



WASHINGTON, D.C. Sept. 3, 1970—Mrs. Laura Bergt, Fairbanks, poses in office of the Vice President with aide C.D. Ward and Robert Robertson, Executive Director, National Council on Indian Opportunity, which is chaired by the Vice President, after having been sworn in as one of eight new Indian members appointed by the President

from across the country to serve two-year terms. Mrs. Bergt will be chairing two regional meetings with Indians and Natives in Fairbanks, the first of which is to be held October 2. She and her husband, Neil, and their children reside in Fairbanks.

Laura Bergt to Chair NCIO Meeting in Fairbanks

Indian and Eskimo leaders from across the State are scheduled to meet in October to discuss President Nixon's Indian legislative program, Laura Bergt announced this week.

Mrs. Bergt, of Fairbanks, is the regional representative for Alaska on the National Council on Indian Opportunity. She tentatively plans to call Alaska's native leaders together for a regional meeting in Fairbanks, Oct. 2. The date and location will be confirmed as soon as possible.

The President's legislative program mentioned above consists of seven bills sent to Congress in July by Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel. The bills are designed to implement the dramatic new Indian policy announced in President Nixon's message to Congress on July 8,

1970.

In the message, Nixon called

for a comprehensive program
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NCIO Meet . . .

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that would give the Indians greater control over their destiny and end Federal paternalism toward them.

Each of the seven bills has been introduced in the U.S. House and Senate but none have been passed, Mrs. Bergt said.

Expressing an attitude of optimism about the proposed legislation, Mrs. Bergt said that, if enacted, it will give Indians and Eskimos a strong voice in their welfare as far as health, education, and business opportunities are concerned.

It is encouraging that legislation was introduced following the President's message, she added, and shows that he was sincere.

Following the regional meeting in Alaska and similar ones throughout the United States, the eight-member National Council on Indian Opportunity, will meet in Anchorage to decide what to do with the recommendations and opinions collected from across the nation.

All of the council members have very strongly voiced the feeling, Mrs. Bergt said, that they wanted the meetings to lead to action.

The seven bills to be discussed are summarized as follows:

—A bill to authorize Indian tribes and communities to assume control of federal programs and services provided for them by the Department of the Interior and the Indian Health Service.

—A bill to retain civil service coverage for employees of the federal government who transfer to Indian tribal organizations as these organizations assume control of various federal programs.

—A bill to establish an independent Indian Trust Counsel authority to provide independent legal representation for the Indians' natural resource rights. Such representation is now the responsibility of the Departments of Interior and Justice, which is often faced with a conflict of interest in such cases.

—A bill to provide for direct allocation of Johnson-O'Malley (education) funds to Indian tribes which could then control their own schools.

—A bill to permit impoundment of livestock trespassing on Indian land and institute a system of fines for recovery of the stock.

—A bill to increase the revolving loan fund, which loans money for Indian economic development projects, and to set up a fund for the insurance and guarantee of loans made to Indian tribes in order to encourage private lenders to loan more money for Indian economic projects.

—A bill to establish an Assistant secretary of the Interior for Indians and Territorial Affairs.