

# Editorial



## Comments were racist

There's only one word for comments made recently by Sen. Jack Coghill, R-Nenana, in the debate over the makeup of the Senate Ethics Committee — racism.

Unfortunately Coghill has a long-standing record of opposing Native causes, so it comes as no surprise to those who have watched his career that he would suggest Sen. Pat Pourchot, D-Anchorage, should not be on the panel investigating Sen. Al Adams, D-Kotzebue.

Coghill's reasoning against having Pourchot on the committee is that his wife Janie Leask is "very close" to Adams and that Pourchot has received contributions from Native corporations. In reality, Leask's main tie to Adams is that they are both Alaska Natives.

It would put the Senate ethics panel in a very interesting position if a non-Native were being investigated by them. Just suppose the spouses of these committee members happened to be non-Native and that the senators had received contributions from non-Native corporations. Should then only Natives be allowed to sit on the ethics committee?

The whole ethics hearing process is very difficult for Adams and others involved. It is inappropriate for Coghill to inject racism into this painful situation as part of his sour grapes attempt to embarrass the Senate leadership.

Coghill is obviously upset that he did not become one of the power brokers in the organization of the Senate. He has appointed himself as the minority of one whose main role in life these days seems to be to attempt to embarrass the leadership of the Senate.

We believe Adams has acted responsibly in calling for this investigation and in requesting that all the hearings be held in public.

We also believe that in our country individuals are innocent until proven guilty. And we would hope that all senators, including Coghill, would approach the ethics committee deliberations with that in mind.

We know that this whole situation is causing Adams, his friends and family, as well as many members of the Legislature great discomfort. Given all of that, we find it to be the height of irresponsibility for Coghill to have injected racism into the ethics committee deliberations.

This kind of overt racism is something that the Alaska Native leadership has been fighting to overcome for generations. By his comments, Coghill has shown the mentality of political leaders of Alabama and Mississippi in the 1950s and 1960s when they fought Martin Luther King and other leaders in the black community, who were attempting to end the vicious cycle of segregation.

