

d-2 failure

We are saddened and disappointed at the failure of the Congress to produce a d-2 bill this year. The key players in the d-2 issue are of the unanimous opinion that a compromise bill would have been signed into law were it not for the opposition of Senator Mike Gravel. Senator Gravel killed the d-2 bill.

Gravel said he killed the bill because his concerns for establishing transportation corridors across national interest lands were not provided for. Our Native leaders say Gravel acted out of misunderstanding of what provisions were actually provided for in the proposed legislation. The Native corporations and the rest of the Alaska Congressional Delegation say that the access question would have been taken care of in the compromise, and that perhaps Senator Gravel did not take the time to study what this vital legislation contained and perhaps Gravel acted out of ignorance.

We can see the logic in their argument that access corridors can not be practically established at this time, since no one knows for certain where valuable oil and mineral deposits are actually located.

We can also understand the frustration of our Native profit and non-profit corporations at Gravel's action. Many hundreds of thousands of dollars of Native money have been spent, along with thousands of person-hours and dozens of tiresome cross-country flights, in trying to obtain approval of key parts of the bill which are crucial to Native people. Each Native in Alaska will be affected by this failure, because the money spent on this effort will mean less dividends to Native stockholders, and the money spent by non-profit corporations could have been spent instead on providing services to our people.

The d-2 failure means that important Native provisions went down the drain: subsistence, land swaps, stock alienation, land conveyances and reconveyances, tax moratorium, money for Native Groups formed under the claims act, and other provisions important to many of our villages and regions.

We have tried for several days to question Senator Gravel on his reasons for killing the d-2 bill, but he has been unavailable to us. We are saddened and disappointed, and we are left wondering whether the Senator numbers us, the Native people, as being any longer among his constituents.