

Bartlett Asks Governor For Housing Plans

On May 19 Senator E. L. (Bob) Bartlett sent the following letter to Governor Walter J. Hickel:

Hon. Walter J. Hickel
Governor of Alaska
Pouch A—State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Governor Hickel:

As you know, the House of Representatives eliminated from the Housing and Urban Development budget President Johnson's request for \$1 million to launch a special Alaska native housing program.

I am sure you share my distress at this action. I intend to fight with all my energy and ability to restore this cut.

Chances for success will be enhanced if I can have in my possession some information about what plans the state has made and is preparing for the implementation of this program. As you know, the act authorizing this program gave the state responsibility of drawing up the plans for the project. This was done because it was felt that the state was closest to the scene and would have more intimate knowledge of the problem of substandard housing in native villages than the federal government.

In its report explaining why the native housing item was dropped from the bill the House Committee on Appropriations said that it was "of the opinion that plans and standards for this program need further refinement and no funds for this program are recommended at this time."

Clearly, I will need some information on the state's plans and standards to counter that argument when I go before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Independent Offices. As a member of the full Appropriations Committee I could sit in as a member of the subcommittee at these hearings. However, my thinking at this time is what I should appear as a witness.

I do not know if our efforts will be successful in restoring this cut, but as I said before chances of success will be greatly improved if we can have some information with which to answer the complaint raised in the House. Inasmuch as the Senate hearings on the entire bill will not start until June 6 and those portions of the hearings dealing with housing funds will not begin until July 10, there should be ample time for the state to supply me with the information needed.

I have heard some unconfirmed reports that at least one elected official from Alaska feels that my native housing bill was only an election year proposal and that there would be no attempt to appropriate funds for it. I am confident that you do not share this feeling and that partisan politics has not played a part in slowing development of the necessary plans to implement this much-needed program. In requesting \$1 million for this program in an extremely tight federal budget, President Johnson showed that he is as fully committed to helping the natives of Alaska as I am, and, as I am sure, you are.

I am looking forward to receipt of information on what the state is doing to meet its responsibility in implementing this program.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,
(signed)

E. L. Bartlett