

# Aleut Bill Update: Reagan to Appoint Commission

On July 30, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed into law a bill that would establish a Congressional Commission to look into charges that during World War II the Aleut and Japanese-American communities were made to suffer constitutional injustices and excessive damages at the hands of the federal government.

The commission, which will consist of nine members, is expected to be appointed soon by the new Reagan administration, but one Aleut official is apprehensive about the new conservative government's potential selections. Philemon Tutiakoff, Chairman of the Aleutian Pribilof Island Association, said Friday that it was of "the utmost importance that the commission be an objective one. The Aleut community will have one member to select but it

is imperative that all members be willing to consider carefully the unique situation present during the Aleut's World War II experience. The commission must examine the culture of the Aleut, who has been the victim of culture crash after culture crash...ever since the first Russian blew ashore."

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The Congressional body will have 18 months and a budget of 1.5 million dollars to confirm their findings. Hearings are scheduled to take place in Seattle, Anchorage, Dutch Harbor and on St. Paul. But Tutiakoff points out the million-plus budget will only cover the immediate cost of the commission, not gathering of pertinent information. That burden of proof falls to the Aleut community. "It is a monumental task," says Tutiakoff. "Individual depositions, an accurate description of each village at that time and complete lists of all personal belongings that were lost must be presented to the commission. APLA is currently trying to raise the funds to implement this research."

Tutiakoff, who was evacuated from Unalaska during the war and held at the Funter Bay Camp, says "...a lot of the older people would like to forget this terrible experience...put it forever behind them. I think the important thing is that nothing like this should ever happen to a U.S. citizen again."