

# Mallott urges economic meet, Ketzler gives *Native Vote '96* challenge

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The vote by AFN convention delegates to support drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was both historic and emotional.

But it was not the only important business conducted at this year's annual meeting of the state's largest and oldest statewide Native organization.

Among other developments were a major economic address by

Byron Mallott, executive director of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., and a rousing call to turn out the Native vote in 1996 by Al Ketzler, vice president of Tanana Chiefs Conference.

Interrupted several times by applause, Ketzler made it clear that Alaska Natives would be a key factor in next year's legislative elections. He outlined a detailed strategy for increasing Native turnout over last year's significant showing, which many credit with the election of Tony Knowles as governor.

## Natives hurt most by state budget woes

Asserting that the state's fiscal crisis in state government is real, urgent and growing, Mallott said Alaska Natives should demand

### AFN '95

prompt resolution of the problem.

"We know we have the most to lose if we wait until a crisis occurs and programs are cut, taxes are enacted and inappropriate direction taken in the urgency of the political moment when action can no

longer be postponed," said Mallott, former president of Sealaska Corp. "If Alaskans do not face the reality of the growing gap between state spending and state income, sooner rather than later, we will be in the unenviable position of spending our children's future."

Mallott said that without fundamental change, Alaska Natives must fear that any fiscal policies will cost them more than any other segment of the population.

"We know that because we have the farthest to go, with basic needs

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still unmet. We know that because we are in a numerical minority. We know that because, for as much progress as has been made, there is still a lack of understanding of who we are and why we aspire to live our lives within the strength of our Native cultures. We know that because, again, in spite of all the progress that has been made, there is a belief among many non-Native Alaskans that Alaska Natives already have too much," Mallott said. "And finally we know that we have the most to lose because we have admitted to ourselves that we fear for the future of our children because we do not have control of our own lives."

## **A blueprint for progress**

Like several speakers at the convention, Mallott cited the three principles identified by the Alaska Natives Commission as key to enabling Natives to regain control of their destiny: self-reliance, self-determination and integrity of Native cultures. He called on Natives to use these principles as a framework for greater involvement in charting new fiscal policies for Alaska.

"I suggest that before this convention is through, a resolution be adopted that directs the AFN Board of Directors to convene at a time and place of its choosing before the next regular convention, a state-wide Native Fiscal Policy Summit to examine the fiscal issues facing the State of Alaska and to develop a course of action that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Alaska's Native peoples, that proposes courses of action that brings Alaska Native leadership focus to the needs of all Alaskans, and that is built upon the overarching principles of the Alaska Natives Commission final report," Mallott said.

## **Next election not far off**

Mallott was not the only one urging delegates to action. Al Ketzler, one of the leaders of a Native electoral task force credited with turn-

ing out large numbers of Native voters in the last governor's race, spelled out the urgency of Native participation at the polls in 1996.

Voting does make a difference. It takes commitment right here and right now," Ketzler said. "The countdown begins now."

He said current efforts are focused on finding voters who used to cast ballots and getting them registered again, recruiting young voters who have never participated in an election and encouraging even more Native women—most active of all Alaska Native voters—to turn out for the 1996 off-year elections.

## **"I've got plans for you"**

Ketzler noted that a little more participation from Native voters and sympathetic non-Natives could have produced a pro-subsistence legislature, since 10 legislative races were determined by less than 10 percent of registered voters.

"We have a dream of taking care of ourselves. How we get there involves your help," Ketzler said. "

He took aim at those who suggest that Native electoral participation has peaked.

"I've got news for them, and I've got plans for you," Ketzler told delegates. "We have ambitious plans. We're going to build a data base that will make the state computers spin."

## **Other business before the body**

In addition to re-electing Albert Kookesh and Willie Hensley co-chairs of AFN, the body voted on a huge package of policy recommendations. Among them were measures to:

- endorse the re-election of Sen. Ted Stevens and Rep. Don Young;
- declare indigenous languages as national languages and oppose "English-only" legislation;
- support development of an interactive telecommunications infrastructure to improve education in Native villages;
- support preservation and re-vitalization of Native languages

through state education legislation;

- to support adequate funding for Alaska Legal Services Corp., Village Public Safety Officers, Head Start, energy assistance and a host of other programs critical to low-income Alaska Natives and Native villages;

- to conduct a feasibility study for an Alaska Native-operated prison;

- in support of involving tribal, cultural and artistic definition in federal agency management of marine mammal byproducts;

- calling for removal of any AFN chair or co-chair who is subsequently appointed to a state or federal position in order to prevent any possible conflicts of interest.

*Editor's note: Tundra Times will provide additional coverage of AFN resolutions and their implementation throughout the year as our resources and space allow.*

## **Making up for lost time**

With all the controversy simmering at this year's convention, AFN staff was relieved to have some good news to report.

In a formal ceremony before delegates, representatives of the federal government and Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. signed an agreement to redress their mutual failures to meet Native hire goals on the trans-Alaska pipeline project.

The agreement commits Alyeska to an equivalent of 20 percent Native hire on the pipeline system, including Natives employed by subcontractors. The company has also agreed to spend \$25 million over a 12-year period (about \$1.2 million per year) for training and scholarships to help achieve the hiring goals. Compliance with the agreement will be monitored by the federal government. An advisory board of company and Native representatives will advise the implementation process.

## **Time to get to work**

In addition to its direct \$25 million investment in Native training and education, Alyeska has agreed to contribute \$1 million per year for six years to an AFN endowment fund to be used to help prepare Natives for employment in the oil industry. Furthermore, Alyeska will contribute \$1 million over three

years to help raise an additional \$20 million for the endowment from third parties.

"I'm very encouraged by the signing. It's a wonderful opportunity for Native people," said Julie Kitka, AFN president, after the ceremony. "Now it's time to get to work implementing it."