

50,000 More Alaskans To Vote

By STEWART DILL
(Courtesy of Anchorage Daily News)

There are 50,000 more Alaskans registered to vote this November than there were in the last general election, two years ago.

Who are they? Their identity, and candidates who may appeal to them, could forge a revolution in Alaska politics.

Or, these thousands of new Alaska voters might divide along the normal spectrum, preserving the status quo.

Lt. Gov. H. A. "Red" Boucher told the Daily News Thursday that this might not only bring the State of Alaska a national record in voter registration, but also an influx of people into the polling booths who have never taken part in government before.

They are youth, Natives and Blacks, Boucher said.

Boucher expects to have over 90% of the state's 160,000 eligible voters registered by November, and Alaska could well exceed all other states in the U.S. in the proportion of its population participating in the presidential election.

And most of the Alaskans registered in the 1½-year voter drive are young people and minority groups, voters which Boucher describes as "previously outside, uninvolved and turned off by government."

The estimated total of registered voters represents a 77% increase over the 84,902 votes cast in the 1968 presidential election, and almost a 50% increase over the number of Alaskans registered in November, 1970.

Boucher attributes the recent swell in the ranks of voters primarily to youth.

"The young bring excitement to anything they are involved in. Every area of social change was started by motivated youth. They set the example. And it all started the day the amendment for the 18-year-old vote was passed."

Boucher, in charge of administering all state election preparation stated that of the 42,000 voters already filed with the State Election Office, over 30,000 "have never participated in the political process before." The remaining 12,000 registrants he estimated was due to average population growth.

"The business community and middle class have historically been involved in voting. The greatest increase has come among the young, the minorities and rural residents, said Boucher. This election year will involve a "broader spectrum of people" than ever before seen in Alaska politics, he said.

The new voters who registered as independents for the coming election far outnumber those claiming party allegiance. The breakdown of the 42,000 registered since the last primary election in 1970 is as follows: Nonpartisan: 24,296; Democrats: 12,212; Republican: 5,259; and Other: 718. The newly registered nonpartisan voters, Boucher said, "outnumber the voters of all other political parties put together."