

# Gambling issue, subsistence spark debate

## Aug. 28 election will narrow field

by Jeffrey Richardson

for the Tundra Times

The 1990 election season suddenly heated up last week when leading candidates for governor parted ways over a proposal to legalize gambling.

This year's political races were already complicated by a number of factors, including the unresolved dilemma of subsistence management and the state's uncertain revenue picture, especially with the onset of a Middle East crisis.

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## ELECTION 1990

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In addition to congressional contests and a race for governor, Alaskans will vote in the Aug. 28 primary election to narrow the field of contenders for all 40 state House seats and 10 state Senate seats.

The ballot initiative to legalize gambling sparked a flurry of activity in several camps.

In a major pre-primary push, Tony Knowles, a major Democratic contender for governor, seized on the gambling issue to separate himself from opponent Steve McAlpine, the state's incumbent lieutenant governor.

The Knowles campaign released a new commercial blasting what the candidate referred to as casino-style gambling, saying it would be "completely incongruous" with Alaskan lifestyles, despite the potential for raising revenue.

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Knowles cited fears of increased crime, drug and alcohol addiction, political corruption, administrative expenses and a negative impact on the poor if gambling were to be introduced.

McAlpine supports the gambling initiative for the sake of economic benefit, pointing out that gambling would be strictly regulated and only allowed in communities that wanted that kind of activity.

With this year's state budget losing another \$3.6 million in municipal assistance revenues and many communities still pinched by the oil recession, the gambling initiative may stir up legislative races, as well.

Despite its current spotlight status, gambling is not the only issue on the minds of Bush voters and the candidates who want their votes.

Candidate positions on subsistence, development of safe sewer and water systems and local political control will be the yardstick by which Bush voters measure their political choices.

With so many legislative races and an unusually high number of incumbents declining to run for re-election, the impact of this year's political races on the subsistence issue is unclear. However, the realistic possibilities for potential legislative coalitions will be clearer after the August primary, after the field of contenders has been whittled down.

Although rural voters typically don't turn out in large numbers for the primary, one political analyst cautioned that waiting until the November general election to vote means leaving up to others the choice of who the finalists, particularly in the crowded races for governor, will be.

Rural voters who do not plan to be home on election day because of subsistence activities or seasonal employment may obtain absentee ballot applications from regional election offices, or by writing the Division of Elections in Juneau at 240 Main Street, 4th Floor, Juneau 99811-0106 (phone 465-3021).

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