

Our view: Light of day***Emails will become public, one way or another****(06/08/11 18:30:51)*

There's an element of summer circus about the Parnell administration's handling of the Palin email records. After the governor refused to make the email records available outside of Juneau, Sen. Dennis Egan, D-Juneau, asked the governor to change his mind and even offered to cover the expense of shipping them to Anchorage and Fairbanks.

That was out of his legislative office expenses, of course, which legislators recently increased for themselves, so it wasn't quite as sacrificial as it appears at first glance.

Still, Sen. Egan has the right idea, and the administration's reluctance to meet its public record obligation is the wrong idea.

It's also futile.

The administration has agreed to provide copies of records to Anchorage Reps. Mike Doogan and Berta Gardner, who have requested them, as a matter of course in response to a legislator's request. Doogan and Gardner aim to make the records available. Neither will have to pay for copying and shipping -- that's in contrast to the governor's office reply to private citizen Andree McLeod, who wanted to know if the records would be available for viewing in Anchorage. She was told no, that she would either have to fly to Juneau to see them or pony up more than \$1,000 for copies and shipping to Anchorage.

Further, media organizations, including the Daily News, are planning to have them scanned and put online for the public -- something the state should have done.

More than 24,000 redacted emails aren't likely to compete with that novel-loaded e-reader or good book Americans tote to the beach. But they are part of the public record of a former Alaska governor, current national figure and possible presidential candidate. They'll fetch a look, and by text and Twitter, Facebook and email, circulate on the same social media that Sarah Palin has used to such telling effect.

These emails may be more summer story than revelation. But that's not the point. Private news organizations and individual legislators shouldn't have to do the administration's job of abiding by Alaska's public records law and making these records available to the public -- in Juneau, Anchorage, Fairbanks and online.

BOTTOM LINE: Email circus is funny -- except for the genuine public records issue at stake.