

April/May
1996
Number 147

THE CHUGACH OUTLET

Published by
Chugach Electric
Association,
Anchorage.
Chugach is a not-
for-profit member-
owned electric
cooperative and
Alaska's largest
electricity
supplier.

Board viewpoint

by Ray Kreig, President



Damage to our cooperative from election mudslinging

We have suffered through one of the nastiest Chugach elections in recent memory. In this last campaign the Anchorage Daily News carried twice as many column-inches of paid advertising on our Chugach election than for all of our Municipal Assembly and School Board candidates combined. The public was bombarded with advertising on radio, TV, multiple mailouts, and even buses. Such high-cost media wars are virtually unknown in co-op elections elsewhere in the nation. A management consultant to a former board said, "The kind of money being spent on (Chugach) elections is obscene and is making this board look like the US Congress." Something is seriously wrong.

Did this advertising address the critical business issues affecting our future rates and Chugach planning? Generally NO!

Increased member communication has been a very high priority of this board so that you might make informed decisions during co-op elections. Never before have Chugach members had more information on the business affairs of their co-op available to them for open discussion. New information brought to you that should have been debated during this campaign include: the salary and benefit list, the NRECA operations benchmarking study, and the Intertie Contracting Alternatives study.

We released all in ample time to be discussed for the election. Additionally, since Chugach doesn't have to directly compete for your business, this board initiated a competitive comparison with the nation's best performing

utilities to improve our performance so you will know when we are delivering the best value to you.

Rather than a good faith dialogue and debate on this new information, it is disappointing that the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Union chose instead to conduct a smear campaign against decent citizens willing to volunteer their service by running for your Chugach board. It is additionally regrettable that candidates supported by the IBEW sat silently as lies, distortions, and innuendoes were made on their behalf. I believe that board members have an obligation to maintain a higher standard of conduct and not allow the membership to be intentionally misled. Such campaigns are very harmful to public discourse in a democratic society and they lower the quality of life in our entire community. They also reflect poorly on the capable and decent Chugach employees, many of whom are represented by the IBEW.

We live in a free country - the IBEW has the right to run a confusing smear campaign - a technique used when one doesn't want to address the issues. However, as a Chugach member, with a clear understanding of the financial motive of the IBEW Union in wanting to control your board, you can discourage this type of campaigning by being aware of it in future co-op elections, and exercising your right to vote. We will do our best to keep you informed of the facts.

Ray Kreig