

ONE VIEW

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There can be no doubt that Mike Gravel wants to be a U.S. Senator. There is doubt though as to whether or not he has the vote-getting ability to attain that high office.

Mike Gravel is now trying to determine that possibility of success if he challenges Senator Ernest Gruening in the August primary. People speak of a poll which Gravel is anxiously awaiting the results of. Presumably, the poll will reveal Gravel's potential strength at the ballot box, and presumably if that strength is significant the former Speaker of the Alaska House of Representatives will announce his candidacy.

People speak also of money raising problems, alluding to the rumor that Gravel's principal financial supporters in past campaigns will not support him in a race against Gruening.

Notwithstanding polls, many questions and other variables incidental to the vital question, "To run or not to run," persons close to Gravel speak in terms which seem to indicate that he is busily talking himself into running.

Statements emitting from the Gravel camp about "residual strength" from the last campaign against Ralph Rivers, and, "our position is stronger than in any past campaign" seem to indicate also that he has his mind pretty well made up. Gravel is cognizant of the fact though that he has lost once in statewide campaigns and to lose a second time could very well mean near political oblivion. Thus the hesitancy, the need to have the fateful decision reinforced by all the supporting data possible.

Gravel was a strong vote getter in Alaska's rural areas in past campaigns, and indications suggest that he may be again.

Many persons, who in the past were either politically apathetic or who made their minds up quietly, have voiced doubt and concern over Senator Gruening's bid for re-election. They cite the Senator's age as their principal concern, and in many instances their only concern, for Ernest Gruening is a man highly respected.

Although it is felt that most people in the rural areas are "hawkish" concerning the Vietnam war, the war will probably be not as large an issue as the Senator's age unless the Senator chooses to make the war a major issue in the bush.

There is a rumor that several native leaders have pledged support to Mike Gravel if he should run, and many more are as yet undecided—a reflection of the concern over Gruening's bid for re-election. It is felt that native leaders with a strong party attachment will probably support Gruening.

No matter what support Gravel gets from native leaders, it is a fact that Gruening will be a strong, formidable opponent in the bush.

To run or not will therefore be an agonizing decision for Mike Gravel to make. His entire political future hangs in the balance. But if Gravel chooses not to run, there will probably linger in his mind for a long while to come, "Maybe if I had fun...;" and it is hard to envision a man like Gravel, youthful, vigorous, hard driving, living comfortably with such a thought.