Stevens Tours Tundra Runways - Finds Some 'Shocking'

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Kodiak Senator Gary Stevens got a look at a part of the state that will be in his district if he wins re-election this fall – communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta outside Bethel. Stevens says he wasn’t on a campaign swing, though, saying he went there at the invitation of the Alaska Department of Transportation.

“I was checking out the runways and the access. It’s sort of shocking – some of them were so bad. This one place we landed in, Chefornak, it appears the wingspan of the plane was wider than the landings strip. These pilots are really great, but I can see where they’ve got to be careful and be cautious. And sometimes it’s best not to land in those places,." Stevens said. "Clearly that’s an area that needs replacing. And they’re working on them, I think they’ve replaced three or four of them and have six or so to go.”

While out on the tundra, Stevens also got a chance to see some newer village schools, which were largely paid for with state funds.

“But yeah, it was interesting. I really enjoyed getting out and seeing the communities and the excellent schools in that area that we built because of the court case, the Moore case. So there are some beautiful schools out in those areas," Stevens said. "But it’s totally different than the villages around Kodiak Island. It’s very flat, it’s on a river. It’s just very, very different than our communities.”

The new Senate District R now stretches from east of Yakutat to Newtok on the Bering Sea coast. Stevens will face Democrat Robert Henrich, a life-long Cordova commercial fisherman, in the November 6th general election.