

Native gaming . . .

Continued from page 7

crime prevention and other issues. With that caveat, he said the governor wants the Legislature to help formulate a "process where everybody knows what the ground rules are," so that the state can respond to tribes in good faith and avoid litigation.

Botelho believes lawmakers feel that they, rather than the governor, have the right to bind the state in tribal compacts and want to use that authority to block, rather than simply oversee, the creation of tribal gaming operations.

In a May 13 letter to both Phillips and Senate President Drue Pearce, Knowles wrote: "We believe it is in the best interests of all concerned to establish, by law, the process for legislative ratification of gaming compacts negotiated by the executive branch under the IGRA. A bill that would accomplish this was prepared by legislative counsel and calendared

for hearing . . . However, the bill has not even been introduced, much less heard. We must have clear rules governing the process by which Indian gaming compacts are approved and entered into by the State of Alaska."

Meanwhile, both Botelho and tribal leaders have received word that Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt may not approve any other tribal gaming ordinances until the federal district court for Alaska has ruled on whether "Indian country," land over which tribes can exercise governmental jurisdiction, exists in Alaska.

Demmert said Klawock has not yet decided how to respond to Knowles' expected signing of the anti-gambling measures, but is considering its options, including a legal challenge.

Other Alaskan tribes that have indicated an interest in pursuing gaming operations include those in Barrow, Tetlin, Akiak, Eklutna, Kenai and Akiachak.