

# Politicians Vie as Election Nears

By CHUCK MALLEY

With the crucial primary elections in sight, candidates for public office in Alaska are shifting their campaigns into high gear.

And at the same time registered Native voters — as all other voters in the state — are looking harder at the choices to be made Aug. 27.

Key races involve the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, governorship and lieutenant governorship. Locally, interest is focused on races for the state legislature.

At least one bright spot crystalizing on the face of Native interests is the candidacy of State Senator William L. Hensley. According to the latest Anchorage area straw poll by the Daily News, Hensley's drive for the House is promising indeed.

As of Sunday, the 32-year-old Kotzebue Native piled up 57 per cent of the total straw votes cast in the struggle between himself and Anchorage lawyer John Havelock.

Both are seeking the Democratic Party's nod as the candidate to face Republican Congressman Donald Young of Fort

Yukon.

If successful in the primary and general election in November, the politically sophisticated and urban Hensley would assume the highest elective office ever achieved by an Alaskan Native.

Whether Hensley or Havelock captures the nomination, however an intense duel to gain Alas-

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ka's only House seat looms ahead.

Young, who many believe has been unfairly labeled the "accidental Congressman" (he was elected in 1972 following the death of popular incumbent Nick Begich), this year received recognition from fellow Congressmen for his performance in the House.

Young stands unopposed for the GOP nomination.

Hensley currently is the only Native candidate posing a serious threat for election to high office, though others are deeply into the battle.

Eben Hopson, chairman of the vast North Slope Borough, is intensifying his pursuit of the Democratic nomination for governor, flying boldly in the face of popular Gov. William A. Egan.

Hopson is still smarting from special legislation that set taxation limits on the oil rich borough he heads, and as governor would move to upgrade the role of boroughs as primary municipalities.

The popularity of Egan, however, presents an enormous obstacle in Hopson's path. Neither Hopson nor a second Native candidate, Don Wright, former president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, showed well in the Daily News poll, both running far behind Egan.

On the Republican side, Jay Hammond and Walter J. Hickel are reportedly neck-and-neck in the Anchorage area, while a recent Fairbanks poll by the All-Alaska Weekly puts Hickel ahead of Hammond by a 3-1 margin.

Joe Vogler, the Independence for Alaska candidate of the Alaska Independence Party, is producing a consistent though numerically unimpressive following in Fairbanks, according to the weekly's straw vote.

Hammond and Hickel each outran Egan in the Anchorage poll.

Other GOP contenders for governor are Donn Hopkins, Keith Miller and James R. Russell, none of whom are strong straw poll candidates.

After six years in the Senate, Democrat Mike Gravel wants another six. His controversial public image has mellowed in the past year as he strived to pay more attention to the people who put him in Washington, some say.

Gravel grabbed national headlines during the Nixon years with his public reading of part of the Pentagon Papers and a self-propelled bid for vice-president in 1972. "Personal ambition," charged the electorate.

Then, in 1973, the senator boldly pushed for a pipeline vote in the Upper House and won by a single vote, cast by then Vice President Spiro Agnew. Job-minded Alaskans rejoiced, but some anti-pipeline Natives recoiled.

One young Native recently remarked in Fairbanks how impressed he was to meet the senator in St. Mary's a few years ago. "But now I'd like to meet him face-to-face," he said. "I'd really tell him what I think."

Still, the suave, easy-to-meet Gravel looked strong in the Anchorage poll against Dick Greuel, the Fairbanks "turtle," Gene Guess, a politically-seasoned Anchorage resident and Donald W. Hobbs.

C. R. Lewis and Terry Miller, both veterans of the state legislature, pose the greatest threat to Gravel from the Republican camp.

Lewis, a reactionary conservative, and Miller, a concerned liberal, present clear political choices to the voters. Vying with the two, but not so well-known, are Bob Aaron, Merle W. Gangy and Red Stevens.

In the race for lieutenant governor, incumbent H. A. (Red) Boucher appears in command of things over James Tallman, to many a name without a face. The Fairbanks straw vote had him leading Tallman, 25-6.

Boucher last winter told a Tundra Times reporter that his former role as a tough baseball manager in Fairbanks created a false image, thus hurting him at the polls in that city.

But now, after four years in office, "Red" feels he has shed that cloak and will do better in his hometown where he served as councilman and mayor. The GOP's trio of candidates for the nomination include Lowell Thomas Jr., Andy Warwick and Jo Ann Miller, with Thomas running strong in the Anchorage poll.

Thomas would like to be Hammond's running mate, but claims he can work well with any of the Republican candidates, including Hickel.

Two House districts and Senate District 20 are drawing keen interest in the Fairbanks area on the state level.

Larry Peterson of Fort Yukon, the incumbent Athabascan Democratic representative, seeks the nomination for re-election against a raft of candidates in the new 19th District, stretching his hometown to Nenana, Delta Junction and Tok.

The 19th is composed of the old 16th and 18th, with Peterson serving in the seat and LaVelle Wilson in the other. Each are seeking to head the new district, as well as four other aspirants. Mitch Demientieff, former president of the Tanana Chiefs Conference and a Nenana resident, is among four Native candidates and is expected to carry Nenana.

In the 20th House District, 17 Democratic candidates are seeking six seats. The Democrats include Mike Bradner, who leads the pack in the Fairbanks straw poll, Fred Brown, Thomas H. Morris, Ed Orbeck, Kirk R. Richmond, Brian Rogers, H. O. (Red) Williams, Tim M. Wallis, Charles H. Parr and Steve Cowper.

Republican hopefuls are Sam Barnes, Don Bennett, Glenn Hackney, Thomas Blaine Jensen Jr., James Otis Joiner, Charles L. Richmond and David M. Wood.

Bradner, a veteran legislator, is best known of the group and stands in an excellent position to become House speaker should he be nominated and elected.

Politically active for a number of years, Brown is making his first attempt for elected office and is putting heavy emphasis on personal contact with voters. The Stanford and Columbia-educated lawyer is an Alaskan by birth, former newsman and a member of the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra.

Orbeck, a former legislator, heads the local labor union and Cowper, a lawyer, has been involved in Native legal affairs.

The 20th District Senate primary pits Robert T. Hamme against John Huber on the Democratic side and John Butrovich, veteran legislator, Selwyn Carroll, a black minority House incumbent, John Holm and George Silides on the GOP side.

All registered voters are eligible to vote in the primary election.