Reflections on ACG’s First Decade and Our Founder’s Vision

By Peg Tileston, Current and Founding ACG Board Member

Alaska Common Ground was founded in the fall of 1991. Alaska was just coming out of a severe financial depression caused primarily by bank failures. The political situation was messy which caused considerable consternation across the state. Walter Hickel had just been elected with approximately 41 percent of the vote.

It was out of this chaos the desire for an organization that focused on sound public policy was fostered. The effort was led by Esther Wunnicke – former Commissioner of Natural Resources, member of the Federal/State Land Use Planning Commission, and staunch advocate for strong citizen participation in government decision-making.

The first topic ACG engaged was whether Alaska should hold a Constitutional Convention. Alaska’s constitution requires a yes/no vote by Alaskan voters every ten years. A position paper and a forum described the numerous problems a yes vote would entail, not the least of which would be tearing apart a document considered one of the best state constitutions in the country.

Alaska’s fiscal situation has held ACG’s attention since it started – from 1992 to 2000 alone, we held 10 forums (two of which were televised statewide). Forums on numerous other public policy issues were held too and ranged from Alaska’s high cost of health care to reconciling our urban-rural split to the role of the university. ACG produced position papers on these and other topics, most of which are still available on ACG’s website here and as we know… still relevant today.
ACG is extremely fortunate and grateful for the wisdom of Esther Wunnick, Peg Tileston – and all our founding board/members – who set the organization on a solid path over 30 years ago. We recognize and thank this inspiring group of Alaskans that also includes Beryl Johnson, John Havelock, Wilda Hudson, John Reeder, Julie Kitka, and Pauline Utter.

Check out the original invitation to join ACG here.

Find all the current and former board members here.