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Final Edition

# Anchorage Daily News

Tuesday, April 15, 2003

ALASKA'S NEWSPAPER

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## It's Mayor Begich by 18 votes

■ **ELECTION:** Wuerch seeks a recount, Jacobus wants a restraining order, and lawsuit could force a runoff.



George Sullivan

**Anchorage mayors since municipality formation**

- George Sullivan 1967-82
- Tony Knowles 1982-88
- Tom Fink 1988-94
- Rick Mystrom 1994-2000
- George Wuerch 2000-2003

By **BEN SPIESS**  
Anchorage Daily News

By a mere 18 votes, former Anchorage assemblyman Mark Begich won enough absentee and questioned ballots Monday to become Anchorage's new mayor.

Within minutes of the count, incumbent Mayor George Wuerch said he will ask for a recount of the entire election.

"There's no concession. Eighteen votes is too close," Wuerch said.

Another potential problem for Begich is a lawsuit filed in federal court last week challenging a change to the city's charter that allows Begich to take office July 1 without a majority of votes. Monday evening, the lawyer handling the suit, Ken Jacobus, said he would go to court today seeking a restraining order to prevent Begich from taking office.

Despite the hurdles ahead, Begich was jubilant.

With all ballots counted, Begich had 45.03 percent of the ballots cast in the April 1 election — just 18 votes more than the 45 percent he needed to be declared the winner.

All sides in the mayor's race say they are surprised by Begich's strong showing.

As the news filtered back to his Midtown campaign headquarters, his supporters spilled out onto the sidewalks, cheering and waving signs. Begich credits his success to a positive message and a desire for change.

"We're going to assume we've won. But we're also going to keep campaigning," he said.

The outcome of the race has been in limbo since election night.

Begich took 44.8 percent of the vote in the 11-candidate field. Wuerch took 37.5 percent. Former Mayor Rick Mystrom took about 15 percent.

To win Monday, Begich needed 47 percent of the uncounted ballots. He took 48 percent. Overall, Begich got 28,604 of a total 63,524 votes cast. Wuerch had 23,615.

Under city election rules, Wuerch can get a recount by posting a \$12,200 bond. If the vote is overturned in his favor or changes



Taking yet another congratulatory cell phone call Monday, with his supporters waving to rush-hour traffic behind him, Mark Begich basked in the narrowest of wins — 18 votes — in the Anchorage mayoral race.

by more than 4 percent, he will get his money back.

The recount will take about seven days, Wuerch said.

The Anchorage Assembly had been

scheduled to certify the election tonight. Monday, Anchorage Assembly Chairman Dick Traini said the Assembly could certify part of the election but not the mayor's race. Or the body could certify the entire election

pending the recount. Traini also said that he would not certify the election if the federal court grants Jacobus

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## With fall of Tikrit starts the mop-up

■ **OVER:** Marines seize last major town; focus shifts to restoring order.

By **RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN**  
The Washington Post

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The Pentagon on Monday declared that major combat operations in Iraq were over after U.S. forces took control of Tikrit, the last bastion of President Saddam Hussein's government.

It also marked a shift in the U.S. campaign from grabbing territory to targeting pockets of resistance, rebuilding war-ravaged infrastructure and creating a system of government.

U.S. officials said the Marines who captured Tikrit, a small farming community 90 miles northwest of Baghdad and the ancestral region of Saddam, encountered lighter than expected resistance, mostly from paramilitary Baath loyalists instead of the organized

military defenses some officials had feared. By the end of the day, U.S. troops patrolled the city center and set up checkpoints, receiving a calm if sometimes reserved welcome from the population.

But it was clear that the allies' worst fears about chemical and biological attacks, major destruction of Iraqi oil fields, heavy and sustained fighting by the Republican Guard, missile attacks on Israel and prolonged, dangerous street fighting in the major cities of Iraq had not been realized.

What lies ahead threatens to be difficult. Police forces are needed to keep order. The Iraqi people need water, electricity and food as well as a government and operating economy. The fate of Saddam, his sons and the leaders of his regime need to be determined. And the role of other nations interested

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U.S. Marines spoke with an Iraqi prisoner of war Monday in the main square of Tikrit, about 90 miles from Baghdad. American forces captured the city with little resistance.

## Couple united in their worry

■ **CONSUMED:** Marine, wife at home think more of loneliness than fear.

By **JAYSON BLAIR** and **MICHAEL WILSON**  
The New York Times

JACKSONVILLE, N.C. — Sarai Thompson had finally been able to get some rest after hours of tossing and turning. Then, she recalls, she rolled over and saw her husband tucked underneath the white covers beside her and she began to cry. He was not really there or anywhere in their townhouse outside a Marine base here. He was 6,500 miles away in the desert of Iraq.

"I am not sure what's worse, the fear or the loneliness," Thompson says of the recent nights without her husband, Cpl. Alan Thompson, a member of a Marine artillery battalion that was among the first to enter Iraq.

There were good reasons to be fearful. At virtually the same moment on March 23 that Thompson sat anxiously awake, her husband was in a drab command tent outside Nasiriyah as his artillery unit shelled paramilitary fighters and other Iraqis who had been attacking Marine and Army units there for days.

"Thompson!" an officer shouted as fire began to rain around the headquarters tent.

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## House bill gambles that gaming will save budget

■ **POPULAR:** But lottery, video poker might create social ills.

By **SEAN COCKERHAM**  
Anchorage Daily News

JUNEAU — Deal 'em, say some legislators. The state needs money and gamblers are willing to spend theirs, so how about a lottery and video card games to help balance the budget?

Legislation is moving in the state House to expand Alaska gambling, now limited mainly to bingo and pull-tabs. The bill provides for a lottery and electronic games and says those could include video poker, keno and blackjack. The state would take its cut, bars and clubs would take theirs, and charities would be paid as well.

The bill has influential supporters. They include House Speaker Pete Kott, R-Eagle River, who has made the bill a personal priority and put his staff to work on it. But there also are passionate opponents who argue it would be socially destructive.

The state lottery and electronic gambling are the latest proposals for trying to fill the state's huge budget shortfall, which ranges from \$400 million to over a billion dollars each year, largely depending on the price of oil. The budget reserve that absorbs the shortfall is expected to be gone in two or three years.

The bill's proponents hope Alaska joins 25 other states that already are part of the giant Powerball lottery system, in which people buy a ticket for a \$1 for the extremely remote chance of ending up a millionaire.

Kott envisions some kind of catchy name, like the Gold Rush Powerball, and lottery terminals set up on cruise ships and state ferries so that tourists will participate as well as Alaskans visiting the local store.

No official estimate was available on how much the state could make from such a lottery, but Kott said he believes it could be \$40 million a year. Other estimates range down to \$10 million.

"I think the time has come," Kott said. "Every other state is taking advantage of it."

Much more controversial than the lottery is the other half of the bill. Even the wording is a matter of contention, with opponents calling it video poker and advol-

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Alaska Legislature

■ **ON THE WEB**  
For more on the Legislature, including easy ways to track bills and contact lawmakers, go to [www.adn.com/legislature](http://www.adn.com/legislature)

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