

# Natives blast GOP candidates

Alaska Native leaders sharply criticized seven Republican gubernatorial candidates late last week for their call to the Senate to delay action on an Alaska Federation of Natives' sponsored package of amendments to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

The criticism came after all of the Republican gubernatorial candidates except for Don Wright — Joe Hayes, Walter Hickel, Bob McGrane, Dick Randolph, Bob Richards, Ron Somerville and Arliss Sturgulewski — issued a joint press release and letter supporting a delay in the 1991 amendments.

Roy Huhndorf, president of Cook Inlet Region Inc., said the candidates' action reduces the choice Alaska Natives have in the election this year.

"I think the letter was a drastic error. Now, whether we like it or not, the 1991 amendments have become a campaign issue," he said. "The

Republican candidates' decision to lump themselves together in a single position on the 1991 amendments in my opinion greatly diminishes the choices that Alaska Native voters have in the upcoming election."

The Republican candidates asked for the delay in a letter to U.S. Sen. Malcolm Wallop, chairman of the Senate Public Lands, Reserved Water and Resources Conservation Subcommittee.

"It is absolutely imperative that any legislative action be carefully crafted so that the original purpose of the 1971 settlement be retained and Alaska is not socially and economically divided along racial lines," they said.

"Despite the good intentions of the Alaska delegation, the complex issues surrounding the ANCSA amendments have not been adequately publicized

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# Native leaders

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throughout Alaska. . . Alaskans have not been granted adequate time in which to discuss and fully understand the far-reaching consequences of these amendments.

"It is absolutely unnecessary that the amendments be passed at this time. Therefore, we collectively request that the Senate delay further consideration until next year."

The letter calls the proposed changes to the settlement act, aimed at allowing the restrictions on the sale of stock in Native corporations to remain in place beyond 1991, "sweeping" and states that any changes must be prepared carefully with full participation of the Alaska public.

Nelson Angapak, president of Calista Corp., took issue with the candidates' statement that the amendments had not been adequately publicized.

"They're absolutely wrong," he said, adding that the proposals have been under consideration by many people for several years, including numerous public hearings in the last year.

"We strongly feel that the can-

didates may have unnecessarily and unknowingly alienated themselves from rural Alaska voters," Angapak said.

Morris Thompson, president of Doyon Ltd., said he did not understand why the candidates wrote the letter.

"Considering the positive economic impacts that village and regional corporations have had on the state and further considering the deliberative process which the Native community undertook to arrive at these amendments, I find it difficult to fathom how enlightened public officials could sign such a letter."

Spud Williams, president of the Tanana Chiefs Council, said the candidates' action will cost them votes.

"No Native in good conscience can support any Republican candidate that signed the letter opposing passage of the amendments to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that are crucial to the protection of Native lands."

A spokesman for Gov. Bill Sheffield said the governor strongly supports the 1991 amendments and that he is working to assist in getting them passed this year.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Steve Cowper also said he supports the amendments.