

1 Year Resident Requirement Challenged

Attorney General John E. Havelock pledged to provide a "vigorous defense" of the one year residence preference for for state employment that was challenged by a law suit Thursday.

The suit, brought by Susan K. Wylie of Juneau, seeks to have the State's durational residency requirement, which gives preference in state employment to persons who have been residents of Alaska for one year or more over other residents, declared invalid and unconstitutional.

Havelock said the state's "preference for hiring Alaskans who have lived here for one year or more is not an arbitrary distinction in terms of economic or constitutional policy."

He said residential preference is "valid public policy on economic grounds, and I will give it a vigorous defense, taking the case as far as necessary in an effort to get it upheld."

The Attorney General said the employment preference for State residents of at least one year "implements the state policy that those persons who have been in the state the longest and who may have been unemployed the longest can constitute those most needing employment relief and constituting the largest burden on the State's taxpayers.

"Consequently, the state is justified in providing them an employment preference over people who are newly arrived in the state," Havelock said.

The suit claims that the residential preference hiring practice imposes an unreasonable burden on interstate commerce and on the right of citizens of the United States to travel freely, and that it violates the equal protection provision of the United States Constitution.