

# President Backing Claims

President Richard Nixon noted last week that an early and just settlement of the Native land claims issue has his "complete personal backing."

In a letter to Alaska's Sen. Ted Stevens on Sept. 22, he added, "Certainly it is of high priority to this Administration."

Noting that a September letter of Sen. Stevens had come to his attention, the President said, "It has long been my belief that the Federal Government should support a strong and equitable settlement for these ancestral claims and the Alaska Native Claims legislation proposed by the Administration is an indication of my personal commitment to a just settlement."

"I believe it is vital to the interests of the State of Alaska, to Alaska Natives, and to the Nation that proper action be taken by the Congress in order to resolve this issue."

A land claims bill recently passed by the Senate would give Alaska's Natives \$500 million in cash, \$500 million in royalty payments, and about 10 million acres of land.

The House subcommittee on Indian Affairs concluded executive sessions on the land claims issue Tuesday, Sept. 22, with no reported resolution on the matter. It appears unlikely that a bill will be forthcoming this year unless Congress, scheduled to adjourn Oct. 15, returns after the November elections.