

# Halford: Don't change constitution

*Editor's note: This is the third 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

Sen. Rick Halford, R-Chugiak, opposes amending the State Constitution to solve Alaska's subsistence dilemma.

"A constitutional amendment is unnecessarily divisive and doesn't solve the whole Kenaitze problem," Halford

said.

The Kenaitzes have sued the state for, among other things, not considering them eligible for a rural subsistence preference.

Halford would turn to the Legislature to replace the subsistence law struck down last December by the state Supreme Court.

"We should come up with a legislative solution supported by Alaska's citizens. Elements of that solution should be individual and collective need, availability and cost of

alternatives, efficiency of harvest, (most importantly) preservation of the resource," he said.

"We have made subsistence the province of lawyers instead of the province of the people. It doesn't have to be that way," he said. "We should regulate uses, not users."

Halford says he supports a proposal by former Gov. Jay Hammond for a subsistence law that would make rural Alaska a subsistence area, allowing anyone there to "subsistence" hunt

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*Sen. Rick Halford is from Chugiak.*

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and fish. The stipulation would be that hunters and fishermen could not remove their catch from the area where they caught it.

Halford suggests legislators consider that kind of solution.

Asked to set priorities for balancing the state budget when revenues diminish, Halford says spending Alaska Permanent Fund earnings would be his last resort. Alaskans, he says, shouldn't take that from their children.

The first place to cut, he said, would be state jobs.

"Every new employee is a passenger on the *Titanic*. . . The long-term solution is to come up with a package that backs away from new mistakes and allows us over time to become free from our addiction to past mistakes."

Halford says he'd cut planners and engineers from the Department of Transportation and cut what he calls political positions, such as aides to legislators.

If he had to cut the budget more, he'd reduce state aid to municipalities in the same proportion as other state budget cuts.

The next resort would be taxes, probably state income taxes.

Halford supports the Power Cost Equalization program, the Longevity Bonus and the Rural Alaska Television Network, but not necessarily in their present forms.

Halford considers PCE an example of what he calls "the equity standard versus needs dichotomy."

In other words, elected officials have to balance the need to apportion state services equally to all citizens, according to Halford, while somehow accounting for the fact that rural residents need more of some kinds of services than urban residents do.

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Halford proposes cutting direct subsidies to the PCE program and replacing them with revenue generated by the profits from state-financed hydroelectric power projects.

Halford calls the Longevity Bonus Program a good one, but he wants to turn it into an annuity program to protect it "from growing so fast it destroys itself."

He says RATNET serves Alaskans better than public radio and television and should have a higher priority. However, he said he would sell the rural network as long as the purchaser would continue the same level of services.

If elected governor, Halford would increase law enforcement in rural Alaska to deal with drugs, domestic violence, bootlegging and necessary followup in courts and rehabilitation services. He'd also step up economic development outreach programs.

Halford says he'd get the money to pay for such services by eliminating some mid-level legislative staff positions. He'd move 10 positions into public safety and 20 into the Village Public Safety Officer Program.

"We don't need the political positions," he said. "We have created a palace guard system," that insulates public officials from the people they represent.

Halford says he'd reduce funding for public broadcasting in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau and encourage broadcasters in those areas to seek more outside support.

He says he won't promise never to cut basic services to rural Alaska, but says reductions of services would be

greater in urban areas than in rural areas.

"Services in rural Alaska are more basic."

Halford says he'd provide jobs in rural Alaska by creating a small-business infrastructure and helping match services rural Alaskans can provide to the markets for those services.

He says the state should work to make resources, such as minerals, land and tourism more available. He proposes a regulatory structure that doesn't "unnecessarily inspect, tax

and harass." And he says he'd set up a state department dedicated to economic development.

Halford, 45, has lived in Alaska 24 years. He has a bachelor's degree in history and political science with a minor in economics from Alaska Methodist (now Alaska Pacific) University. A commercial pilot, guide and lodge operator, Halford is single with three children.

He served two terms in the state House, and he is currently serving his third term in the State Senate.