



/ DRAFT-2026 Federal Government Priorities

KEY ACTIONS FOR 2026

Investing in Critical National Defense Infrastructure in Port Valdez

As the 27th largest port in the United States by cargo volume and terminus of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, Valdez plays a key role in supporting national defense and energy security. Port Valdez's unique combination of ice-free deep-water access, existing industrial infrastructure, and a multi-modal transportation system make it strategically significant, and Valdez is seeking funding through the U.S. DOT's Port Infrastructure and Development Program to improve the waterfront infrastructure at the core of this system.

From a national defense perspective, Port Valdez is arguably the most important in the nation. Valdez has a longstanding partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard and most munitions for military bases in Alaska come through the port. The City of Valdez is prepared to partner and build suitable infrastructure for homeporting U.S. Coast Guard Fast Response Cutters, icebreakers, or other federal maritime assets needed to support the nation's mission in the Arctic.

Increasing Local Access to Federal Infrastructure Funds

In Alaska, many federal programs designed to improve infrastructure are administered by the state. Limited funding and a large backlog of state infrastructure needs makes it difficult for local governments to access funding to improve roads, bridges, harbors and other important infrastructure. The City of Valdez supports added local control and flexibility in federal grant programs generally.

Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization

The City of Valdez applauds Congress for passing the Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2025 and reinstating funding for recent fiscal years. As a community surrounded by National Forest land, this program provides an average of \$1.3 Million in critical funding for the Valdez City Schools. Uncertainty at the federal level makes municipal budgeting difficult and adds an additional economic burden to an already overextended education system.

We ask Congress to pass legislation to make this program permanent and ensure stable funding into the future.

ADDITIONAL CITY AND COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Take Active Steps to Stabilize Housing and Child Care

The Valdez City Council has identified housing and child care as top priorities. Valdez has been working hard on local initiatives and trying to find ways to support projects in both areas but addressing these dual crises will require ongoing support from all levels of government. We ask that the federal government maintain and expand funding for initiatives that directly aid local communities in addressing housing and child care scarcity and affordability issues. The City of Valdez supports legislation like the Renewing Opportunities in the American Dream (ROAD) to Housing Act that align with Council priorities.

Support Prince William Sound Fisheries and Mariculture Industries

Valdez is home to 41 permit holders and homeport to 91 vessels participating in various commercial fisheries and one of the largest purse seine salmon fisheries in Alaska. Each summer, up to 200 commercial vessels fish in Port Valdez.

The Valdez fishing fleet was severely impacted by the historically meager salmon run in 2024. A request to declare a Prince William Sound Fisheries Economic Disaster for 2024 was submitted to the U.S. Department of Commerce by Governor Dunleavy in January 2025 and has yet to be approved. Swift approval of this request will aid local fishermen and help sustain the industry.

Support Programs to Increase Healthcare Access, Quality and Affordability

The Valdez City Council and local partners have identified gaps in specialty healthcare services – including obstetrics, senior support services, and long-term care. Maintaining a quality healthcare system in rural Alaska is a challenging and expensive endeavor and consistent access to health care is a tangible issue in our community.

The local hospital, Providence Valdez Medical Center has identified the following projects and programs that could be supported by the Rural Health Transformation Program: MRI & Ultrasound Replacement Project, a Rural Training Hub Pilot Program, and a Home Health Pilot Program. They also support Compacting Nursing Licensure to allow for reciprocity of professional licenses across states.

Federal Laws and Programs Important to Valdez

The City of Valdez recognizes the importance of maintaining funding for and integrity of various federal laws and programs that are essential locally:

- **Vessels of Opportunity** – Vessels of Opportunity, fishing vessels that play a vital part in oil spill response programs, remain exempt from USCG inspection under the current version of the National Defense Authorization Act that was signed into law in December 2025. The City of Valdez thanks Congress for ensuring this exemption remains in place and recognizes the important role these vessels play in responding to a potential spill in Port Valdez.
- **Head Start** - The City of Valdez has been partnering with Chugachmiut, an Alaska Native Corporation that provides Head Start services. Changes to federal eligibility guidelines made in 2023 have allowed a Head Start program to be approved for Valdez for the first time. This program will play a key role in providing access to quality child care and early education for local families. The City of Valdez urges continued flexibility in eligibility requirements and stable funding for Head Start programs.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency:** This federal agency provides support for a broad range of emergency management training and activities that the City of Valdez uses to ensure the organization is ready to respond quickly and effectively in the case of a natural disaster, oil release event or other major emergency.
- **U.S. Forest Service:** Valdez is located in the Chugach National Forest and receives fewer direct services from the forest service than our neighboring communities. We urge this agency to partner with Valdez to assist with areas of avalanche mitigation and outdoor recreation support in our area.
- **U.S. Economic Development Administration:** This federal agency has administered recent grants that have benefited Valdez. Locally, The City of Valdez was awarded a major grant to help develop outdoor recreational facilities and amenities at Meals Hill. Regionally, several Prince William Sound projects have benefited from the Alaska Mariculture Cluster grant program.
- **Magnuson-Stevens Act:** The City of Valdez sees reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act as an opportunity to evaluate possible changes that could be beneficial to Prince William Sound fisheries.
- **Dingell-Johnson Act** The Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (Dingell-Johnson Act) provides funding to the State of Alaska to support the Boating and Angler Access Program. The City of Valdez hopes to use funds from this program to improve the launch ramp at our old harbor.