

Tyonek faces serious threat

The Village of Tyonek is facing a serious threat to its economic well being. This threat is so serious, in fact, that officials have said the village could be financially devastated.

What village officials fear is that the General Services Administration will force the Bureau of Indian Affairs to move from the Kaloa buildings in Anchorage to the renovated old Federal Building on Fourth Avenue. Tyonek would lose a tenant currently leasing 18,345 square feet and accounting for rent of about \$28,000 a month.

This loss of revenue does not even take into account the fact that the village recently spent hundreds of thousands of dollars renovating the Kaloa buildings. Most of the money was spent to bring the facility in line with federal regulations for handicapped people.

And the projected loss also does not take into account the fact that a number of other offices have located in the Kaloa buildings in order to be near the BIA. Nor does it include the inconvenience that many Native people who do business at the BIA will face when they try to park in downtown Anchorage.

Let's face it, this move appears to be ill-advised.

We have to remind everyone that the federal government and the Reagan Administration have been espousing economic development and self-sufficiency for Alaska Natives and American Indian tribes for some time. Well, management of the Kaloa buildings is certainly an example of the sort of business enterprise these federal officials have been promoting.

And yet, the government itself seems to be turning its back on Tyonek, and this comes after 21 years of leasing space in the Kaloa buildings.

We must point out that there are a number of other federal agencies in Anchorage that have office space that is not owned by the federal government. Wouldn't it make more sense to move one or more of these agencies than the BIA? Why couldn't the BIA remain where it is?

Tyonek is seeking economic development and self-sufficiency. And it's doing so in a competitive market. The village recently reduced the BIA's rent by some 16 percent in an effort to be more competitive.

The government has a moral obligation to aid and assist tribes. Turning its back on an Alaska village is certainly not the way to encourage this.

We would hope government officials will rethink this situation and find solutions that do not involve economic disaster for the Village of Tyonek.