

Registration, fund raising goals of SENSIBLE

By BILL HESS
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Getting Alaskans registered to vote and convincing them

to contribute to fund-raising efforts are two of the big challenges facing the Alaskans For Sensible Fish and Game Man-

agement. "As far as we know, the rural folks don't have any problems supporting subsistence," says Dennis Tiepelman,

the director of SENSIBLE.

"As a percentage of registered voters, the rural areas have a better turnout than do the urban voters. Our problem is, so many are not registered," says Tiepelman. "So many of them are absent from the city limits, living out in their fish camps and being out in the country, living the subsistence lifestyle, that this kind of thing (registering to vote) just falls by the wayside."

Ironically, it is that lifestyle which is threatened if its followers do not take enough time off from it to get registered and then to vote. "We need to put concern and fear into the minds of the voters," Tiepelman claims.

In order to vote in the Aug. 24 primary, a person must register to vote by July 26. In order to vote in the Nov. 2 general election a person must register to vote by Oct. 4. A person can't vote unless he or she has registered.

Tiepelman points out that Alaska is a big and diversified state, and that the staff of his office is small. Right now, Tiepelman works with one assistant, Pat Petrevilli. The grassroots work of the campaign will have to be carried out in the different regions, says Tiepelman, with the different regional village and non-profit corporations spearheading the drive.

"The battle is, in a lot of ways, their responsibility," he explains. "While we coordinate the different efforts from here."

Besides getting rural Alaskans registered and to the polls, Tiepelman says the movement to preserve the subsistence priority is going to need a lot of dollars, and he expects different fund-raising campaigns to be launched in the different regions.

"Both sides proclaim they are going to spend upwards of half a million dollars," Tiepelman notes. "It's going to be a million dollar campaign to convince the voters to vote either way."

Tiepelman stresses that although much of SENSIBLE's efforts will be directed toward rural Alaskans, a good deal of work will be aimed at getting urban voters out, and in convincing those whose minds are not irrevocably set to support subsistence.

"Anchorage has half the state's population," Tiepelman explains the importance of the urban vote. "About a third of the people living in Anchorage do no hunting at all. Of the 60 percent who do hunt, there are those who are violently opposed to subsistence, who believe it's discrimination against them to give a priority to rural folks. And there are those who support subsistence."

Tiepelman claims that an "unofficial poll" conducted this past winter showed that in the urban areas of Alaska,

a small majority of potential voters favor subsistence. "The more numbers we get out to vote, the more we will consolidate that slim majority," he explains.

Of a certainty, those urban residents who deeply want to see the subsistence priority eliminated will flood the polls.

Tiepelman also notes that many urban Alaskans have never spent time in rural Alaska, and have no idea what life is like in a subsistence village. A great number of urban Alaskans have moved into the state only within the past few years, and a great many will move out again within the next few, without ever sampling village life.

SENSIBLE has taken a soft-sell approach in its attempt to better educate these people and to give them somewhat of a feeling of what village life is about. Currently, SENSIBLE is sponsoring eight five-minute vignettes titled "People of the Land," about village life which are appearing on television, one each week.

SENSIBLE also is organizing a speakers' bureau to get Tiepelman and other subsistence advocates in to speak to various civic organizations and clubs in Alaska, and to allow them to present their view.

Once the voters have been registered, and once as many as possible have been convinced to support subsistence, then, says Tiepelman, it is important they all understand that to support subsistence, voters will have to mark "No," on their ballots. "This is a bit confusing," he adds. "Politics usually is."

Tiepelman is a former director of the Maniilaw Association and for the past year has headed the Alaska Federation of Natives' office in Washington D.C. Tiepelman resigned earlier this year, citing his strong desire to return to Kotzebue, his home.

He had been hired by the NANA Regional Corp. to coordinate NANA's Inupiat Illitqusiat, the Inupiat Spirit committee which is spearheading a movement to return to traditional inner values of the Inupiat in the NANA region.

His job as coordinator was postponed, however, when NANA corporate leaders decided his services could be spared until the vote on subsistence is taken in November.