

SECESSIONIST SARAH AND HER STAY-AT-HOME SUBSIDIES

✖ By now you've heard of Sarah Palin's brilliant way of easing tensions between family and career: she has billed Alaska for her girls to travel to her official events (Jane hits it [here](#) and Christy [here](#)).

In separate filings, the state was billed about \$25,000 for Palin's daughters' expenses and \$19,000 for her husband's.

Flights topped the list for the most expensive items, and the daughter whose bill was the highest was Piper, 7, whose flights cost nearly \$11,000, while Willow, 14, claimed about \$6,000 and Bristol, 17, accounted for about \$3,400.

One event was in New York City in October 2007, when Bristol accompanied the governor to Newsweek's third annual Women and Leadership Conference, toured the New York Stock Exchange and met local officials and business executives. The state paid for three nights in a \$707-a-day hotel room.

Think about it! If women everywhere just billed their employers for lugging their kids on business trips, it would strengthen families and make it easier for women to sustain vibrant careers. And I'm sure the corporations picking up the tab won't mind about the cost, given the way it would strengthen families ...

But that's not the most interesting aspect of today's Palin scandal du jour, IMO. I'm more interested in the way that Palin's actions have effected a policy change that the Alaska Independence Party—those loony secessionists her husband was officially affiliated with not so

long ago—has been pushing for some time.

Along with wanting to separate from America, you see, the AIP has long supported efforts to move the state capitol from Juneau to some place more central—some place like the Mat-Su Valley (Palin's home) or Anchorage. And that's what Palin has effectively done—at least in her role as Governor.

Palin's Support for Moving the Capitol

As Governor, Palin's first purportedly anti-Juneau act came when she took the oath—it in Fairbanks, not Juneau. Then, she told her Commissioners they didn't have to live in Juneau.

But overall in the last few months she's seen less of Palin, who's moved most of her operations up to Anchorage, the biggest city in Alaska and a place much friendlier to the sort of conservative pro-business pro-drilling stance that's marked her tenure as governor. "She had started off by telling her Commissioners that none of them had to live in Juneau, which makes Juneauites nervous. We're always convinced that they're going to try and move the State Capitol again."

In fact, when Palin called a special legislative session earlier this year to push through her pipeline plan, she wasn't in Juneau that much.

Palin has spent little time in Juneau, rarely coming to the state capital except when the Legislature was in session, and sometimes not even then.

During a recent special session called by Palin herself, she faced criticism from several legislators for not showing up personally to push for her agenda.

Someone at the Capitol even printed up buttons asking "Where's Sarah?"

But that's just Sarah and her top aides—the Executive—that have effectively been working outside of Juneau.

She has also said she would not veto an ongoing attempt to move the legislature out of Juneau—even though the measure would bypass a measure passed in 1994 that gives Alaskan voters a say in whether the capitol will move or not.

It seems that Governor Palin's a pretty big fan of moving out of Juneau—or at least not being in Juneau.

Subsidies for an Expensive Policy

But that's what today's article is so interesting to me. Her per diem charges for being in Wasilla and commuting down to Anchorage effectively require the citizens of Alaska to subsidize a de facto move of the executive branch outside of Juneau.


Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin has billed taxpayers for 312 nights spent in her own home during her first 19 months in office, charging a "per diem" allowance intended to cover meals and incidental expenses while traveling on state business.

Sarah Palin has billed Alaska's taxpayers for an executive that has worked in Wasilla for 312 out of the 645 days she has been governor.

The AIP and Palin and Moving the Capitol

What makes this still more interesting is where Palin first got started in efforts to move the capitol—to a 2002 effort championed by the AIP to move the capitol to Palin's own Mat-Su borough.

The chairman of the Alaskan Independence Party and two other sponsors of an initiative to move legislative sessions out of Juneau are one step closer to putting the question on the state ballot.



The group on Friday filed an application with the lieutenant governor's office for an initiative petition. If the state approves the application and the group collects about 29,000 signatures, voters will decide whether to move sessions to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough near Anchorage.

That's not to say Palin supported it because the secessionists did—after all, her town of Wasilla stood to benefit if it could land the capitol. But it was a connection the AIP used to celebrate openly with the picture (above) of Palin signing their petition, which until recently was on the AIP's own photo gallery.

I'll leave it to the Alaska taxpayers to decide whether it makes sense to move their capitol to Anchorage. It surely offers some benefits, like road transportation for a significant proportion of the population and easy access to oil lobbyists (heh).

But for her own purposes, Sarah Palin has already largely decided that issue. And billed the taxpayers accordingly.