

Spivey rejoins governor's public relations team

by Andy Ryan

Alaska News Service

JUNEAU—Some "obvious and extraordinary events" have brought the governor's former press secretary, Pete Spivey, out of retirement and back to work for the Sheffield administration.

Spivey, 34, who in May quit his job as special assistant to Gov. Bill Sheffield, says he had planned to take the summer off and to use the time figuring out what to do with his future.

But when a Juneau grand jury issued a report July 2, recommending that the legislature impeach Sheffield for his role in the lease of a Fairbanks state office building, the onetime newspaper reporter offered his services to Sheffield's public relations team.

The legislature meets here Monday to consider removing Sheffield from office.

Before taking the job of special assistant in charge of the governor's Anchorage Office, Spivey had worked as Sheffield's press secretary in Juneau. He will now

become deputy press secretary to the governor, working under Press Secretary John Greely.

Greely, who used to work for Spivey, took over the administration's top public relations job last August, after the latter moved to the Anchorage office.

"My plan was just to take most of the summer off and think about a lot of things, not the least of which was what I wanted to do next," says Spivey, in his second day on the job.

"When this came up (the grand jury report) it was just sort of a natural instinct for me to see if they felt I could help. And if they did, I'd be willing to do it.

"I consider the governor a friend. I haven't seen an impeachable offense committed, either in anything the grand jury showed, or in anything else. And, in addition to that, I feel very strong ties to John Greely."

Spivey will earn a little over \$50,000 as the governor's press

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Spivey

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secretary. His annual salary as special assistant was about \$61,000.

Saying that the goal of a press secretary is always "to stress the best side of any situation," Spivey says he doesn't know yet how much of his work will involve undoing damage that was done to Sheffield's reputation by the grand jury report.

"In terms of his image in relation to this matter, probably the worst thing about the grand jury report in my opinion is that it attempted to present him as unfit for office, and basically ignore all the accomplishments of this administration," Spivey says.

"Now, while this thing is going on, I don't know that it will

fall upon us to remind people of the things he's accomplished, but it may. And he's had a lot of accomplishments; he's got a lot to be proud of.

"He's had some stumbles. I can't recall an elected official in my lifetime who didn't have some controversies, but I think he's doing some good things."

The governor, Spivey says, deserves credit for, among other things, fixing up Anchorage roads, making reforms in the capital budget process, improving child protection programs, and putting \$700 million in the Alaska Permanent Fund.

Does Spivey think the governor's reputation has been hurt irreparably by the grand jury's report?

"I don't know," he says. "I do see a fair amount of support for him out there, despite the extremely negative tone of that

grand jury report. I have seen some 'man on the street' interviews on TV and radio, for example, that had a fair number of people, a majority of people, I thought, that said they didn't think he'd done anything to be removed from office for.

"In terms of long-term damage, I think that's up to the legislature, and how partisan some of the members try to make it. If they want to deal with this just on the issues, I think he'll probably come out of it stronger. If they make it a major project to brutalize it, and it goes on for a long time, I don't know what can happen," Spivey says.

Before joining Sheffield's administration, Spivey worked for nine years as a newspaper reporter for the Orlando Sentinel and the Palm Beach Post, in Florida, and for the Anchorage Daily News.