Gary Stevens Organizes Senate Coalition Majority

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

There will be another majority coalition in the Alaska State Senate this upcoming session. With Democrats picking up two seats this year, the 20-seat senate is split right down the middle.

Kodiak Senator Gary Stevens, who is now the senate president, put together this year's majority coalition, roughly along the same lines as the one that ran the state senate the past two years. Like before, there are more Democrats than Republicans in the coalition, but this year the difference is even greater. All 10 senate Democrats are joined by only three of the senate's 10 Republicans.

Despite being in the minority of the majority coalition, Republicans hold three of the five leadership positions: Stevens as President, Charlie Huggins as Rules Chairman, and Bert Stedman as Finance Co-Chair. Democrat Johnny Ellis is Majority Leader and Lyman Hoffman is the other Co-Chair of Finance.

Stevens described the coalition as "fragile," but says there's room for more senators if they'd like to join up:

-- (Gary 1 30 sec "Well it certainly was not ... unknown at this time.")

One member of last year's coalition, Senator Lesil McGuire of Anchorage, is not in this year's majority. Neither is newcomer Linda Menard, who was elected from the Mat-Su to replace

Lyda Green, last year's senate president, who retired. The other Republicans out in the cold include Tom Wagoner of Kenai-Soldotna, Con Bunde and Kevin Meyer of Anchorage, Fred Dyson of Eagle River, and Gene Therriault (terry-oh) of North Pole.

Stevens said he's not prepared to announce any other committee assignments beyond the leadership. He added that the coalition's members will take a retreat before the legislative session begins on January 20th to hash out any of their differences:

-- (Gary 2 21 sec "We have some commonalities ... position on that.")

The State House also announced their leadership. Nikiski Representative Mike Chenault will be the Speaker of the House. Stevens says the senate's relationship with the house should be healthy this year:

-- (Gary 3 24 "Chenault is a longtime friend ... communicate well with them.")

When asked if the Senate plans any action against Governor Sarah Palin in light of the legislative finding that she abused her power in Troopergate, Stevens said the Senate has done all it planned to do, and that the State Personnel Board subsequently cleared the governor.

In Kodiak, I'm Jay Barrett.

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