

DEMOCRATS PICK EMIL NOTTI

Pegge Begich's Support Vaults Notti to the Lead

By MARGIE BAUMAN

ANCHORAGE — Alaska Democrats have nominated their first Native congressional candidate, Emil Notti, to run in a special March 6 election for Alaska's lone seat in the U. S. House.

"I can succeed Nick Begich, but I can never replace him," said Notti in his acceptance speech.

It was shortly after 5 A.M. Sunday at the Gold Rush Hotel in Anchorage that Notti won the nomination on the third ballot.

Two hours before, Pegge Begich had dropped out of the race and thrown her support to Notti. After the third ballot, State Senator Chancy Croft of Anchorage, the third contender, conceded and asked the convention to give Notti its support by acclamation.

All three candidates received a standing ovation, but the longest came for Notti as he made his way from the back of the room toward the platform to accept the nomination.

"This is a happy occasion but it is a solemn one also," Notti said. "There are few suitable words one could ever say about all the events that have brought us to this morning, but it reminds me of the time Thomas Jefferson went to France to replace Benjamin Franklin and the man who met him said: 'You are here to replace Ben-



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jamin Franklin.' Jefferson said 'No one can replace Benjamin Franklin. I can only succeed him.'

"I can succeed Nick Begich, But I can never replace him," Notti said. "To all of you and to his lovely wife, Pegge, and and her family whose support meant so much to me tonight, I pledge I will carry on Nick's work with the last measure of devotion to which I am capable.

"To Chancy Croft and to all you good Democrats I pledge the greatest thing I can offer — a united party, united today and united in March. United in Anchorage, united in Fairbanks, united in Southeast and united in the Northwest, but most of all, I pledge you victory," Notti said.

The occasion was a highly emotional one for the more than 400 people jammed into the room where the Alaska Federation of Natives Inc. met in

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THE MOMENT OF VICTORY — Charlie "Etook" Edwardson, center, is holding Notti for Congress sticker at the moment of victory when Emil Notti was nominated. With Etook is Rep. Chuck Degnan. Partially hidden behind Degnan is Senator Willie Hensley who headed the Northwest Alaska delegation. The man at right was not identified.

— FRANK MURPHY Photo

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another highly emotional meeting back in October.

This time delegates were standing on chairs cheering, some with tears running down their cheeks. The northwest delegation, led by Chairman Frank Degnan of Unalakleet, went wild. From the start of the convention, northwest had pledged its block of 26 votes to Notti and kept busy urging other delegates to back him too.

The occasion was also, of course, a very historic one, for this was the first time a Native candidate had received the nomination for Congress from the Republican or Democratic Party in Alaska.

And none were more aware of this than the Native leadership packed into that hall. There were state Sen. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue, Senate Minority Leader; State Rep. Chuck Degnan, D-Unalakleet; State Rep. Phillip Guy, D-Kwethluk; State Rep. Larry Peterson, D-Ft. Yukon; State Party Secretary Brenda Itta of Barrow; former State Rep. Martin Moore of Emmonak;

Vice President Tim Wallis and Executive Director Sam Kito of Doyon Ltd., Fairbanks; Aleut Corp. President Mike Swetsof; Charlie "Etuk" Edwardsen, President Joseph Upicksoun of the Arctic Slope Regional Corp.; Frances Degnan of the Alaska Native Enrollment Office; Marlene Johnson of the Tlingit and Haida Central Council; Juanita Corwin of the Alaska Native Foundation;

Borough Chairman Eben Hopson of Barrow; Harry Carter of the Federal-State Land Use Commission; Clifford Black, Native Coordinator for the Commission and of course Fred Notti, brother of the candidate and President of the Calista Corp.;

Bob Willard, Alaska Human

Rights Commissioner; Nancy Gray, Barrow City Manager; Oliver Leavitt, President, North Slope Borough Assembly and Edward Hopson, Housing Chairman, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation.

Fred McGinnis, State Commissioner of Health and Social Services, delivered the nomination speech for Notti, with seconds by Hensley and Robert Goldberg, an Anchorage attorney on the board of the Alaska Native Foundation, of which the candidate was president.

McGinnis introduced Notti as "a Native born son of our great land . . . whose greatest characteristic of his life is "to serve the people of the great of Alaska."

The convention began Saturday afternoon, with greetings from Anchorage Borough and Alaska Lt. Gov. H. A. "Red" Boucher. Boucher remarked on the uniqueness of the convention, "the first of its type in the history of this state." State Party Chairman Eben Hopson read a message from U.S. Sen. Mike Gravel, who was in Washington, D.C.

Sixteen hours later, the convention marathon had ended and the democratic state central met to add their support to the Notti candidacy.

Notti's Republican opponent, Don Young, has been on the campaign trail for some time, and Notti has a long campaign trail ahead of him. Monday morning, however, some of the Notti family still couldn't believe it.

"I think I'm getting over the shock . . . I think I'm on cloud nine," said LeNora Notti.

At the candidate's home in Anchorage, Notti supporters were busy passing out "I'm for Emil" buttons. The candidate has a different button. It reads simply "I'm Emil."