

Wright, Vogler to run for top state seats

BY MARGIE BAUMAN

FAIRBANKS--Donald R. Wright, one of the architects of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, has become the seventh candidate in the 1978 Alaska gubernatorial race.

Wright and running mate Joseph E. Vogler announced plans May 3 to run on the Alaska Independence Party ticket. They will not run in the August primary, but are circulating petitions to get the 1,000 signatures of registered voters necessary to place their names on the general election ballot Nov. 7.

Wright, 47, who now operates an equipment leasing business here and does some consulting for Arctic Village and Venetie, said the pending d-2 legislation is flatly unconstitutional. Wright said he's ready to take on the federal government in the battle over those national interest lands just as he did for the Native land claims settlement. "Only this time all Alaskans would join together and fight for independence," he said.

Vogler, 65, a Fairbanks real estate developer who founded the Alaska Independence Party in 1974, ran for governor in the general election that year and lost. This time, as a candidate for lieutenant governor he thinks his chances are much better, because "people are more disgusted than ever with the federal government. It's become more brazen, more tyrannical every day.

"The people are fed up with the mass of federal regulations. (England's) King George was a kind, benevolent old gentleman compared with the federal government," Vogler said.

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Wright too said he felt their chances were excellent, but neither will do much campaigning until after the primary. "We think that the established parties should have the right to fight out their platforms," Vogler said. Republican candidates so far in the race for governor are incumbent Gov. Jay Hammond and Tom Fink and former Gov. Walter J. Hickel, both of Anchorage.

Democratic contenders are State Senators Chancy Croft of Anchorage and Jalmar (Jay) Kerttula of Palmer, and Edward (Ed) Merdes of Fairbanks, a former legislator.

In the lieutenant governor's race are Republicans M.F. (Mike) Beirne, a state representative from Anchorage, and W.E. (Brad) Bradley, a state senator from Anchorage; Jimmie Drew Lockhart, and Robert (Bob) Ward, also of Anchorage, and Terry Miller and Kathleen (Mike) Dalton, both of Fairbanks. Democrats in that race are John L. Alexander, of Anchorage; Katherine T. (Katie) Hurley, Wasilla; Leslie E. (Red) Swanson, Fairbanks, and Robert E. (Bob) Bradley, Anchorage, both legislators, and Donald E. (Dux) Thompson, Douglas.

The Land Issue

For Wright and Vogler, land is a big issue in this gubernatorial race. "Not one more acre," said Vogler of the d-2 lands. "We have far more (federal) lands than our share already, if we are a state deserving equal treatment."

Part of the Alaska Independence Party platform, furthermore, calls for the reestablishment "of the rights of Alaska residents to entry upon all state and borough lands under customary homestead, homesite and mineral location regulations and to receive surface and subsurface patent to these lands."

Vogler argues that there is no constitutional authority for the federal government to own so much land in Alaska anyway. "There's no constitutional authority...except for the seat of government, forests, magazines (ammunition supply centers), arsenals, dock yards and other needful government buildings," Vogler said. "They've exceeded that. They've forgotten their contract with the people."

Vogler, who came to Alaska in 1942, is quite serious about Alaskan independence, despite the poor response to date from other Alaskans. His party's platform calls for a constitutional convention to reconsider the constitution of the State of Alaska.

The platform also calls for a government that will allow Alaskans "to manage their affairs in a better and more orderly manner without external interference, in fulfillment of the basic human right of all people to self-determination and control of their lives, liberties and their pursuit of happiness."

Wright, who was raised in Nenana, said those feelings about land and independence run strongly in his family too. "I've worked on the land claims all of my life and my father before me," he said.

(Wright is currently involved in a proxy battle for control of Cook Inlet Region Inc., the regional profit-making Native firm serving the Anchorage area. Wright, a Cook Inlet Region board member, has charged the company with issuing a false and misleading statement about the company's financial condition. (A related article about the Cook Inlet dispute also appears in this issue of the Tundra Times).)

So despite all the competition from Democrats and Republicans, Wright and Vogler feel their chances are good. "We'll run the campaign on a low key and spend just as much money as we are able to raise ourselves," Vogler said. "We think that the general dissatisfaction with Democrats and Republicans will help the people decide themselves."