

Renkes report complete after 4 months

ROBERT BUNDY: Former U.S. attorney says it focuses on executive branch ethics act.

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A report on whether state Attorney General Gregg Renkes violated the executive branch ethics act should arrive on the governor's desk Monday, the author said Friday.

Former U.S. Attorney Robert Bundy, speaking by cell phone from California, said he had just completed his nearly four-month investigation. Bundy said he expected to sign the report over the weekend. Depending on Gov. Frank Murkowski's schedule, he likely will receive it Monday, Bundy said.

Murkowski spokeswoman Becky Hultberg did not respond to numerous messages Friday.

Bundy, hired as outside counsel by Murkowski in October, offered few specifics about the report's contents. The Anchorage attorney did say the report will total either 45 or 60 pages, depending on whether he formats it as single- or double-spaced.

Until he briefs his client about the report, Bundy said, it would be inappropriate to offer any details. He did say that it focuses on the executive branch ethics act, a law that bars public officials from using their positions for personal enrichment.

Renkes fell under ethics scrutiny Oct. 1, when the Daily News reported his stock ownership in KFx Inc., a Denver company that's trying to commercialize a coal-drying process. Renkes promoted KFx last year in state negotiations with Taiwan aimed at the development of a \$1 billion coal mine at Beluga, west of Anchorage. KFx technology would process the coal.

Renkes had disclosed his KFx holdings -- at more than \$100,000 his largest financial asset at that time -- to the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., where he is a trustee. But he said he did not tell the governor. On Oct. 4, Renkes said he did not break any laws. Two days later, Renkes sold his KFx stock, he said.

Bundy said he has not circulated any draft copies of his report. Asked when he would be available to talk about his investigation, he said that's up to the governor. And if the governor requests that he not talk about the report?

"I'll cross that bridge when I come to it," Bundy said.

The governor and Renkes are confidants whose relationship dates back more than a decade. Some Murkowski critics have questioned how impartial Bundy can be given that his \$260 an hour fee was paid for out of the governor's budget.

Hultberg and other Murkowski supporters have characterized such accusations as outlandish and have said Bundy's reputation for fairness and impartiality is beyond reproach.

The state personnel board has hired an outside counsel to investigate an ethics complaint against Renkes. There's no word on the status of that confidential process. The Alaska Bar Association is also reviewing a complaint against the attorney general.