

# Nightmute becomes 25th Alaska community to ban alcohol

Residents of Nightmute, a village just west of Bethel, voted overwhelmingly to prohibit the sale, importation and possession of alcoholic beverages. The ban goes into effect April 9, 1996.

Mayor Fred J. Joe said he was not surprised by the 32 to 3 vote in favor of the ban.

"It is important to protect our people, especially the next generation, from the problems that come from the abuse of alcohol in a small village like ours," Joe said.

The ordinance makes it unlawful to possess alcohol within five miles of the municipal boundaries of the City of Nightmute. Violation would be a class C felony punishable by up to five years in jail and a fine of up to \$50,000.

Douglas Griffin, executive director of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, said the alcohol ban in Nightmute was part of a growing movement by residents to take control over their own communities.

"More and more villages are completely banning the sale and possession of alcohol. Many of these communities want to assert more control over their lives," said Griffin. He said there are a number of variations in rural Alaska on the restriction of alcohol.

"Some villages can only allow restaurants to sell wine or beer with meals, other communities outlaw the sale of alcohol, but not possession for personal use. But more and more communities are doing

what Nightmute did, completely banning its possession and use," said Griffin.

Nightmute is the 25th community to ban possession of alcohol in the state. Ninety-one other communities have exercised some restrictions on alcohol. There is growing teamwork between the ABC

board, the villages and the liquor industry to enforce bans or restrictions on alcohol use.

"Our investigators are getting help from store owners and village officials in identifying individuals who are buying alcohol in order to bootleg it," said Griffin.

Griffin said the public needs to be aware of the growing number of communities banning liquor. "We don't want innocent people unknowingly bringing alcohol into dry communities. The word needs to get out that travelers must check on local laws prior to traveling with liquor in their possession."