

It's a whole new race for governor

by **Jeffrey R. Richardson**
for the Tundra Times

It's a whole new race for the governor's mansion.

To many, the Republican campaign of Arliss Sturgulewski seems to have a whole new life following Jack Coghill's surprise decision to join former Gov. Wally Hickel on a third-party ticket.

The two paired up when Alaska Independent Party gubernatorial candidate John Lindauer made a surprise announcement to drop out of the race, and Hickel announced his intention to run for governor. Coghill then joined him, as Jerry Ward also withdrew from the Independent ticket in the race for lieutenant governor.

The changes, among other things,

prompted Lt. Gov. Stephen McAlpine to issue an endorsement of gubernatorial candidate Tony Knowles, former rival in the Democratic primary.

McAlpine said while there was never any question of his intention to endorse Knowles, the timing of his support was "a hundred percent" related to formation of another ticket.

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• McAlpine explains timing of endorsement

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"The timing of my endorsement was intended to make it perfectly clear I didn't appreciate that procedural maneuver," McAlpine said, criticizing Hickel and Coghill for circumventing the electoral process.

As the dust continued to settle over Alaska's altered political landscape last week following Coghill's defection, Sturgulewski supporters reveled in a groundswell of new support, despite uproar in the Republican Party.

Although it's too early to know if the support will make a difference on election day, Sturgulewski gained strength from picking up former primary opponent Jim Campbell as her new running mate to replace Coghill.

The two are far more compatible philosophically than Sturgulewski and Coghill, and the campaign should benefit from many of the votes that helped Campbell place a strong second in the Republican primary.

Coghill and Hickel, on the other hand, have made much out of their agreement on many issues, such as strong opposition to abortion.

They have garnered support of many strong Republicans, who say they are going to vote the Independent

ticket to elect Hickel and Coghill.

Sturgulewski, however, feels that many women voters will vote for her.

Sturgulewski press secretary Claire Lynam said many women are "furious" with what they see as an effort by Hickel and Coghill to keep a woman from being elected governor.

The upheaval in Republican ranks was precipitated by Sturgulewski's refusal to cave in to demands by Coghill and other party conservatives on a number of issues such as state spending, abortion and school prayer. According to Lynam, much of Sturgulewski's new support comes from women and men who applaud her rejection of backroom deals with "good ole boys."

McAlpine said initial fallout from formation of the Hickel/Coghill ticket was bound to favor Sturgulewski.

"The immediate reaction was somewhat predictable. The real question is how long does that last?"

McAlpine said it is too early to make reliable predictions, but with the benefit of recent polling he is inclined to agree with what he called "conventional wisdom" that sees Knowles benefitting from the changes in the Republican Party.



Gubernatorial candidates addressing the Women's Fisheries Network included, from left, Tony Knowles, Arliss Sturgulewski, Jim Sykes and Walter Hickel.

photos by Paul Drummond



Jesse Foster of Quinhagak asks a question at the network's forum last week.