

Kitka praises commission bill

Alaska Federation of Natives President Julie Kitka recently commended congressional leaders on passing legislation creating a commission to review federal and state policy affecting Alaska Natives.

House Resolution 498 passed both the House and the Senate and is now on its way to the White House.

"After a lot of work by Alaska's

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congressional delegation, the governor's office and key congressional leaders, we are delighted to see this proposal about to become law," Kitka said.

The Joint Federal-State Commission on Policies and Programs Affecting Alaska Natives, was the central recommendation of a comprehensive report on the social and economic status of Alaska Natives issued in January 1989, "The AFN Report on the Status of Alaska Natives: A call for Action."

According to Kitka, the effort to review the effectiveness and relevance of federal and state policies for Alaska Natives has been a concern for some time.

"Although the Department of the Interior was directed to prepare a comprehensive report for submission to Congress in 1985, a study was started but never finished," Kitka said. "Clearly, in light of the absence of an updated analysis of public policy affecting Alaska Natives — and given the alarming statistical information outlined in the AFN report — the creation of such a body is critical to addressing the crisis facing Alaska Natives today."

Kitka noted that the purpose of the commission will be to make specific policy recommendations to the U.S. government, the state of Alaska and Native institutions which would reduce the levels of social pathology and enhance the lives, health and general well-being of Native people.