series of columns in the ADN exploring [Alaska's health care costs here](#).

You can read Dr. Hall's responses [here](#) and [here](#).

You can listen to the [podcast here](#). Thanks to Alaska Public Media for recording.

## **Solutions: Improvements**

**Wednesday, Jan 10th, 7-9 pm, suggested \$10 donation**

**49th State Brewing Company, 717 W 3rd Ave, Anchorage**

What can we do about Alaska's high health care costs? This session will explore possible fixes to our situation such as

transparency in pricing, medical travel, and task-shifting.

**Panelists:**

- Sen. Cathy Giessel, R.-Anchorage, and Advanced Nurse Practitioner
- Dr. Jeremy Gitomer, nephrologist and co-founder of Alaska Innovative Medicine
- Dr. Graham (Alec) Glass, neurologist and former President of Alaska State Medical Association
- Sandra Heffern, CEO of Effective Health Design, organizer of AK Comprehensive Healthcare Blueprint, and lobbyist who has worked for the health care industry
- Dr. Melissa Shein, primary care physician at Alaska Native Medical Center
- Dr. Anne Zink, Medical Director, Mat-Su Emergency Physicians, and former President of the Alaska Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians

**Moderator:**

- Dr. Thad Woodard, pediatrician and host of “Line One—Your Health Connection”

Watch the Facebook live video [here](#).

**Solutions: Overhauls**

**Wednesday, Jan 24th, 6-9 pm\*, suggested \$10 donation**

**49th State Brewing Company, 717 W 3rd Ave, Anchorage**

**\*Note the earlier start time. This is to allow time for further discussions on these complicated and controversial topics.**

We'll continue to discuss solutions to Alaska's high health care costs. This session will explore systemic changes, such as the establishment of a single-payer system, addressing the 80th percentile rule, and establishment of an Alaska Health Care Authority.

**Panelists:**

- **Thea Agnew Bemben**, Anchorage small business owner
- **Albert Fogle**, former employee benefits consultant/health insurance broker and former President of Alaska Association of Health Underwriters
- **Dr. Jennifer Perkins**, family practitioner at Alaska Native Medical Center and organizer of Alaska Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program
- **Julie Taylor**, CEO of Alaska Regional Hospital
- **Prof. Ralph Townsend**, Director of the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER)
- **Dr. Anne Zink**, Medical Director, Mat-Su Emergency Physicians, and former President of the Alaska Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians

The moderator will be **Dr. Thad Woodard**, pediatrician and host of the public radio program "Line One—Your Health Connection."

Facebook live video is available below. The discussion was in three parts. Audio is available thanks to [Alaska Public Media here](#).

Discussion on the 80th Percentile Rule in two parts:

First part:

Second part:

Discussion on establishment of an Alaska Health Care Authority:

Discussion of a Single-Payer System:

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