

## Standing room only: Dunleavy leads powerhouse panel in defending oil and gas at energy conference



*Alaska Sustainable Energy Conference 2025*

The Alaska Sustainable Energy Conference kicked off Tuesday with a series of high-level panels and presentations, but it was the lunchtime session — moderated by Gov. Mike Dunleavy — that stole the show.

The luncheon, held at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center, featured a powerhouse panel including US Energy Secretary Chris Wright, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin. The theme was clear and unwavering: “Alaska has it all.”

With a packed ballroom and no empty seats, the luncheon panel was the highlight of the day. Attendees responded with loud applause throughout the session and multiple standing ovations by the end. The crowd's energy mirrored the message from the stage — that energy is not just about power grids and pipelines, but about human flourishing, national strength, and economic opportunity. Even people living in Alaska's harshest Arctic conditions have had their lives extended by decades due to the use of fossil fuels.

Gov. Dunleavy was in his element, guiding the discussion with sharp focus and evident pride in Alaska's resource potential. The tone of the session was unapologetically pro-development, with a moral case made for continuing to harness fossil fuels as the backbone of modern civilization.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright emphasized that the global reliance on fossil fuels has not diminished. Forty years ago, he noted, about 80% of the world's energy came from coal, oil, and gas. Today, that number is roughly 85%. Technology has made the industry far less polluting. He also noted that despite massive investments, the share of global energy provided by renewables has only make up 3% of energy.

The panel discussed how energy access is directly tied to quality of life, economic development, and global stability. Fossil fuels, they noted, continue to drive the vast majority of global energy use, and Alaska has a critical role to play in meeting that demand responsibly.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin and Secretary Burgum added their perspectives on regulatory clarity and federal-state cooperation, underscoring the importance of stable, science-based policy frameworks that don't sacrifice economic progress.

The luncheon left a lasting impression with attendees. With a room full of policymakers, industry leaders, foreign representatives, and local stakeholders, the atmosphere was electric. As the panel wrapped up, a standing ovation brought the event to a close, a rare and telling moment of unity, even while protesters stood outside the building holding signs that objected to any oil and gas development.

Day One of the conference set a strong tone for the days ahead: Alaska is not backing down from its position as a global energy leader.

“It's rare to witness such a powerful combination of competence, vision, energy, and authority in one room, especially here in Alaska,” said Brett Huber of Power the Future. “The Trump officials stood out for their deep understanding of the issues and their clear, actionable plans to advance Alaska's future. You couldn't sit through that meeting and walk away anything but inspired and confident about what lies ahead for our state.”