

Sen. Gravel Praises Jackson's Release

Senator Henry Jackson's release of the Federal Field Committee's report on the Alaska Native land claims was received by Senator Mike Gravel who called the report "A very significant addition to the body of knowledge necessary to reach a fair and equitable settlement of the Native land claims."

"The report concludes," he said, "that the nation and its representatives have been moved by the Alaska Native cause, and recognized the validity of the claims, and wish to see justice done."

"The prospects for a settlement in the 91st Congress are greater than at any time in the past," the senator stated.

"Those who have traveled through the villages and the remote regions of Alaska have seen in stark reality the overwhelming need for a settlement. The joblessness, sickness and abject poverty well documented by this report, can be eliminated once and for all when the land claims settlement is made," Gravel said.

The senator stressed that the Alaska Federation of Natives would be instrumental in the mobilization and coordination of the Native case before Congress.

He said that a strong AFN was necessary for a just statewide settlement.

Gravel had praise for specific provisions in the 565-page report by Senator Jackson. But he mentioned that there were other areas such as the land use section of the report, which needed comment from the AFN.

Senator Gravel also noted that the report emphasized a monetary settlement, although the report opened certain federal lands previously closed to a land claims

settlement.

"Land is the essential issue before the Native people," Gravel said, "and I expect that there will be serious discussion among Native leaders to determine how much money and how much land their settlement should include."

"I am fully convinced that the Congress is ready to act. Senator Jackson's exhaustive report demonstrates how important the Congress believes this legislation to be," Gravel said.

"If the Native people can unite behind a specific proposal, we will be strategically prepared for the hearings and the debate."

Gravel concluded: "I think we can succeed in the endeavor, which will ultimately benefit all Alaskans."