

Another thing is that a fundamental component of competing successfully against China in at least two of three of these technologies—blockchain technology and AI—is that we have to have abundant American energy to power in and advance in these technological areas.

Again, for the benefit of our own citizens and our own national security, it is critical that we unleash American energy—all forms of American energy. I am an “all of the above” energy proponent: oil, gas, coal, renewables, nuclear. We used to talk about the energy transition, but in terms of winning the race on these kinds of technologies, we really need to be talking about energy addition because we are going to need all forms of American energy—American energy dominance—when it comes to blockchain technologies, crypto, and AI.

In these areas, I believe that, for example, in blockchain technology, when developed properly, it cannot only help but ensure our economic resilience, our economic competitiveness, and, very importantly, as it relates to competing with China, the continued dominance of the U.S. dollar as the world’s reserve currency, which, as I mentioned, is a critical comparative advantage we have over the Chinese of which they are trying to erode both in terms of their own digital currencies but in other ways in terms of working with other countries that want to erode the dollar’s preeminence as the world’s reserve currency. Related blockchain technology can make sure that the United States is more resilient to economic warfare—again, only if we are the leaders related to China.

In these areas, I think we are off to a pretty good start by actually passing laws that are beginning to establish the rules of the road for these technologies, like stablecoin, when we recently passed the GENIUS Act.

Next up, as we are working on additional rules for the road to establish the strength of these technologies based in America, not China, is the market structure legislation that we are working on.

As some of you know, the CLARITY Act passed the House, and we are continuing to move that legislation forward here in the Senate. We are splitting some of it apart with legislation, such as the Digital Commodity Intermediaries Act, which recently passed out of the Agriculture Committee. This is also bipartisan legislation. Again, it is a good start, but we have a long way to go.

I think it is critical to keep in mind that one of the most important elements of this is to beat China, which is for our economic security and for our national security. That includes, of course, the areas of AI in biotech, as I have mentioned.

Again, the race against China here is critical. Who wins these technological races will almost certainly dominate key elements of the 21st century. We

need to optimize the full promise of AI while protecting our citizens against some of the related harms, particularly protecting our children when it comes to this new technology.

Smart regulation and legislation and well-thought-out legislative actions from Congress should focus on empowering our people and accelerating societal benefits that result from the use of AI, especially in healthcare and in education, where I believe the promise of artificial intelligence is immense and transformative in a very positive way for our country and our citizens.

When I talk to the experts, they believe that we are winning the AI race with China, but we can’t be complacent at all. As I mentioned, they can compete. Every day, we need to keep moving forward in recognizing that this is a critical competition that we cannot let the CCP dominate and control.

Finally, on biotech, the United States maintains leads here in critical areas but, again, not in every respect. The leads we do have cannot be taken for granted because biotech has been a priority for China for over 20 years. It appears in document after document that constitute China’s industrial policy strategies. It is a main priority again in the new draft 5-year plan that the CCP just released this week. We have to acknowledge that China is a powerhouse of research—bigger than the United States, bigger than Europe. It has the advantage of a large gene pool—data which, by the way, belongs not to the individual; it belongs to that guy and the party. Think about how scary that is.

Where we lead in market size and development trials, China is No. 2 in all of them in terms of biotech. And this is so important. Why? Because it involves our genes. They are the very things that physically make us who we are as human beings, and it will be increasingly central to our health. Again, there are dangers here because it can also be used in bioweapons. The Pentagon’s annual China power report, by the way, says, “Prominent PLA thinkers”—the People’s Liberation Army—that guy and his cohorts—“believe that biotechnology is poised to transform warfare.”

These are all the reasons we need to do everything we can, in a bipartisan way, with all the smart people we have in the United States, to win these technological and emerging technology challenges—especially as it relates to them.

This is a good example of the work we have done. Congress passed a law to establish the National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology. They put out a report just a month ago. It is quite good. It is helping educate Members of the Senate and Members of the House, but we have got to keep doing the work on this.

TRIBUTE TO OLIVIA KLUPAR

Mr. President, it is Thursday here in the U.S. Senate, which means it is time for one of my favorite traditions on the

Senate floor—the “Alaskan of the Week.”

