

Gravel Tells Of Pipeline Fight And Final Win

By MARGE BAUMAN
KTVE/KFRB

U.S. Senator Mike Gravel, fresh from victory on pipeline legislation in Washington, D.C. said Saturday in Fairbanks that he sees no further environmental blockade to a trans-Alaska pipeline.

"I don't foresee any further litigation," Gravel said. "They (environmental groups) have the money. They don't want to waste it and I think any further litigation would be a waste of money on their part."

Pipeline right-of-way legislation, with the Gravel-Stevens amendment attached, is now in the U.S. House, and some reports from the capital indicate environmentalist groups are launching anew their attack to keep such legislation from passing the House.

Gravel has maintained that the pipeline plans meet requirements of the National Environ-

(Continued on page 6)

GRAVEL ON PIPELINE FIGHT . . .

(Continued from page 1)

mental Policy Act and that no further studies are needed.

Senators supported Gravel on that move, while voting down another amendment to hold off pipeline construction pending further study on a route through Canada, where the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories and others are pushing for their own land claims settlement.

Gravel's amendment also includes a proviso with respect to subsistence living in Alaska. It provides that any damage done with respect to subsistence living could be indemnified. Gravel said indemnification from oil spills is already protected by the state legislature.

State Sen. Willie Hensley, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, had been pushing for well over a year now, however, for support of indemnification on the federal level. Hensley, executive director, Sam Kito of Doyon Ltd. and John Borbridge, president and chairman of the board of Sealaska Corp., were in Washington, D.C. to lobby for amendments to pipeline legislation, (by Washington State Sen. Henry Jackson) to protect Native rights.

Alaska Gov. William Egan, Attorney General John Havelock and other Alaskans also participated in the pipeline lobbying effort. Gravel acknowledged that oil lobbyists also had a considerable effect on the Senate vote.

On another issue of importance of Alaska Natives Gravel expressed confidence in the Native leadership to do the necessary work.

Asked about the revision of requirements for Native Allotments, Gravel said: "Obviously the Native organizations in this state and the Native leadership is extremely well versed and sophisticated in the bureaucratic processes. And if there is something they find is terribly bad in their interest, I am sure they will have the wherewithall and the skill to try and seek a correction in that regard."

Gravel, the only Alaska member of Congress to spend the Fourth of July recess in Washington, (lobbying for the pipeline) said he had not had much time to study the allotment problem yet.

Gravel said he was "very happy" about a Fairbanks News-Miner editorial giving him a strong pat on the back for pushing pipeline legislation through the Senate. The News-Miner and others had strongly criticized Gravel for his tactics, in pursuing a pipeline route.

"At the end, we all did pull together," Gravel said of various pipeline factions. "It was all really a united effort. We really all pitched in. The credit should be spread across the whole segment. All I provided was the leadership in one particular tactical area, which, thank God, worked out."

As for attacks that he has been "grandstanding on the pipeline and other issues, the Alaska

Democrat said it was really a "personality deal."

Those who levy the charges, "don't disagree with your goals. They don't disagree with the propriety of the action, but they want to oppose you. They can't find any grounds to oppose you, so they then attack your motives," he said.

"Actually, that's the most dastardly attack of all. And in the Senate we don't do that. As a matter of course.

"We never impugn another person's motives. You at least credit the other person with the same amount of sincerity you have.

Gravel said there is no question that he went around lobby-

ing, "actually begging for people to vote for the pipeline, on the merits of it." But nobody voted for the pipeline as a political favor to him, he said. "When a person votes for the pipeline, he's got to go back to his state and face his constituents. In the final analysis, he's got to be able to stand up to the merits of the issue, because that's what he's got to respond to among his constituents," he said.

The senator still hasn't said for sure whether he will seek reelection. He noted that he doesn't have to make up his mind on that until next May.

And with that, he dropped the issue of running again.