

# Senate panel delays action on 1991 bill

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*Tundra Times* publisher

Action by the U.S. Senate Energy Committee on a 1991 bill developed by Sen. Frank Murkowski — expected last week — has been postponed until this week, according to Murkowski.

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# • Vote expected Wednesday on 1991

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Murkowski, R-Alaska, requested a vote Wednesday on his bill to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, but Committee Chairman J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., declined because of a last-minute request from Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M.

Also delayed was action on funding for the Tongass Timber Supply Fund and a bill to permit oil and gas leasing in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Among those who are seeking to stall the 1991 bill are members of the

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Alaska Native Coalition, who are objecting to the Murkowski version of the bill. They are concerned that the bill does not include a provision authorizing transfer of ANCSA corporation lands to a "qualified transferee entity," such as a tribal government.

ANC officials also have said they object to portions of the bill which they say could lead to non-Native takeovers of Native corporations.

The Murkowski version is being supported by the Alaska Federation of Natives.

In asking for the vote last week, Murkowski defended the bill.

"We've had 13 hearings, heard 250 witnesses to develop this compromise bill, which has been available for more than seven weeks. We should vote on it now," he said.

Johnston said action will be taken this week.

"I assure the senator that we will take action on Wednesday. I support his legislation. The majority and minority do. Don't worry."

As for ANWR, Johnston said he would announce results at the next meeting of his informal poll of committee members on whether they desire to proceed with the bill to open ANWR.

Murkowski said Wednesday's committee agenda will be critical for the three Alaskan issues.

"We got Tongass, 1991 and ANWR, all of which are vital to us," he said.