

Bush holds its own at 11th Alaska Legislature

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While the State Senate quickly organized, placing bush members in top committee positions, the House remained at an impasse by Friday, with the bush caucus refusing to budge from its game plan of seating Nels Anderson, D-Dillingham, as speaker.

John Sackett, R-Galena, with

13 years of legislative experience, again was appointed chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee. Any legislation that entails spending money must go through the Finance Committee. George Hohman, D-Bethel, who has served 11 years, was given a valuable seat on Finance. The Labor and Management Committee will be headed by Frank Ferguson, D-Kotzebue, in his ninth legislative year.

Although Rep. Anderson started his organization plan early, he came to Juneau to find three colleagues gunning for the speakership with their own leadership rosters. Sam Cotten, D-Anchorage, and Charlie Parr, D-Fairbanks, dropped their bids mid-week, throwing support to Terry Gardiner, D-Ketchikan.

But the eight-vote bush block remained steadfast, and Gardiner had trouble rounding up the

four or five votes he still needed to get the necessary 21 votes to elect him speaker. Bush members were not included in Gardiner's organization plan. Republicans threatened to form a coalition with non-bush Democrats and elect a speaker if the organization roadblock was not resolved. No committee appointments can be made and no legislative work can get started until a speaker is chosen.

Those representatives in the bush caucus for the 11th Legislature include: Anderson, Jack Fuller of Nome, Phil Guy of Kwethluk, Vern Hurlbert of Sleetmute, Al Osterback of Sand Point, Leo Schaeffer of Kobuk, Fred Zharoff of Kodiak and Jim Duncan of Juneau. Duncan has aligned himself with the caucus in hopes of getting the chairmanship of the House Finance Committee.