

Mrs. MURRAY. ``Mr. President, let us vote for the 49th star in the flag." Those were the words from the great Senator from the State of Washington, Warren Magnuson, spoken on this floor in 1958, just before this body finally agreed to make Alaska one of the United States.

Today, I am very pleased to join our colleagues from the north in Alaska to say a warm congratulations to the people of Alaska on this 50th anniversary of their statehood. Alaska's statehood, as you heard, was controversial a half century ago. But I think time has proven that the United States is a greater Nation thanks to the Land of the Midnight Sun.

As Senator *Murkowski* has said, Washington State's Senators, Warren Magnuson and Henry Jackson, were some of Alaska's greatest friends. Their advocacy helped to sway this Senate that Alaskans were ready to join the Union. Today I want to give you a flavor of that debate at the time and their role in it.

Back in 1958, Alaska's statehood had already been an issue for 42 years, and legislation to make it a State had been introduced in every Congress since 1943.

As Senator Jackson said in one speech that led up to that final vote that Congress had held 11 hearings, two of them in Alaska, and others here in Washington, DC. And more than 4,000 pages of testimony had been published.

``It was time to put the issue to rest," he argued, and I quote:

There can be no doubt that the record is complete. Our objective is statehood. It can be achieved now.

Those were the words of Senator Jackson back then. And as the debate continued, Senators Magnuson and Jackson were confident that Alaska was ready.

Senator Magnuson argued that with 180,000 citizens, Alaska had more residents than Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Alabama, Nevada, Idaho, and 21 other States when they were admitted into the Union. He pointed out to this body that Alaska was strategically located between the United States and the Soviet Union and that it was home to two important military bases at the time right when the Cold War was escalating.

He dismissed the argument that Alaska could not support itself as a State because that argument had not held up when it was used for his own State of Washington.

He said:

Alaskans feel confident that they can lick this problem as they have met and solved others. I say, we should give them that opportunity.

So in Senator Magnuson's mind, the controversy was very similar to a family argument about whether a child was ready to leave home. He said:

These United States, like fearful parents, can waver further in indecision, and allow our lack of confidence to undermine Alaskans and say, "You will be ready for statehood someday, but not now." Or we can be proud of Alaskans' determination to strike out for their true independence through their own real self government.

"The United States should follow through the second course," Magnuson said.

He said:

The territory feels entitled to sit and deliberate with us--be one of us. Alaska wants to work out her own future, just as each of the other 48 partners in our nation have been allowed to do. Alaska's hopes, aspirations, and quiet self-confidence are understandable. She knows that her resources, her people, and their combined potential spell a brilliant future.

Alaska has sat impatiently in the anteroom of history for 42 years. Alaska should be a State.

I am very proud of the role Washington's two Senators played in this debate at the time. Alaska's road to statehood was long and it was hard. But Alaskans are some of the toughest people around. They fought for their rights. They did not give up. And they prevailed.

So as they celebrate across their State I wish them a happy and a successful future. I want to close by once more quoting Senator Magnuson's words to the people of Alaska.

He said:

We approve and commend your vision, understand and believe your hopes, know that your mission and goal can and will be reached, so good luck and godspeed.