

What others say...

Haskell Indian college seeks help

To the editor:

Haskell Indian Junior College is facing a crisis, and we need your help! We are requesting a resolution from Native organizations to enable the board to contract certain services under PL 93-638.

Haskell has a history and tradition of educating Indian students for over 100 years. It is the only accredited national junior college for American Indians and the Natives of Alaska.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has been mandated by the Office of Management and Budget to implement Circular A-76, which provides that any service provided by agencies of the federal government must be contracted to an outside source if a dollar savings of 10 percent or more can be shown.

Studies have been made at Haskell, and the determination will soon be made as to whether food, custodial and security services should be contracted. A decision to contract these services will mean the loss of jobs by Indian employees, although they have performed satisfactorily and have established an excellent rapport with the students.

However, as Circular A-76 is concerned only with saving dollars, these important factors have been ignored.

If these services go to a private contractor, current Indian employees would be given the first right of refusal for positions offered to them by the contractor. The contractor, however, is not obligated to pay more than the

minimum wage, and this could result in a wage reduction of at least 50 percent for any of the current staff.

Therefore, the Board of Regents proposes to contract for these services as a tribal organization under PL 93-638 (Indian Self-Determination Act); to do so, however, the board must receive a resolution from tribal or village governments in Alaska who might have students attending Haskell authorizing it do so.

The board made its decision to protect jobs of Indian employees at a satisfactory wage and provide Haskell with the opportunity of using savings from the contract to finance critical needs at the college.

Since time is of the essence, we would appreciate the adoption of a resolution at the earliest possible date. The original or certified copy of the resolution should be mailed to the Board of Regents, Haskell Indian Junior College, Lawrence, Kan. 66044.

The board is asking for your support to preserve Haskell for Indian and Alaska Native students and staff and to continue the operation of the college in the 100-year tradition as a national educational institute for Indians.

Your early and favorable response to this request will be appreciated by the students, staff and Board of Regents of Haskell Indian Junior College. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Fred Bigimi
Kansas

Fish, game resources

To the editor:

I would like to address this letter to anyone who commercial fishes, sport fishes, hunts, traps, works in the tourism industry or just enjoys viewing the states fish and game resources.

During the last few years the budgets for fish and game and fish and wildlife protection have been drastically reduced.

The fish and game resources are worth over \$2 billion a year to the people of Alaska. The state receives at least \$40 million a year from fish and game related activities.

From Fiscal Years 1981 to 1985 fish and game violations have increased 27 percent. Currently, there are only 87 permanent Fish and Wildlife Protection Troopers in the state. (This represents an area approximately the size of Vermont for each officer to patrol.)

Under Gov. Steve Cowper's proposed FY'88 budget, there would be 25 Fish and Wildlife Protection Troopers (including all supervisors) to patrol the entire state and all the coastal areas.

Many fish and game stock are in decline — moose on the Kenai, sport fish in the Tangle Lakes area, caribou herds in many areas of the state, etc. We need to protect our fish and game resources.

I urge all of you to write Gov. Cowper and your representatives. Let them know how important the fish and game resources are to you.

If we lose our fish and game resources not only do we lose many jobs, but we lose our heritage and much of what it means to be an Alaskan.

Bonne' Therriault
Craig

A plea for seniors' benefits

To the editor:

Citing statistics that show older Alaskans contribute more than half a billion dollars to the Alaska economy

each year, a statewide senior citizens group has called on state officials to leave senior citizen benefits intact.

A position paper issued by Older

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• *Plea for seniors' benefits*

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Persons Action Group Inc., a non-profit senior organization with more than 900 members across the state, was developed in the wake of recommendations that senior benefits (Longevity Bonus, property tax exemptions and renter's rebates) be reduced or eliminated in next year's state budget.

Copies of the paper were mailed Feb. 28 to Gov. Steve Cowper and members of the Legislature.

OPAG's position paper was based on information provided by members who interviewed officials from state, federal, private and union pension offices, as well as seniors.

"Our studies show that more seniors stay in Alaska (now). They are neither rich nor poor, but are most often middle income. If these benefits, namely bonus and tax exemptions, are withdrawn or greatly reduced, we predict that many seniors will feel the pinch and head 'south,' taking with them income and assets," the position paper said.

Prior to the 1970s, when both Longevity Bonus and property tax/renter's rebates began, most seniors left the state when they retired, the paper explained.

"They sold or rented their homes, withdrew checking and savings accounts and took their pensions, annuities, social security and health care benefits and other assets and left to survive in a warmer, less expensive climate."

But state benefits over the past

decade made it possible for more middle-income seniors to stay in the state they helped build, providing a more balanced population mix.

To estimate the effect retirees have on the Alaska economy, OPAG members sought to learn how much money Alaska seniors receive in Social Security payments and retirement and health benefits from state, federal, military, union and private sources, and how much money comes to the state to take care of retiree's programs.

The group found an estimated \$451 million (not counting state benefits now in jeopardy) goes into the state economy each year because of the older population.

If a large number of seniors feel they must leave the state, the "negative impact experienced by the economy" will be "very depressing" the paper concluded.

If bonus and tax exemption/renter's are ended or cut significantly, the group also concluded:

- Most middle- and low-income seniors would be significantly affected.

- Many seniors would be forced to leave the state for less expensive areas.

- The state economy would suffer from loss of senior benefits and assets.

- Senior out-migration would result in a reduction of maturity and experience in the general population.

- Agencies and services depending on volunteer labor throughout the state would experience the loss of seniors as well.

Older Persons Action Group
Anchorage