

State House Majority Leader Urges Generous Land Claims Settlement

House Majority Leader Chuck Sassara this week called on all Alaskans to support a generous land claims settlement by Congress.

"It is in the best interests of

all that our first citizens receive a generous settlement of their just claim from the U. S. Congress," Sassara said.

"It's time to let them become first class citizens instead of beating them down. If our State leaders really want the Natives to live and work as equals, to get off the welfare rolls, they will support a generous land claims settlement," the Anchorage Democrat stated.

The Democratic Majority Leader noted that during the past few weeks, there has been a sudden amount of interest in the Native land claims question from Alaskans who never took any interest in Native problems and rural poverty before.

"Now there are many people who have come forward for the first time, trying to make the Natives look like secretive, greedy schemers," Sassara charged.

"They all hypocritically pretend to support the idea of a settlement, but with a bare minimum of land and money, if any at all," he continued.

"And they are trying to destroy the Natives reputation for integrity, at the same time," he charged.

The long-time Alaskan noted

that "No one is advocating favored treatment for the Natives. They were here for centuries and the land was theirs. They have a legal and moral claim, and they should not be treated any better or worse than if they were, as an example, Irishmen, who had lived

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on that land for hundreds of years. The State should assist any citizen in any claim before Congress."

"U. S. history shows that white men have usually cheated and mistreated the First Americans. Let's show that we've learned to treat all Americans equally" Sassara urged.

"The Natives are pressing their claim before the U. S. Congress this week. They should have the full support of the State Government. The State can't continue to change its position and expect Congress to consider the State as sincere in wanting a settlement."

"Let those people have a grubstake in the same way so many homesteaders and businessmen started. Then the Alaska Natives can move into the modern world on their own, instead of being kept as words of the bureaucrats in Juneau and Washington."

Sassara urged Alaskans to wire the Senate Interior Committee supporting a generous settlement. The Committee headed by Senator Henry Jackson, D.-Washington, is holding hearings in Washington, D. C. starting Monday, August 4.