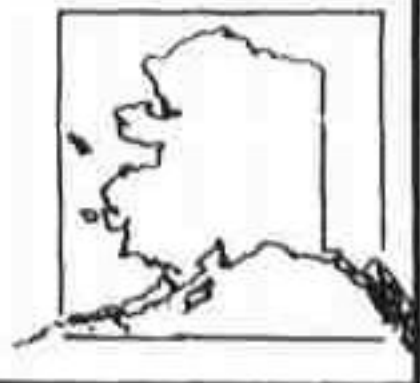


Editorial



'Hidden' cuts in federal spending

The Congressional Research Service recently produced a report for the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs showing conclusively that Native American related federal spending, corrected for inflation, has been going down in almost all areas.

What's attention grabbing about this report is the finding that the downward trend is not immediately obvious if one looks only at current-dollar data.

"The tables and graphs show that, in constant dollars, overall Indian spending has gone down, while overall federal non-defense spending has gone up," according to a summary of the report.

Some examples:

- Bureau of Indian Administration education has actually fallen by \$11.8 million (-4.1 percent) a year during the period covering Fiscal Years 1975-1991.

- For the period covering FY 1982-1991, BIA education declined \$6.5 million (-2.75 percent) a year, and Indian education in the Department of Education has fallen \$2 million (-3.36 percent) a year. This compares to an average increase during the same period in the Education Department of \$345.7 million (2.23 percent) a year, which has averaged \$15.5 billion.

- Indian Health Service appropriations, in constant dollars, increased during FY 1975-1991, but at an annual increase of \$19.7 million (2.58 percent) on an average level of \$763.8 million. This compares to federal health outlays during the same period of \$30.9 billion, which increased at a rate of \$1.3 billion a year (4.09 percent).

- Indian housing decreased at an annual rate of \$36 million (-9.18 percent) from FY 1978-1991, with an average level of \$392.1 million.

- In the FY 1982-1991 period, Indian housing has decreased at an annual rate of \$45.7 million (-19.99 percent) on an average level of \$228.7 million. In the same period, overall Housing and Urban Development spending has remained almost flat.

- During the first 10 years of the 1975-1991 period, the federal government spent more per capita on Indians than on the population as a whole. After 1985, however, Indians received less expenditure per capita than the population as a whole.

The Select Committee is seeking an increase of \$1 billion over the amount in President Bush's 1991 budget for Indian and Alaska Native programs.

Among those already giving strong support to this request is Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska.

We urge Congress to look closely at this important report and think hard about this increase. These vital programs must not be allowed to suffer further.