

White seeks needs-based subsistence

Editor's note: This is the sixth in a series of articles the Tundra Times will be running on candidates for governor and lieutenant governor.

by Geoff Kennedy
for the Tundra Times

Anchorage heavy-equipment operator Ryal White prefers a sub-

sistence law based on economic need.

The 36-year-old Democratic gubernatorial candidate would introduce legislation to provide subsistence fish and game for families, but he would try to find a way to keep them from feeding the meat and fish to their dogs. If a constitutional amendment is

necessary to provide a subsistence law based on economic need, he would promote such an amendment.

The fairest approach would be to bring the issue to the voters in order to unify all Alaska Native people, White said.

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"This one thing would unify them," he said.

Asked how he would balance the state budget when revenues diminish, White said his first preference would be to cut state jobs.

Then he would increase taxes on the oil industry. White considers the present taxing mechanism unfair. Oil companies make more money than they deserve to, he said.

He would also impose licenses for and raise taxes on foreigners and non-residents who take fish within 200 miles of Alaska's shorelines.

His third choice would be to cap Permanent Fund dividends at \$800 to \$900. He would use the money saved from that cap to help pay for schools and highway repairs.

"Highways here are a real joke," White said.

After those three cost-cutting measures, he would cut aid to local governments.

White's last resort would be to impose state income taxes. He would use the revenues from such taxes to provide subsidies to help reduce housing costs of people who live in Alaska, he said.

White would retain the Rural Alaska Television Network in its present form.

"It's a very great service and should be kept," White said.

He would encourage but not require rural residents to select more educational television programs, he said.

He supports the longevity bonus. But he would require recipients to live even longer in Alaska than the two years now required. He wouldn't reduce the \$250 monthly payments, but he'd put a cap on that amount.

He would continue the Power Cost Equalization subsidies to rural Alaska. But he would provide state subsidies for windmill projects, solar-power col-

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lectors and geothermal projects and require rural residents to use such energy sources as alternatives to fossil fuels, he said.

Developing alternative energy sources would play an important part in the economic development of rural Alaska, he said.

White would also promote moose farming and possibly bison farming in the Bush. Although critics have pointed out failed moose-farming ventures in the Soviet Union and Canada, the practice has flourished in Scandinavian countries, such as Finland, White said.

He would promote development of minerals, such as platinum in Western Alaska, he said.

To help develop the economy of rural Alaska, he'd promote highways built to Nome, Bethel and Cold Bay.

Alaska "seems to be a state of reaction instead of a state of action," White said.

As governor, White would also increase state funding for day care and provide safe houses and shelters for



Ryal White

abused women.

White considers moving the capitol from Juneau to Willow one of his top priorities. He'd spend a billion dollars from Permanent Fund earnings and even from the fund itself, if necessary, to finance the move, he said. The federal government would match that billion dollars and private industry would contribute about a billion dollars to pay for the project, he said.

White, a resident of Alaska all his life and a high-school graduate, hasn't held any elective offices in the state, but he has worked for the political campaigns of former governors Walter Hickel and the late William A. Egan. He handed out pamphlets for candidates Russ Meekins and the late Wendell Kay as well, White said. He ran for Congress two years ago and for governor in 1986.

"I run an unconventional campaign and do not seek campaign contributions," White said. Running for office is "something every 30-year-old Alaskan should do to get new ideas."

Four years ago, White was looking for a job as the economy was reacting to the sharp drop in oil prices. He applied to the Alaska Railroad, which had seven positions and 3,500 applicants and with Arco, which had one job and 500 applicants, White said. Then he noticed a job opening for governor of Alaska and only six applicants had signed up for that job at the time. So he decided the odds were better for landing that job, White joked.

Pollsters David Dittman and Marc Hellenthal consider White such a long shot they don't even list him in their political preference polls. So I asked him if he was running to win or just to communicate his ideas.

"I was asked if I would be disappointed if I lost, and I said no," he responded. "But I wouldn't be disappointed if I won, either."