

# BIA keeps Native education

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Senate has passed the Department of Education bill on a vote of 72-11, after deleting a provision that would have transferred Indian education programs from the Department of Interior to the proposed education department.

The amendment deleting the transfer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs education programs was introduced by Senator Ted Stevens. It passed by a vote of 47-39.

During the debate on his amendment, Stevens said there was overwhelming opposition to the transfer from the American Indian community, nationwide. Heading the list of opposition to the proposal, he said, was the Alaska Federation of Natives.

"I strongly opposed this provision in committee because the vast majority of Native Americans do not support such a transfer," he said. "They oppose it because they feel that the bill does not adequately address trust responsibility or their tribal sovereignty rights."

Stevens said the purpose of the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act is to allow the decisions affecting

Indians and Alaska Natives to be made in tribal council rooms and by Native corporations "and not in Washington, D.C."

The Alaskan senator said that the administration has made a commitment to the Indian and Native communities that they would be consulted before initiating changes that would directly affect them. The proposed transfer for the BIA education programs would have been "in direct violation of that promise," Stevens said.

He argues that the BIA could best administer educational programs for Indians and Natives because the BIA "in many instances, acts as a local educational agency."

"The Bureau is responsible for hiring teachers, determining curriculum, building maintenance, building construction, running boarding schools, and a host of other activities which set it apart from the grant and loan processing functions of the present Office of Education."

Stevens added that at some future date the Native American community may opt to have the BIA education programs included in the Department of Education, but "the choice should be theirs."