

Randolph questions Hickel gas pipeline plan

Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick Randolph, in a speech earlier this month, questioned Walter Hickel's potential conflict-of-interest in Hickel's plan to build a gas pipeline.

Randolph said Hickel wants Yukon Pacific Corp. to build the line, and public records show that Hickel owns 32 percent of that corporation and is a director.

Randolph said Hickel and his family stand to make millions of dollars if the pipeline is built as Hickel proposes.

"This is a tremendous conflict of interest, yet Wally Hickel refuses to appear at candidate forums to explain it," Randolph said.

Randolph posed two questions in his speech: "Will Mr. Hickel, his family and friends agree to enter into a binding agreement that will preclude any inappropriate gain? What are the areas of potential conflict of interest between his public responsibility and his business interests?"

Randolph also said that gas industry officials believe a pipeline now is "sheer fantasy."

"I, as most other Alaskans, would like to see a gasline built if it makes economic sense, but I can find no one, besides Mr. Hickel and crew, who believes that a gasline can be built or operated in the near future without major subsidies," he said.

Randolph said that Hickel probably would attempt to use or pledge the Permanent Fund as collateral to build what he termed a "premature, non-economic gasline."

"We know that there is a world glut of natural gas, that Japan is reducing its natural gas consumption and the U.S. is buying cheap gas from Canada and Mexico," Randolph said.

And he added that in order to get the pipeline built now, "the state could wind up with a depleted Permanent Fund, a reinstated personal income tax and a doomed project that we are still paying for but are unable to complete."

Sheffield gets endorsement

United Food and Commercial Workers, local 1496, has endorsed Gov. Bill Sheffield in the Aug. 26 primary.

President Bob Freimuth said the endorsement was made after reviewing the records and positions of the gubernatorial candidates.

"We looked at what the candidates have said and what they've done and where they stand on issues important to our members. No one was even a close second to Bill Sheffield," Freimuth said.

Local 1496 has 3,000 members throughout Alaska. The endorsement is Sheffield's eleventh. Other include the Alaska State AFL-CIO, fishermen's groups, unions and the Alaska Visitors Association, environmentalists and the Central Council, Tlingit and Haida Indians.

Sturgulewski wants hotline

A "hotline" to the state Attorney General's office would allow public employees to pass on reports of irregularities in state business without fear of retribution, says gubernatorial candidate Arliss Sturgulewski.

She said the hotline would be one of her first priorities as governor.

"We're really fortunate to have a lot of dedicated, caring public employees," said the Anchorage Republican. "Too often, people have felt there were problems with contracting procedures or inappropriate application of regulations and felt there was no one to listen to their legitimate complaints."

If elected, Sturgulewski said she plans to assign an assistant attorney general "to hear what state employees have to say about irregularities in the conduct of the people's business," she said.

Richards for dividend boost

GOP gubernatorial candidate Bob Richards believes the Permanent Fund is a special institution to all Alaskans. By paying annual dividends directly to the people of Alaska, "it makes every Alaskan a 'shareholder' in the funds and a shareholder in Alaska's future," he said.

"Unfortunately, Alaskans' direct link to the Permanent Fund, the dividend program, is not protected by the

Constitution," Richards said.

Richards is proposing a three-part amendment to the Constitution, which would include \$250 million 1985 dollars or 25 percent of the Alaska Permanent Fund's earnings to be paid in dividends to all Alaska residents each year, unless otherwise authorized by a popular vote.

It also would include a stipulation that all proposed uses of the earnings of the fund, with the exception of dividend payments and inflation proofing, be presented to Alaska's voters in advance of appropriation. And it would call for voter approval of the state's policy for investing the principal and the undistributed income.

Cowper offers child care plan

Alaska should have a model child care system that is both affordable and of high quality, that permits Alaskan women to pursue career opportunities and that is the envy of other states, according to gubernatorial candidate Steve Cowper.

To achieve those goals, Democrat Cowper is offering eight proposals to improve Alaska's child care system, which he said is currently "piecemeal" and inadequately financed.

The proposals include creation of a payroll deduction plan for child care services, increasing funds for child care programs that especially benefit low-income families and lobbying Congress for federal child care funds.

"The unmet need for quality child care has reached unacceptable proportions," Cowper said. "We must ensure that Alaska's working families

have every opportunity to find and afford good child care. By doing so, we not only benefit women and families today, but we protect the most valuable resource of the future, our children."

Butrovich favors Hickel

Life-long Alaska resident and statesman John Butrovich has announced his support for Wally Hickel's candidacy for governor.

The Fairbanks pioneer served in the territorial and state senates for 30 years.

"Hickel knows his way around the state capital and the national capital. He's the person we need in Juneau now," Butrovich said.

Butrovich termed the current economic situation in Fairbanks as "brutal," and he said he's confident Hickel will be able to turn things around.

Butrovich said he decided to endorse Hickel because he believes Hickel is "the only candidate who can get this show on the road."

Donley supports local hire

Dave Donley, candidate for state house, District 11 Seat A and author of Alaska's local hire law, said recently that the California legislature will introduce a bill incorporating the language of his law in that state.

He said California sponsors told him they expect quick passage of the act

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and that they anticipate no constitutional problem with enforcement.

"As the drafter of SB367, I have always felt that local hire could withstand constitutional scrutiny. The California action reinforces that conviction," he said.