

# Hensley After Congressional Seat

By MARGIE BAUMAN

**FAIRBANKS** — State Sen. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue made it official Friday that he will be a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Eskimo legislator from Northwest Alaska, an organizer and prominent figure in the Alaska Native land claims movement, said he would formally announce his candidacy when the 1974 Alaska legislature adjourns.

The session began Monday in Juneau and Hensley, the Democratic whip in the Senate, made clear that "from now until the end of the session my primary responsibility is to the constitu-



**SENATOR HENSLEY**

ents of my Senate district."

The colorful, 32-year-old lawmaker, cited last week by the Democratic Party as one of the five outstanding young Democrats in the state, said one of the most important issues facing Alaska is the 83 million acre land recommendations made by the Interior Department.

"A Republican administration put the recommendations in and it is going to be up to a Democratic House to help get them out," he said.

Alaskan input was not considered in the land proposals and "the recommendations do not re-

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# Hensley Eyes Congress

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flect a consideration for Alaska's own growth. Not only are mineral and timber development at stake but even the tourist industry will be affected," he said.

"Our fisheries are in crisis," he said. "The fishermen are facing fuel shortages and foreign depletion of our fish. It will be important to rally the Democratically controlled House to defend vigorously Alaska's interests and to promote effective solutions to our problems."

The national scene is an area Hensley is already familiar with. He studied at George Washington University in the nation's capital from 1963-66, earning a degree in political science.

Since then he's returned to Washington, D.C. about 70 times on legislative business concerning

the Native people and the state. His lobbying efforts ranged from passage of pipeline legislation and sea mammal legislation to appropriations for the Arctic Winter Games.

On the state level, Hensley has held positions on the Resources, Health, Education and Welfare and Finance Committees in the legislature.

He is a former state chairman of the Alaska Democratic Party. He was an organizer and first chairman of the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, which provides electricity for many rural villages.

Back in 1966, Hensley helped organize the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Northwest Alaska Federation of Natives and the Northwest Alaska Native Association, the latter of which he now serves as a board member at-large. And he wrote a paper as a student at the University of Alaska entitled "Alaska Native Land Claims: the primary issue."

In that year he was also elected to the Alaska House of Representatives. In 1968 he served as chairman of the land claims task force and was appointed to the state Rural Affairs Commission.

In 1970, Hensley's constituents sent him on to the State Senate for a four-year term.

In the interim period, his interests and knowledge of the state and its people have expanded far beyond the basic issues of the land claims movement.

On trips to his Senate district during the past few months alone Hensley has delved particularly into the lack of sufficient education facilities and centers for the elderly in rural Alaska.

For more than an hour at Kotzebue one day late last fall he stood over the drawing board with other Kotzebue residents studying plans for a retirement home for the area, then was off to a lengthy evening session with other legislators meeting with the local school board.

In preparation for his press conference at Fairbanks Friday, the senator boned up on local issues — ready to state just how he felt about each of them when the press was asked.

Later, the new candidate sat down for coffee with friends and mentioned his preparatory work on local issues.

He held up several pages of notes in one hand and grinned ruefully, "but nobody asked."