

Hammond views reapportionment

Says plan would aid bush representation

Governor Jay Hammond says he has a plan for reapportionment of the Alaska Legislature which would allow rural Alaska to retain significant representation in the legislature, even after Anchorage gains a majority of the state's population.

His plan isn't new, he told the Tundra Times, but it would prevent rural Alaska from losing more seats in the legislature and, at the same time, satisfy the Supreme Court rule for "one-man, one-vote" representation.

Hammond said he argued for the plan before the reapportionment board appointed by the Egan administration, and lost. If re-elected, he said, he would advocate the same plan before the reapportionment board which he would appoint as governor.

Under his plan, urban areas, primarily Anchorage, would continue to gain more seats in the state House of Representatives as population increased in the cities. In the Senate, however, districts would be established much the same as they were at statehood, when the Alaska Constitution provided for 16 senate districts drawn along a regional, rather than population, basis. Candidates would be required to be residents of these districts.

The catch, however, is that the senate seats would be elected at-large statewide in order to allow approximately the same number of voters to vote for senators. This would satisfy the "one-man, one-vote" Supreme Court mandate, and also provide for regional representation.

Hammond explained, "The state constitution provides for 16 senate districts with regional residency voting requirements. The one-man, one-vote requirement threw this arrangement out the window. I believe there is a means of meeting the one-man, one-vote requirement as well as the state constitutional districting de-

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design. In the senate, we could require an individual to live in one of the constitutional districts in order to run for a seat, but allow for the required number of voters by holding elections at large."

"We would have one house of the state legislature which would be obligated to serve the broader statewide interest. That might be very healthy. That body would be more sensitive to concerns on a statewide basis," the governor added.

Hammond noted that, under

the circumstances, this arrangement might make the best of a bad situation for rural Alaska.

"Consider the alternative," he suggested. "If we don't go that route, we will have 35,000 people in Anchorage controlling both houses. We would be a lot better off. My idea is the only approach meeting the state constitution as well as the Supreme Court mandate."

Hammond indicated that, while the governor has the authority to appoint a reapportionment board and implement a plan, the last reapportionment

plan was challenged in the courts. He thought his plan might also be subject to court challenges, yet he felt it was lawful and would hold up to legal scrutiny.

The Governor, asked whether this was part of his rural platform, or whether he had a rural platform, said, "There are those who feel this (rural interests) has been our whole emphasis. Our programs, such as those in fisheries and schools, have indicated that, not only do we have a rural platform, but that we have also implemented it."

Hammond strongly replied to

a statement by his opponent which was critical of the Republican party stand on the Molly Hootch case, which provides for rural school construction. "I think is any administration has taken action on the Hootch case, it was this administration. We decided to try to resolve the case out of court. I thought it appropriate to try to resolve this. I sympathize with the difficulty and the trauma of having to send kids out-of-state to go to school. The first bond issue in working to settle this case came out of this administration."

Hammond added, "I supported the \$110 million appropriation passed this year for rural school construction. We can point to the record. I think that is a phoney issue."

The Governor also replied to criticism that his administration is dragging its feet in implementing the state hunting and fishing law, and laid the blame for his

veto of half the money appropriated for subsistence in the lap of the legislature. "The resources of the state, by constitutional mandate, are required to be allocated to all the people of the state," Hammond said. "There are some significant hurdles that have to be overcome. It's going to take a period of time to provide for implementation. Let's work together on it, rather than polarize on the issue. I resent the use of the subsistence issue as a political ploy," Hammond said.

Hammond said he supported half the money for the subsistence program in spite of having to trim the budget by \$80 million, and blamed the legislature for the money crunch. "This is a problem of having to prioritize the money available, when the legislature has not provided significant new money to support the programs they've enacted."