

# Job situation for Alaskans looks poor

The employment situation in the state is expected to worsen this spring. The state is attempting to help people who want jobs to come find them.

There are some 250,000 people presently employed statewide,

and about another 10,000 people are added each year to the states workforce.

But while the state's economy is growing, there are also a number of people unemployed. Some people don't want to work,

or need to work but there are thousands of Alaskans looking for work and can't find it.

The situation in Alaska's villages is not expected to improve greatly. And to make matters worse for state residents wan-

ting to find work, the United States Supreme Court ruled the state's local hire law on oil and gas development projects unconstitutional. In it's ruling the Supreme Court said the state couldn't require local hire on private development projects.

A law requiring 95 percent local hire on construction projects is being challenged in the courts now. The state, however, still has it's job training and placement program. "We're devoting a lot of state and federal funds to that effort now," Governor Sheffield said, "and to make sure that money is well spent, the Department of Labor is working hard to make sure Alaskans are hired first. The way to do this, since we can't overturn the Supreme Court ruling of 1978, is to work in cooperation with private industry to hire Alaskans."

"We've enjoyed a great deal of success in doing this when it comes to jobs in the fishing and timber industry. We're trying to expand that effort now in the oil and gas industry, as well as the construction companies that work with the industry on the North Slope," Sheffield added.

According to Sheffield, the goal of having more Alaska residents in the state's workforce is easier to achieve today than 10 years ago. "Through advances in education, Alaskans are better trained now than ever before and companies looking for skilled workers don't have to look any farther than their own towns, cities, or villages," said Sheffield.

"For that reason, local hire not only makes good sense, it makes for good business," concluded Sheffield.