

Election means Knowles, Hensley officially a team

by Holly F. Reimer

Tundra Times reporter

It's official: Former Anchorage Mayor Tony Knowles and Willie Hensley, well known Native leader, are now a team, giving Hensley a chance to become the state's first Alaska Native holding statewide office.

Election results. . .

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After nearly a year of debates, newspaper, television and radio commercials and statewide appearances in

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Photos by Paul Drummond

Former Anchorage Mayor Tony Knowles, left, won by an unexpected margin over challenger Steven McAlpine. More election night photos, page eighteen.

• Knowles gets 25 percent of vote

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efforts to gain voter support and lots of politicking, Democratic gubernatorial candidate Knowles got 25 percent of the vote, beating Lt. Gov. Stephen McAlpine, who got 19.4 percent of the vote.

Hensley easily won over his Democratic opponent, receiving 27.8 percent of the vote compared to John Williams of Kenai, with only 9.2 percent.

Knowles and Hensley were greeted with cheers near the end of the evening by supporters at the Egan Convention Center in Anchorage. The crowd chanted their names while holding and waving campaign balloons and posters.

In preparation for the General Election, top candidates from each party will team up and begin planning their campaign strategies for the election in November.

Since both the gambling and railroad initiatives failed in the primary, they won't show up on the Nov. 6 ballot.

Voters turned down the gambling initiative, which would have author-

ized legalized gambling in Alaska. McAlpine's stand in favor of the initiative was believed to be a factor in his defeat, since Knowles was strongly opposed to it.

During a short speech to the group at about 1 a.m. Wednesday morning, Knowles said he wants Alaskans to have confidence in government. He said he believes he can bring this back because he is going support Alaskans and stand up for what they want.

In an interview, Knowles said he recognized the importance that rural voters played during his campaign.

"The rural vote was critical to my campaign. I got support from Western Alaska to Southwestern Alaska," he said, adding support also included Southeast Alaska votes.

In the beginning, Hensley was in the lead with a majority of the initial tally from Southeast Alaska.

"Southeast set me off from my opponents," Hensley said.

Hensley, who is an Inupiat Eskimo from Kotzebue, said during the general election campaign some of the major issues to come up will be the

state budget, oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, education, taxes and jobs.

"Education has been one of the main issues in my campaign. Even though money is tight, we still must provide for our children's education," he said.

Issues such as ANWR, he said are consensus type issues which don't need immediate decisions, unlike a budget or education.

Some of the issues which Knowles sees as priorities for the campaign are economic development, ANWR, education and drug and alcohol abuse.

He said if he can iron out some of these issues, then "Alaskans can have the quality of life which all Alaskans want."

McAlpine made a speech after realizing Knowles was clearly ahead.

He discussed how the gambling initiative was worded on the ballot, then, clearly disappointed over his loss, he congratulated Knowles.

"Tony ran a good, intelligent campaign, and that's the way it is," McAlpine said.