

# DECISION 86



Gubernatorial candidates try to get the floor at KTUU's recent debate; from left, Steve Cowper, Joe Hayes, Walter Hickel, Dick Randolph, Bob Richards, Bill Sheffield and Arliss Sturgulewski. photo by Norris Klesman

*Crowded candidate slates stymie pollsters*

## Voters to decide tight races in primary

by **Jim Benedetto**

Tundra Times editor

Alaska voters will go to the polls for the 1986 Primary Election on Aug. 26 to choose the main contenders for governor, lieutenant governor, U.S. senator and representative and a host of local races.

Generating the most speculation is the race for governor. The crowded field of candidates includes nine Republicans, Joe Hayes, Walter Hickel, Ken Hinchey, Bob McGrane, Dick Randolph, Bob Richards, Ron Somerville, Arliss Sturgulewski and Don Wright; four Democrats, Steve Cowper, incumbent Gov. Bill Sheffield, Phil Stoddard and Ryal White; Libertarian Ed Hoch; and Joe Vogler of the Alaska Independence Party.

Of the Republicans vying for Alaska's top government post, Hickel is widely perceived to be the front-runner. But political experts caution

that with the field so crowded, a candidate could win the party's nomination with a comparatively small percentage of the votes cast, making accurate predictions difficult.

Hickel holds a substantial lead over his closest opponent, Arliss Sturgulewski, according to two recent polls taken by the Dittman Research Corp. and public television and radio stations.

According to the Dittman poll, completed July 31, Hickel has 20 percent of the vote, to Sturgulewski's 13 percent.

The poll taken by public television station KAKM and public radio stations KTOO and KUAC was taken last week and showed Hickel with 18.2 percent and Sturgulewski with 13.3 percent.

The poll asked 507 randomly selected registered voters who they would vote for if the election were held today. Voters from Anchorage,

Fairbanks, Juneau, Haines, Sitka, Ketchikan, the Kenai Peninsula, the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, Nome, Bethel, Kotzebue, Dillingham and McGrath. The poll has a sampling er-

ror of 3.4 percent.

According to a report by the Alaska Public Offices Commission, the

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Seven gubernatorial candidates were selected for an Aug. 2 televised debate aired statewide by KTUU Channel 2.

photo by Norris Klesman

# Polls show many races too close to call

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Hickel campaign has raised \$505,951, with Hickel himself contributing \$346,105 in his third bid for the governor's seat.

Sturgulewski's campaign has raised \$618,694, with \$237,885 coming from Sturgulewski herself.

On the Democratic side, Steve Cowper is running a close race with incumbent Gov. Bill Sheffield. The Dittman poll shows the race in a virtual dead heat, with Sheffield favored by 11 percent of the respondents, and Cowper with 10 percent.

The Dittman poll surveyed 250 randomly selected Anchorage residents by telephone. Respondents were asked about their voting habits, age, sex and occupation, among other information, in order to determine those more likely to vote.

The KAKM/KUAC/KTOO poll shows Cowper with 19.2 percent to Sheffield's 16.1, still too close to call.

Polling conducted by Marc Hellenenthal from Aug. 5-8 for the Cowper campaign shows Cowper ahead 18 percent to Sheffield's 13 percent in Anchorage, with 16 percent undecided, according to David Ramseur with the Cowper campaign.

Hellenenthal's telephone survey asked 627 randomly selected registered voters statewide for their preferences in the gubernatorial race. It has a sampling error of 3.9 percent.

Sheffield campaign spokesman Patty Ginsburg said that the governor is holding a steady lead.

"It's definitely an exciting race," she said. "The race is close in Juneau,

Fairbanks and Anchorage, but support for the governor is strong in rural Alaska, and that's going to make the difference. We're real confident."

The Sheffield campaign does not share its poll results.

Ramseur said that Hellenenthal's poll indicated Cowper ahead in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and the Kenai Peninsula, and that "Cowper's extensive travels in rural Alaska have narrowed the margins."

Sheffield's campaign has raised \$517,310, with the governor contributing about \$100 of his own funds. Cowper has raised \$331,206, with \$54,771 donated by Cowper himself. Fund-raising figures were compiled by APOC.

The lieutenant governor's race is also difficult to call due to the number of candidates.

The crowded field includes two Democrats, incumbent Steve McAlpine and Jane Angvik; six Republicans, Mike Bierne, Don Bennett, Edna DeVries, Terry Miller, Tom Staudenmaier and Ken Stout; Allegra Barnes, a Libertarian; and Al Rowe of the Alaska Independence Party.

The primary also includes a race for one of the U.S. Senate seats. Republican incumbent Frank Murkowski, who has built up a \$1.1 million campaign war chest, faces five Democratic opponents, Bill Barnes, Michael J. Bruner, Dave J. Carlson, Karl Francis and Glenn Olds; and Libertarian Chuck House.

Olds is perceived by many as having the best chance among the challengers. Bev Isensen with the Olds

campaign told the *Tundra Times* that \$130,000 had been raised so far and characterized the race as a "David and Goliath case."

Though no poll results are available, Isensen says she is encouraged by the responsiveness of Alaskans to Olds' campaign.

Bill Bobrick, executive director of the Alaska Democratic Party, agrees.

"When people see or hear Glenn Olds, whether on TV or in person, they can't help but be impressed," said Bobrick.

A spokesman for the Murkowski campaign, Dennis Fradley, said that the senator is "very confident about his re-election."

Alaska's lone congressman is also

up for re-election. Republican incumbent Don Young faces Democrat Pegge Begich; Republicans Sam Carson, George Johnston and Charley Newell; and Libertarian Betty Breck.

Young is heavily favored for re-election.

A ballot measure on the issue of a nuclear weapons freeze also will be decided. The measure calls for an initiative in November to give voters a chance to agree or disagree that "prevention of nuclear war is the greatest challenge facing the Earth."

The initiative would promote a mutual and verifiable nuclear weapons freeze and would direct the governor to conduct the state's affairs in accordance with the goals of the initiative.