

Mothers plan march to protest JOM budget cut

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American Indian and Alaska Native mothers are planning to march in Washington, D.C. to protest the proposed elimination of the Johnson O'Malley (JOM) budget. The "Mothers March" will take place on March 19.

The march is a protest against the elimination of JOM's budget which totals nationwide about \$26 million; \$6 million of that goes to Alaska. The basis for the budget cut is that BIA feels there are a lot of questionable expenditures that occur within the programs. And that there are duplications between JOM programs and Title I (bilingual programs), Title IV and the Impact Aide programs.

The JOM program was created in 1934 to supplement the educational programs for Indian students attending tribal or public schools.

In Anchorage the \$1 million JOM budget has served Native youth through educational programs such as tutorial/counseling for high school students, the popular Native dress review, Native youth olympics, Native art show, summer camp for Native youth, and the elders-youth conference. The budget cut would cut 27-56 JOM jobs. Sidney Smith who works under a JOM funded tutorial/counseling program said that the budget cut would "take us back 15 years."

In responding to the JOM budget cut, the Community Education Department at Cook Inlet Native Association (C.I.N.A.) is trying to raise \$1000 to send a representative from Alaska to take part in the march. JOM programs serve about 3,300 Anchorage Native students.

Panu Walls, Chairperson of the C.I.N.A. Community Education Dept., said they are also requesting parents, students and other interested parties to write to the congressional delegates to protest the JOM budget cut. She said that they may decide to have a local "Mothers March" also.

Senator Frank Murkowski said, in a recent press release, that he intends to fight the proposed cut. "With the transfer of Bureau of Indian Affairs day schools to the state almost complete, I am concerned that the elimination of this funding to public schools will adversely affect the education of Native children." Murkowski criticized the proposed budget cuts during a hearing last month of the Select Committee on Indian Affairs. Murkowski, who chaired the hearing, agreed with representatives of the Alaska Native community who also testified in opposition to the proposed cuts.

The planner for the National "Mothers March" is Charlie Pourier, JOM director at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. He could not be reached before the paper deadline, but Assistant Director Orville Runningshield said that Pine Ridge Reservation will send about 20 people to the march and a total of about 26 will march from South Dakota.

Karen Funk, NCAI Policy and Budget Analyst in Washington, D.C. said that 11 tribes will be present. The representatives are hoping to meet with Nancy Reagan.

She said the good thing about the JOM programs are that they are controlled by Indian parent committees. "I feel hopeful that money will be appropriated to JOM," said Funk.