Sen. Stevens Likes New Senate Boundaries

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

The Alaska Redistricting Board released Sunday what it hopes will be the last re-drawn map produced as part of the state’s reapportionment process. Last year’s elections were conducted under a temporary map that produced significant changes to the legislative district boundaries. The new map – at least for Kodiak Island voters – will look more like the one used for most of the 2000s.

“It’s sort of ‘Back to the Future,’ and that’s fine with me, said Kodiak Senator Gary Stevens, who was reached Monday in St. Paul, Minnesota.

“I think we’re going to wind up with a Senate District that can work very well together and will mostly be, well, all coastal, mostly fishing communities,” he said. “The three largest communities will be Kodiak, Cordova and Homer, so a lot of commonality there, a lot of common interest. So it goes back to where we were a few years ago, and that’s just fine. I’m very happy with that.”

Stevens, who as Senate President three years ago, appointed Kodiak’s Bob Brodie to the Redistricting Board, says he’s been closely following the developments.

“At one point, one of the plans included Kodiak along with Skagway, Haines and actually Douglas, right across the channel from Juneau. So there were lots of plans out there, and this is, I think probably one of the best ones for Kodiak,” Stevens said. “It keeps us together with fishing communities and with rural Alaska.” Of course, a new redistricting map is of special interest to someone who intends to seek election or re-election:

“Most definitely I am. I ran for a four-year term, but because of redistricting it was truncated to a two-year term. I’m glad to run again. It’s always good to get out there and have a little competition and let people know what’s going on and know where you stand,” he said.

“It’s really been fascinating these last few years – the big issues we’ve been dealing with, oil taxation and education, major education changes, are all things I feel real comfortable with and I’m glad to have this sort of community in those areas.”

After last year’s election under the temporary districting map, the 10-Democrat, 10-Republican senate Stevens had presided over as president for six years became unbalanced, and turned decidedly more conservative and friendly to the governor’s oil tax reduction plan. Stevens hasn’t gone so far as to start counting seats this far in advance, but he says there definitely looks to be some changes under the new proposed plan.

“It could change real quickly. One of the issues out there is that two of our senators, current senators – Dyson and Fairclough – are in the same senate district, so they will either run against each other, or one

will decide not to run. That in itself will change the numbers. So we’ll see how it turns out. It could return to a more split senate between Democrats and Republicans, or it could stay the way it is, which is pretty firmly conservative.”

The plan introduced Sunday still needs the courts’ stamp of approval, but whether it’s this map or another one, there will be new election boundaries for the 2014 elections.