

RDA OFFICE PROPOSED HERE

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Rep. Terry Miller Says Branch Here Would Help Villages

State Rep. Terry Miller proposed today that Rural Development Agency open a branch office in Fairbanks starting next fiscal year.

He stated that the present RDA office in Juneau is doing an adequate job but he said its efficiency could be improved by having an area coordinator with an office here.

"The office is presently being operated from Juneau," said Terry Miller, "however, the overwhelming majority of the villages, and the people affected by the program live in Western Alaska. Since Fairbanks is the most central population center to most of these villages, it

would be the best spot for another office."

Rep. Miller said his proposal was based on the remarks of his contacts in his election district. He said the native people in the area don't always know how the program operated nor do they have adequate knowledge of making out applications for loans.

Miller said the Fairbanks branch office would also be valuable to the main office in Juneau because the RDA man here would act as a contact man for the state and could work on resolving other problem areas as they arise.

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RDA Office . . .

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"Since the legislature funded the RDA program for a high level of activity, the obvious intent was to get money out to the rural communities involved for the construction of needed community projects," Miller stated.

He said that by having an RDA agency here, rural projects could be expedited and would be more meaningful because the Fairbanks coordinator would contribute knowledgeable data on proposed projects.

"RDA officials should travel to the communities so they can personally inspect the village needs and act more quickly on loan applications," Miller said.

He said next legislature could work on the proposal and appropriate additional money for its operation.

"It could be operated by two people, an area coordinator and a secretary. Cost wouldn't be too great on it," Terry Miller said.

The Rural Development Agency administers a grant program which it gives to villages to construct necessary community facilities. It has a maximum grant of \$10,000 per year per village.

The maximum, however, can be doubled if a village plans a large project by applying for it a year ahead of time. The money can be used to pay for labor and to buy material.

The agency is headed by Mark Jacobs, Jr. with offices in the state capitol.

Terry Miller said that his proposal has merit that even if he is not elected, the legislature should appropriate additional money to operate it.

Rep. Miller is running for one of two open state senate seats. He is from North Pole but he now makes his residence in Fairbanks.

He has just returned from a campaign swing through the villages in the rural areas.