Now, the pages, I don’t think, have had the pleasure—this group of pages has had the pleasure—of seeing an “Alaskan of the Week” presentation.

I am sure, once you see it, our great pages, you will understand why every class of pages couldn’t wait until Thursday afternoon to get the “Alaskan of the Week” update. So, congratulations. I know you are literally sitting on the edges of your seats.

What I would like to do—and to our wonderful pages here, when I talk about the Alaskan of the Week, which is usually on Thursday—by the way, the press likes this, too, because they know the end of the week is here, and you know that all of the busyness of the Capitol slows down; but I would like to first talk about what is going on back home—what is going on in the great State of Alaska. Now, it is a really exciting time to be back home in Alaska. I try to get home pretty much every weekend, and last weekend when I was home, there were some fantastic things going on.

First and foremost, one of the most iconic traditions in our great State was the Iditarod, which is often called the Last Great Race. It started last Saturday, in Anchorage, and then officially out of Willow, AK. Each year, dozens of mushers and their teams of sled dogs set out on a grueling journey of nearly 1,000 miles across Alaska’s vast and unforgiving landscape, racing from Anchorage to Nome, through mountain ranges, frozen rivers, and the wide-open tundra.

I had the honor of kicking off that race last week by cutting the ribbon at the ceremonial start in Anchorage. It was a great event—a huge crowd, incredible energy. The dogs were just jumping in their harnesses, ready to run.

By the way, right before we kicked off the race, I was honored to swear in 33 new Marine Corps recruits right there at the starting line of the Iditarod. These are the kinds of events that bring the whole community together—families lining the streets, kids and grandparents cheering on the teams, and visitors from literally all over the world; some of the mushers are from all over the world—to get a glimpse of this uniquely Alaskan tradition.

To anyone who is watching in the Galleries, I invite you, next time, to come on up for the Iditarod—the Last Great Race. It was snowing. We had about a foot of snow. It was beautiful.

The Iditarod captures something essential about Alaska. It reflects the same resilience, determination, and spirit of self-reliance that define our communities from the smallest villages to the largest cities. That spirit is on display across Alaska right now.

From our athletes who are representing the United States on the world stage to the fishermen, small businesses, and families who help to

sustain our communities, Alaskans continue to show what makes our State so special. Whether it is the mushers crossing the Alaska Range, dog teams charging across the interior, or communities all across the State coming out to the trail to welcome racers and visitors from around the world—or what we call the Iditarod Air Force, which are small bush pilot planes helping to supply these mushers and their dogs and their canine athletes—this is a great event that helps define what the last frontier is all about.

One of the clearest places those values come together, as I mentioned, is in our tourism industry, an industry that connects our communities, supports local jobs, and allows visitors to experience Alaska not just as a destination but as a place shaped by its people, which brings me to our Alaskan of the Week.

This week's Alaskan of the Week is Olivia Klupar of Skagway, AK. She is the cofounder of Voyij, a technology platform that connects Alaska's small businesses, artists, and tour operators with visitors and consumers from all over the world to browse and discover over 20,000 Alaska items that they can buy or they can see when they come to Alaska, including fresh seafood, Alaska Native art, apparel and jewelry, and experiences from dog mushing, the Northern Lights, salmon fishing, whale watching, and much, much more.

Now, I had the honor of meeting with Olivia in DC just a few weeks ago. She is an entrepreneur, a small business advocate, and a wonderful bridge between Alaska's communities and the global marketplace.

The oldest of five siblings, Olivia was born in Skagway, a town without a hospital to deliver babies. When she was born, a doctor had to fly in from Haines, AK, during a snowstorm, and because Skagway did not have runway lights yet, the people of the town lined up their cars along the airstrip—headlights on—and guided the plane safely to the ground. That is how Olivia was born. That story may sound remarkable, but to many Alaskans, it has a familiar start to a life in the last frontier—one shaped by community, resilience, and shared responsibility.

Olivia grew up immersed in a small family-owned business that welcomed the world to Alaska. Her parents own and operate the Historic Skagway Inn—a Gold Rush-era bed and breakfast that now welcomes visitors from around the globe. I had the privilege of staying there before I was a U.S. Senator, and it is a great place.

