

AFN, Inc. President—

Testifies Before House Committee On Community and Regional Affairs

Roger Lang, President of the Alaska Federation of Natives, testified before the House Committee on Community and Regional Affairs on a bill to provide for State management of municipal trust lands.

The bill had been introduced at the request of AFN as a result of a provision in the Land Claims Act which provides that each Native Village Corporation must deed to the local municipal corporation a minimum of 1280 acres of land.

However, if there is no local municipal corporation (first class or second class city) then the land is deeded to the State in trust for the municipality if it should be formed in the future.

Presently, over half the villages in the State are not incorporated,

and therefore, the State would receive the land for those villages in trust.

There's no legislation authorizing the State to receive this land or providing for the management of the land once the State does receive it. The legislation which Roger Lang testified on will allow for the State to receive and manage the land in trust.

In his testimony in front of the Committee, which was chaired by Representative Sam Cotten (D-Anchorage), Roger Lang stressed several points. He said he felt that the State should have no role in identifying the 1280 acres to be conveyed.

This land should be selected by

the Native Village Corporation and then transferred to the State. "The Land Claims Act does not provide for the municipal corporation or the State to select land," Mr. Lang told the Committee.

The Alaska Federation of Natives also took the position that no land should be transferred by the State by means of sale, lease, permit, easement, or right of way without concurrence at the village level.

AFN had originally suggested that this concurrence come either from the Native Village Corporation, the traditional council, a village meeting, or a village referendum.

Senator Joe Orsini (R-Anchorage) objected to the inclusion of Native Village Corporation as he felt it was not representative of a village as a whole if there were non-Natives living in the village.

However, AFN's position remains that some village entity, be it the traditional council, a village meeting, or some other means, would have to be used before the Commissioner of Community & Regional Affairs could transfer any lands.

As a result of the hearings, the State Department of Community and Regional Affairs Deputy Commissioner, Mike Harper, and the Department's Director of Community Planning, Kevin Waring, met with John Shively to do a rewrite on the legislation. A Committee Substitute has been drafted which seems to be

acceptable to both AFN and the State.

Roger Lang said, "This is extremely important legislation. The State needs to have legislation of this type if it is to receive land

provided for in the Land Claims Act in trust for future municipalities. I hope that the problems have been worked out and that legislation will pass this session."