

# Consideration of ANCSA Bill Without Edwardsen Provision

U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens has called for the enactment of the noncontroversial amendments contained in his omnibus Alaska

Native Claims Settlement Act clarification bill, leaving aside for the time a controversial section involving trespass claims based on

aboriginal title.

This way, the senator said, he is hopeful that these amendments can be reported out of committee and sent to the Senate floor for consideration before the August recess.

An advanced committee print of the bill, prepared by committee staff for mark-up purposes, reflects the senator's wishes by excluding the Edwardsen provision but including all of his other amendments. Committee members will begin work on this draft of the bill.

The senator warned, however, that some of these amendments may require further hearings and may have to be postponed along with Edwardsen.

In a letter to U.S. Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.), Senate Interior Committee Chairman, Stevens asked that the committee act on provisions involving Native enrollment extension, corporation mergers, an escrow fund, and other issues which were the subject of hearings in May.

The Senator also asked that hearings be scheduled for September on the Edwardsen provision involving aboriginal claims and on other controversial aspects of the bill.

Stevens introduced the omnibus bill designed to settle remaining issues involving ANCSA in May. At the time, he said the committee should consider all the amendments together and settle the issues at one time.

"After meeting with representatives of the Alaska Federation of Natives over the July 4 recess, I now believe it would be best if the noncontroversial amendments to the ANCSA contained in S. 1824 (the omnibus bill) were acted on as soon as possible by the Senate Interior Committee," he said in

his letter to Jackson.

This would allow those provisions to go into effect right away without being delayed by hearings and debates on the other issues, he said.

One provision he asked the committee to act on would extend the deadline for enrollment under the Act so that about 1000 Native people who are eligible for enrollment under the Act but missed the March, 1973 deadline can still apply for benefits.

Another section would direct the Interior Secretary to establish an escrow fund for revenues received by the Department for activities on federal lands later given to Natives. This way, the Natives would receive these revenues when given final title to their land.

One part of the bill would allow for village corporations formed within the same region to merge

with their regional corporations or with other village corporations for efficiency.

The senator also included in his bill grants of Forest Service land to Sea-Alaska, lands to Koniag, Inc., and \$250,000 to each of four cities — Juneau, Kodiak, Kenai, and Sitka — to help them carry out their land selection.

Stevens said that these and other provisions be acted on now also, if the committee can move on them without holding specific hearings.

Any remaining issues, including the Edwardsen Provision, should be the subject of hearings in September, he said.

The Edwardsen provision includes language in the bill which Stevens said will reaffirm congressional intent in regard to extinguishment of claims based on aboriginal title. The Senator said such claims were meant to be extinguished by the Settlement Act.