Again, if you are watching on TV or from the Galleries, come on up to Alaska. Get to Skagway and stay at the Historic Skagway Inn.

Her family also operates Olivia's Bistro, a scratch kitchen of all homemade food—serving Alaska seafood, halibut, salmon, and wild game.

In addition, her parents run the Lynch & Kennedy Gallery in Skagway,

which is a respected art gallery that showcases curated Alaska art and locally crafted jewelry from artists all across our great State.

From an early age, Olivia learned that tourism is not just about visitors and revenue; it is about creativity and stewardship. As Olivia said:

Tourism isn't just about people coming to Alaska—it's about how we take care of our communities and share who we are.

Like many Alaskans, Olivia left home to see the wider world. She earned a degree at Boston College, moved to New York City, and worked at a major law firm before joining Citigroup. She was surrounded by opportunity, but she said something was missing. As Olivia put it, "living that cubicle life" in the big city "made me realize my parents—the small business owners back home—were truly the brave ones."

I love that quote. It is a great quote.

That realization brought Olivia back to Alaska. Together with her brother Greg, a software developer trained at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Olivia cofounded Voyij, a technology platform built specifically for Alaska's tourism and small business community.

Voyij grew directly from lived experience. Olivia remembers spending an entire summer building a website for her parents' art gallery, only to watch it become outdated as the business evolved. She recognized the challenge shared by countless Alaska entrepreneurs. As Olivia said:

Small business owners already wear every [single] hat—they don't have time to be web developers, marketers, and operators all at once.

So that is where Voyij came in. Today, Voyij partners with roughly 400 Alaska businesses across more than 65 communities, offering over 20,000 Alaskan-made goods, services, and experiences, connecting visitors and consumers with local operators all across the State and, really, all across the world.

More than 20 percent of Voyij's platform features indigenous artists or galleries representing authentic Alaska Native art. Olivia and her team have worked diligently with Tribal organizations, including in remote communities, to provide training on photography, pricing, and online sales, helping artists—Alaska artists—in very rural communities reach markets that they might not otherwise access.

The importance of Olivia's work became unmistakably clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, when cruise tourism all stopped. We get about 1.5, 1.6 million tourists coming up on cruise ships to Alaska every summer. And when COVID hit, none of them came. It was a very scary time for our small businesses and the tourism industry.

When it stopped, Alaska communities felt the impact immediately. Businesses that relied on short summer seasons for all their business lost critical revenue. Some, unfortunately, never even reopened.

Voyij pivoted quickly. With the platform already built, Olivia and her team worked with cruise lines, the Alaska Small Business Development Center, and BuyAlaska to help businesses sell online when ships were no longer coming. Their message was simple: Shop now, and you visit later after the pandemic.

Those partnerships continue today. Voyij now works with every major cruise line that visits Alaska—and there are a lot of them—reinforcing a message essential to our State's long-term success: When visitors come to Alaska, they should support Alaska's local businesses.

Olivia's work reflects a clear understanding of what makes Alaska's economy strong. When I met with her a few weeks ago, we discussed the issues that go beyond tourism, issues that matter to the local economy, issues that matter to the future of our State. That includes the ARTIST Act, which is my legislation that I am proud to have gotten through the Senate at the end of last year. I appreciate all my colleagues voting for that. This legislation passed the Senate unanimously and clarifies protections for Alaska Native artists who craft walrus ivory.

We still do that in Alaska, and it is legal. Some States didn't recognize that. So our ARTIST Act makes sure the whole country recognizes you can buy beautiful Alaska Native ivory from walrus.

Alaska's economy and identity grow in our communities—in families and small businesses and the preservation and celebration of culture and tradition, including through art and through the creativity and innovations of Alaskans themselves. And that is the essence of the work Olivia does.

So, Olivia, thank you for your great work, for showcasing and supporting Alaska's economy, for helping other Alaska businesses and artists reach the entire world, for your creativity and dedication in helping our great State. I want to thank you again for all you are doing and, of course, congratulate you on this very prestigious award, being our "Alaskan of the Week."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The Senator from Alaska.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING SUNIL PURI

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, when I think about the American dream, I