



Replaces Ferguson

Hensley named state senator

by A.J. McClanahan

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Willie Hensley has been named to take the Alaska State Senate seat vacated by Sen. Frank Ferguson, D-Kotzebue, who resigned in December for health reasons.

Gov. Steve Cowper made the appointment in Juneau last Monday, the opening day of the legislative session.

Hensley, a Democrat, said he plans to focus much of his attention on the state's financial health.

"My intentions are to keep a very close eye on the budgetary process because of our communities' dependence on the state for educational services and a variety of other services," he said in a recent telephone interview from Juneau.

Hensley also said he will carefully review the state's capital construction budget "because there are some programs in limbo."

And the senator said he plans to "do everything possible to ease the pain of these budgetary problems."

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Cowper names replacement

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Cowper sought and received Hensley's pledge not to run again when the term expires in 1988.

The governor said he felt incumbents have too much of an advantage in an election.

Hensley said although he had no problem making the promise, he was concerned about whether it was necessary.

"To me, since I didn't have an interest in pursuing a political career, it was not a difficult commitment for me to make," he said. "But my feelings are that judgement should be a judgement of the people of the district."

"If the people think someone appointed to a position is not doing the job they want, they would reflect that in their vote."

Hensley is president of NANA Regional Corp., a position he will retain while in the Senate. He also is the founder and board chairman of United Bank Alaska, and he said he is considering whether to resign from the bank during his Senate term.

Although he is currently a member of the University of Alaska Board of Regents, Hensley said his term is expiring and that he does intend to give up that post.

The new senator served from 1967 to 1971 in the State House and from 1971 to 1975 in the State Senate.

He will be on the Senate Finance Committee, and will be one of four Bush votes on the seven-member panel. Other rural legislators include Democrats Fred Zharoff of Kodiak and Jim Duncan of Juneau and Republican John Binkley of Bethel.