

'I may not agree with what you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it'—VOLTAIRE

## *A sad farewell*

It was with both shock and dismay that we learned of State Sen. Frank Ferguson's decision to resign from the Alaska State Senate.

We understand the necessity for Ferguson's decision, and we wish him a speedy recovery from the health problems he is currently experiencing.

At the same time, we must raise our concern about his resignation. The Kotzebue senator's retirement is doubly disconcerting to rural Alaskans because this year the Senate also lost the services of Sen. John Sackett who also retired.

Sackett and Ferguson were a very effective team for rural Alaska, and there is no question that those representatives from the Bush now in the Legislature will have to work that much harder because of the absence of these two fine state leaders.

Ferguson is not the kind of senator who grabs a lot of headlines or chairs numerous of committees. His name is infrequently associated with public events that draw media attention.

He is the kind of senator who makes things work. His great forte is to be able to bring together people with diverse opinions and geographic interests so that the concerns of all Alaskans can be served. And that, truly, is the mark of a statesman.

There are numerous of stories of Ferguson coming to the rescue when one or both houses of the Legislature faced serious obstacles because of disagreements over major issues. Ferguson's first concern has always been rural Alaska, but his genius is his ability to see the needs of people from the different areas of the state and to craft legislation which is beneficial to all.

As well as being one of state's most effective legislators, Ferguson also finds time to serve on the NANA Regional Corp. Board of Directors. And he served as president of the Alaska Federation of Natives from 1980 to 1982.

Those people who were fortunate enough to hear John Sackett's very moving tribute to Sen. Ferguson at the **Tundra Times** banquet know the high esteem in which Ferguson is held by people throughout the state.

We express our deep appreciation for everything Ferguson has done for his state and for rural people during his career thus far.

We wish him a speedy recovery, and we look forward to welcoming him back to the battlefield as soon as he is well.