

1991 Bill Moving Through Congress

The 1991 Legislation currently under review by Congress is of utmost importance to Alaska Natives in determining their future.

That's why this edition focuses on the 1991 bill and its progress through Congress.

All Alaska Natives need to review the legislation and understand it as much as possible for several reasons. First, under Convention Resolution 84-01 AFN will submit the legislation adopted by Congress to villages and regions for approval prior to final approval by the President. Second, the bill gives options to shareholders in determining the future of Native corporations and lands. Shareholders need to be familiar with the options so the best choice can be made that fits the needs and desires of each region.

You must voice your concerns and support of the legislation to your regional and village leaders.

AFN President Janie Leask also notes it is critical that Congress approve this legislation for by doing so Congress is allowing Alaska Natives to make their own decisions. Without the amendments, Native corporations and lands will be subject to takeover by non-Natives in 1991. At that time all stock in Native corporations will become unrestricted making Native land vulnerable to takeover by non-Natives.

The legislation is the result of resolutions passed during the Special Convention held in March of 1985. These resolutions called for retention of stock restrictions, the extension of stock to new Natives and additional benefits to elders.

In essence, the 1991 changes ensure that Native lands remain in Native hands. They ensure that we determine our future, rather than others.

The 1991 Amendments were developed over a three year period under which many meetings, hearings and workshops were held.

The Alaska Congressional delegation introduced the amendments into Congress in February. HR 4162 was introduced in the House and SB 2065 was introduced into the Senate.

Since that time, several hearings

have been held throughout the state on the proposals. In June, the House Interior and Insular Affairs committee approved HR 4162 and sent it to the House.

On July 28 the House unanimously approved the bill incorporating the changes suggested by the House Interior committee.

On the Senate side, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held its hearings on the 1991 legislation August 4. At that time The Department of Interior expressed its concerns with the legislation.

But even though some concerns with the bill exist all of those involv-

ed with the legislation-Congressional and Interior Department officials and Native leaders-believe the amendments will be approved this year.

Congress is expected to return from its current recess September 8 at which time review of the 1991 legislation is expected to continue. Senate approval of the bill occur sometime this fall.

After Senate approval, the bills will go to a conference committee so both Houses can make HR 4162 and SB 2065 agree. After that approval the bill goes to the President Reagan for his signature.

All of this can happen in the next few weeks. And that's why its important all Alaska Natives read and review the legislation now.

"It's important you read and understand the legislation and how it fits with the resolutions passed during the special 1991 Convention," Leask said. "This understanding is necessary so everyone will be prepared for a statewide vote on the legislation should it be approved by Congress this year."

During the October 1985 Convention a resolution was passed which directed AFN to distribute all 1991 legislation adopted by Congress to all regions and villages for approval before it was signed by the President.

This edition of the newsletter is to keep you informed of the legislation's progress.

We urge you to review the legislation and let us know your concerns.