

Mary Sattler Pelota



Mary Sattler Pelota was born August 31, 1973 in Alaska and was raised on the Kuskokwim River in Kwethluk, Tuntutuliak, Platinum, and Bethel¹. She is Yup'ik³. She was elected to represent the Bethel region in the Alaska State Legislature at the age of 24 in 1998¹. She built consensus around budgets, which helped the rural population of Alaska in the 10 years that she was in the state legislature¹. She also worked as manager of Community Development and Sustainability for the Donlin gold mine project¹ and served as the Executive Director of the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, which helped to mobilize 118 tribes and rural Alaskans to protect salmon runs in Western Alaska¹. She also served on the Orutsarmiut Native Council Tribal Court and the Bethel City Council and on the boards of the Nature Conservancy, the Alaska Humanities Forum, the Alaska Children's Trust, and the Russian Orthodox Sacred Sites in Alaska¹. She grew up hunting and fishing^{1,2}. In 2022, she became the first Alaska Native in Congress when she was elected to Alaska's at large congressional district² and sworn in on September 14, 2022³. Less than two weeks after being sworn in, she introduced her first piece of legislation: the Food Security for All Veterans Act (H.R.8888) that calls for the creation of an Office of Food Security within the Department of Veterans Affairs, which would work to provide information on the availability of and eligibility requirements for federal nutrition assistance programs to veterans, as well as work with other government agencies to create policies to help identify and treat veterans at risk or already experiencing food insecurities³. This bill has passed in the House of Representatives⁴. Pelota also has fought for human rights by being one of eight House Democrats to vote against a bill that imposed a labor contract on freight railworkers and sought to avoid a strike that would be detrimental to the nation's economy, saying, "It just seems like a human right, a quality of life issue, to be able to see a doctor, to be able to take a sick day and know that you're not going to lose your job or be severely penalized."^{5,6}

Citations

1. Biography: U.S. representative Mary Sattler Peltola. Biography | U.S. Representative Mary Sattler Peltola. (n.d.). Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://peltola.house.gov/about/>

2. Liz Ruskin, A. P. M. (2022, September 5). Mary Peltola, the first Alaska native heading to Congress, journeys home to the river. NPR. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/05/1120805820/mary-peltola-the-first-alaska-native-heading-to-congress-journeys-home-to-the-river>

3. Staff, N. N. O. (2022, September 24). Rep. Mary Sattler Peltola hits the ground running: Her first bill introduced Clears Committee two days later. Native News Online. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/rep-mary-sattler-peltola-hits-the-ground-running-her-first-bill-introduced-clears-committee-two-days-later>

4. Liz Ruskin, A. P. M. (2022, October 6). Alaska congresswoman's first Bill Passes House. Alaska Public Media. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://alaskapublic.org/2022/09/29/alaska-congress-womans-first-bill-poised-to-pass-house/>

5. Liz Ruskin, A. P. M. (2022, November 30). Peltola says it's not right to deny sick leave for rail workers. Alaska Public Media. Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://alaskapublic.org/2022/11/29/peltola-says-its-not-right-to-deny-sick-leave-for-rail-workers/>

6. Alaska Democrat Mary Peltola to vote against Joe Biden's rail strike proposal, details inside. *The Economic Times*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/us/alaska-democrat-mary-peltola-to-vote-against-joe-bidens-rail-strike-proposal-details-inside/articleshow/95888367.cms>