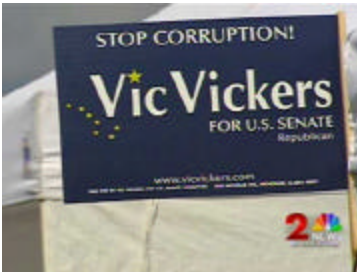


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Vic Vickers: in it to win it?



by Jill Burke
Sunday, Aug. 17, 2008

ANCHORAGE, Alaska-- In the fight to keep his decades-long seat as Alaska's sole senator, Ted Stevens has one challenger, Vic Vickers, who's hammering hard on his legal woes.

Vic Vickers is a one-time Alaskan and former Florida Democrat who returned to the state eight months ago. (KTUU-TV)

However, some are claiming Vickers' republican leanings could be nothing more than a ruse.



Vic Vickers is a one-time Alaskan and former Florida Democrat who returned to Alaska eight months ago. He signed on as a Republican candidate this summer with minutes to spare.

Vickers signed on as a Republican candidate this summer. (KTUU-TV)

He says his conscience led the way.

"It's a titanic struggle to take back Alaska from the oil and gas industry and from the corrupt politicians," said Vickers.



Vickers' opponent in the primaries Sen. Ted Stevens (KTUU-TV)

However, Republican pollster Dave Dittman, who has done work for the Stevens re-election campaign this year, wonders if something else might have led Vickers into the election.

"In my opinion he was part of the package to recruit Begich," said Dittman. "He has no hope of winning. His job is to damage the senator and that's his only purpose whatsoever."



Republican pollster Dave Dittman (KTUU-TV)

Dittman theorizes Vickers is in the primary for the mud-slinging: keeping corruption in Alaska politics and Steven's indictment at the top of everyone's mind while Anchorage's mayor runs a clean campaign.

"To me that is the ultimate dirty trick. To me that's more serious than some of the stuff the senator has been charged with," said Dittman.

However, Vickers says his motives are pure.

"I don't prefer either one of them and that is the reason I got in the race. I got in because Alaskans don't have a choice between Ted Stevens and Mark Begich," said Vickers.

He also says in his race against Stevens he is far more a



Mayor Mark Begich (KTUU-TV)

foe than an ally to either Begich or the Democratic Party.

"I think that Mark Begich is Ted Stevens on training wheels and if I thought that Mark Begich was an honest man I would not have gotten in this race," he said.

The Begich campaign says it's not worried about a face-off with Vickers in the fall and sees no gain in Vickers current campaign tactics against Stevens.

"I don't think Vickers' campaign helps the Begich campaign. He doesn't really stand for anything, so I don't know what his message is," said Begich Campaign spokesperson Julie Hasquet.

Vickers and the Begich campaign are adamant that there is no strategy between them.

"This idea that he is somehow an agent for the Democrats or for Begich seems to be a little back room conspiracy theory from people who are either losing or over on some side and have nothing else to grasp to so they grasp these bizarre theories," said Hasquet.

The Stevens' campaign says the indictment against Stevens is not the most important campaign issue, but rather it's about experience and effectiveness in Washington D.C.

The Begich campaign says, it, too feels there are other matters more important to address.

A recent Ivan Moore poll placed Stevens ahead in the primary with challenger Dave Cuddy in second place and Vickers in third.

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