



## *Bush answers AFN's call to action*

The Alaska Federation of Natives deserves congratulations on the creation of the Joint Federal-State Commission on Policies and Programs Affecting Alaska Natives. Legislation authorizing the panel was signed earlier this month by President George Bush.

This commission is a direct outgrowth of AFN's recent report summarizing available data on the current status of Alaska Natives — "A Call to Action." And the person who deserves much of the credit for getting congressional support for it is AFN President Julie Kitka, who has worked tirelessly in both Alaska and Washington, D.C., to get this commission off the ground.

The commission has a grave charge: seeking innovative solutions to problems resulting from social and economic changes. In other words, what actions can government take to improve Alaska Natives' plight?

One of the most important points about the commission is the membership itself. There will be 11 ex officio members, including the Alaska Congressional Delegation and the chairman and ranking members of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.

There also will be 14 voting commissioners, including seven appointed by President George Bush and seven appointed by Gov. Steve Cowper. The legislation calls for Bush to appoint a minimum of three Alaska Natives and no more than two federal officials. Cowper has committed to appointing at least three Alaska Natives and no more than two state officials.

It is hoped that the membership will include people with expertise on the cutting edge of such areas as Indian Law and policy, health or alcohol programs.

Funding for the commission will include \$300,000 in federal funds and \$300,000 in state funds, as well as private funds from such sources as foundations.

Anyone who has read AFN's "A Call to Action" knows just how serious the problems are today and their potential for becoming even worse in the future. We believe this commission offers a lot of hope and shows that both the state of Alaska and the federal government are clearly committed to finding answers to these problems.