

Rep. Degnan Would Expand Legislature

"Currently the legislative branch of government subconsciously discriminates against rural communities because of the lack of experience in rural community problems and the inability to consciously visualize the depth of rural problems," charges Chuck Degnan, state representative of Unalakleet.

Because there are few legislators with rural community problem experience, it is necessary to expand the House of Representatives and the State Senate to give more people with rural experience the opportunity to be elected.

The expansion of the legislature would bring the representatives closer to the people simply because each legislator would be representing fewer people. In urban and rural areas the election districts would be smaller in size and give more people with varied backgrounds the opportunity to serve in an elected capacity. This would also tend to minimize rural-urban extremes.

However, expansion of the legislature is not enough in itself to bring government closer to the people. Accessibility of the legislature is non-existent in rural areas.

Legislative affairs offices must be established in the major rural centers of Nome, Barrow, Kotzebue, Bethel and Dillingham. In addition, satellite communications must be implemented and transportation systems tailored to local needs.

Currently because of the one-man-one vote apportionment rule in regard to the State Senate everything is skewed in favor of urban Alaska.

"I have no quarrel with urban Alaska needs; however, rural needs are left to be solved last even though they are very basic in nature," claims Degnan.

"Furthermore, I challenge the next governor of the State of Alaska to take Alaska's case to the U.S. Supreme Court involving the apportionment of our State Senate based upon our states rights and sovereignty."

"In the U.S. Senate each state is allotted two senators regardless of population."