

President Bush signs Joint Commission Bill



photo courtesy the Anchorage Times

On Saturday, August 18th, the Bush Administration took significant action to address current Native issues by signing into law legislation to create the Joint Federal-State Commission on Policies and Programs Affecting Alaska Natives.

President George Bush signed the measure in Kennebunkport, Maine, during an extended stay from Washington, D.C. The Bush Administration, in an about face from earlier public statements testified late last year in support of the creation of a Commission to study the social and economic problems in Alaska's Native villages. AFN leaders met with representatives from the White House last year and today expressed appreciation to President Bush for signing the Commission legislation into law.

Now that the Commission is authorized and funded, it will facilitate important governmental policy changes affecting Alaska Natives.

The establishment of a high-level Federal-State-Native Commission was AFN's central recommendation in three public hearings on the AFN Report on the Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action. AFN, along with other Native organizations, has urged the formation of such a commission in the hopes of providing a forum in which to assess existing Federal and State programs, and to recommend specific policy changes to aid delivery of these programs to Alaska Natives in all sectors of the state.

Although other commissions and task forces have been created in the past in an effort to address the challenges facing the Native community, we believe this Commission is significantly different, as demonstrated by the level of commitment the entire Alaska Congressional Delegation has pledged to this effort. With the support and involvement of our Senators and Congressman, as well as that of the Native leaders and State representatives asked to serve, the Commission can achieve real changes in our current situation.

Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) & Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) take testimony at a public hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs May 27, 1989, in Anchorage (photo right).



photo courtesy the Tundra Times