

# Review of state hiring requested

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Concern that the state is not quite living up to its promise of non-discriminatory practices in state job hiring has caused the Alaska Regional Advisory panel of the U.S. Equal Rights Commission to ask for a seven-point report on the progress of minority hiring programs in the state.

The committee also appoint-

ed Chairman Don Peters, and members Gil Gutierrez and Karen Slack to begin studying other matters in the state that bear looking at.

One such concern raised by Slack is the problem of educating children in rural Alaska. "She pointed out that they are going to school out there but they can't read and write when they are done," according to

Peters.

He said the committee's attorneys are studying the matter to see if the education issue is one which they can properly get involved with.

"It's interesting what the Civil Rights Commission can do. They can go into areas where the state doesn't look at."

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# Rights commission to study state hiring

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Another area is the question of sovereignty and the Indian Reorganization Act villages. The committee is going to see if the villages desiring their IRA status are being discriminated against by the state.

The Commission several years ago became concerned about the State record in hiring minorities, especially Alaska Natives, by the state.

At their meeting held in Anchorage last week, several commission members talked about expanding the council's areas of concern but other members said they weren't certain that the two main areas of concern had been solved.

The council was concerned with State minority hiring and hiring in seafood processing plants.

Chairman Don Peters told the commissioners that he had received a letter from Sandra Borbridge, the rural affairs aide to Gov. Bill Sheffield, in which she said he was committed to hiring parity in the state.

However, council member Dave Kull said the state registers have been closed for all but clerical jobs, thus keeping minorities from applying for jobs on a level higher than secretary or clerk.

She mentioned a woman with a masters degree who was told she could apply for a secretarial job but no other job register for professionals is open.

The state hiring register is the system where a person places his name on a state list of people available to work in a job. When Sheffield directed earlier this year that the minority hiring program be expanded and accelerated, the state personnel department closed the registers because, they said, it was too costly to process each and every applicant for jobs that might never need to be filled.

Under the current system, however, state employees can get on any register for any job opening before that job is

advertised to the general public.

Commission member Rosilee Walker called the system "Incestuous," and said the state "does a lot of strange things," in terms of hiring.

Commissioner Arliss Sturgulewski said that she and Juneau Senator Bill Ray had introduced a bill to help avoid this situation.

She added that there was irony in the fact that "The state spends all that money to educate kids and send them to college and tells them if they come back we'll give them a break on the tuition if they work here but then they can't get on the state register."

Commissioner Karen Slack proposed that the commission ask the state to send a seven-part response explaining what is being done to hire minorities.

That response should include reports on: a redefinition of the problem, and explanation of what the study of the problem has shown; what the commission

decided need to be done who or what agency is responsible

for implementation the recommendations to solve the problem; what commitments are being lived up to; and has the problem been solved.

The responses will give the commission a "benchmark" to look at on the state problem

and perhaps might suggest new solutions if needed, said Sturgulewski.

No timetable has been set for the state response.