
'I may not agree with what you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it'—VOLTAIRE

This issue contains a special edition of the Alaska Federation of Natives' newsletter focusing on the 1991 legislation. AFN and Native organizations will be sending out more than 40,000 copies to Natives throughout the state of Alaska.

1991 is clearly the most important issue facing the Native community. It is incumbent upon Native people to study the newsletter carefully so they can understand the proposals now under consideration in Congress.

The legislation itself has become fairly complicated because it attempts to provide a variety of options for shareholders of Native corporations. However, the legislation has several major provisions which are fairly easy to understand.

First, and most importantly, Congress automatically extends the restrictions on stock so that it cannot be sold, pledged or taken until a majority of corporation shareholders vote to remove those restrictions.

Secondly, the legislation provides major protections for undeveloped land from involuntary loss through taxation or court action.

Thirdly, the bill permits those corporations, particularly villages who feel that the corporate structure is not appropriate, to transfer their ANCSA assets to another organization, such as an IRA tribal government.

The fourth major provision allows the shareholders to vote to issue shares to Alaska Natives born after 1971 who currently are ineligible to participate in the settlement act unless they inherit stock.

There has been a great deal of opposition to this legislation from a relatively small but vocal group of Alaskans who have continually opposed Alaska Natives on issues such as the original claims act and subsistence. These people have been sending letters to our congressional delegation.

Because this vocal group has been active, it is particularly important for Native people to contact the delegation. Specifically, those people who favor the bill should contact Sen. Frank Murkowski, who sits on the Senate committee currently reviewing the legislation.

There are a couple of other things that people should keep in mind as they review the AFN special edition on 1991. The first is that the timing of the bill is such that it may well be considered at the October AFN convention.

Nonprofit, village and regional corporations will all be voting at the convention, so it is important that people who are delegates have a sense of whether there is support for the bill at the village level.

Another very important thing to keep in mind about the 1991 legislation is that the bill itself gives the people an opportunity to vote on the future of their corporation and so structure it as they see fit.

Without this legislation Congress will have unilaterally made the decision that Native stock and Native land will go on the open market to be sold to outsiders.