

Sen. Stevens Will Work for Coalition's Continuation

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{audio}/images/stories/mp3/120731.gary_stevens_on_backbone.mp3{/audio}

Jay Barrett/KMXT

A couple of weeks ago Alaska Governor Sean Parnell declared his desire to see the bi-partisan coalition in the state senate broken up, and vowed to work to elect more Republicans who side with him on oil issues.

Currently, there are 10 Republicans and 10 Democrats in the senate, and for the last half-dozen years many of them joined together to form a majority. The most recent legislature saw four republicans in the minority, six in the majority, along with all 10 Democrats. The coalition has always been led by a Republican, most recently by Kodiak's Gary Stevens, who has served as president for the past four years.

-- (Stevens 1 20 sec "What do I think of the governor's ... to make big oil happy.")

Stevens says that the members of the coalition are well aware that the oil industry is the lynchpin of the state of Alaska's economy:

-- (Stevens 2 17 sec "There's a misunderstanding out ... treated fair in this whole thing.")

With the new redistricting plan in effect for this fall's election, there could be substantial changes to the make up of both the house and the senate. But even if the senate wasn't evenly split as it is now, Stevens says he thinks there would still be a desire for a coalition majority:

-- (Stevens 3 27 sec "I think there would be ... of that caucus would have a veto.")

The ad hoc group "Backbone," which had originally formed to check British Petroleum's attempt at gaining more control on the North Slope through the generosity of then-Governor Tony Knowles, has re-formed to support the bipartisan coalition in the senate. Stevens says he's known many of the members over the years:

-- (Stevens 4 41 sec "There are several I've known ... people will listen to them.")

Backbone has not registered to raise or spend money on behalf of candidates and said it will rely on raising grassroots support.

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