

Kodiak Pioneers Support Gender Equality at the Top

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

The Pioneers of Alaska have taken a step into the 22st century and overwhelmingly voted to allow women to serve in the 105-year-old fraternal organization's highest offices.

The vote came Saturday at the group's "Grand Igloo" convention in Soldotna.

Previously, women were limited to serving only as secretary, recorder and trustee to the statewide organization but could not serve as president or vice president.

The vote did not come without debate, though, as a number of men spoke out against it, mostly citing tradition as their reason for opposition.

Former Soldotna Mayor Dave Carey, the president of the Kenai Pioneers chapter, said he would like to invite his niece to join, but couldn't in good conscience because of what he called the inequality at the top of the statewide organization.

During the final roll call vote, the entire men's delegation and half the women from Fairbanks voted no. Both delegations from Kodiak voted in favor of the change.

The measure passed with 181 yes votes and 55 votes no, surpassing the needed two-thirds majority to pass.

The vote does not change the organization of local chapters, or "igloos," and the men and women will maintain separate presidents.