

Paralegal Program Set

JUNEAU A statewide program to recruit, train and employ 10 Native paralegal aides to help meet mounting legal problems in the bush has been approved by the board of the Alaska Legal Services Corp.

The move came Sunday, backed by a program proposal charging that the lack of lawyers and inadequate delivery of justice to bush Alaska critically impairs the lives of 40,000 Eskimos and Indians.

Funds are now being sought to finance what is expected to be a \$250,000 per year program initially placing paralegal aides in Hoonah, Hydaburg, Unalaska, Unalakleet, Kodiak, Barrow, Kotzebue, Ft. Yukon, Galena and Copper Center.

Training of the aides is to be conducted in the villages, with short intensive training sessions in urban locations — Anchorage and Fairbanks. At first, paralegals would act mainly as "trouble spotters" to refer people with legal problems to places where they can get help, such as Alaska Legal Services.

As their training progresses, however, they will also be called on to represent clients in magistrates courts, administrative hearings and village council meetings.

Their total training program will require three years, at the conclusion of which salaries for the aides will be provided by the state legislature and local governments, in-kind services are to be supplied by Alaska Legal Services in the form of circuit-riding supervising attorneys, their travel and training of aides.

Executive Director Frank Flavin says the Alaska Legal Services Corp. case work last year affected some 25,000 people in Alaska beneficially and notes that the legal services board is giving increased emphasis to its bush caseload.

Also underway are tentative plans for the second bush justice conference, in Fairbanks in mid-May.

Funds for the conference are now being sought and Legal Services is seeking suggestions on the conference agenda and participants. Among other things, the conference is to consider the impact of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and trans-Alaska pipeline construction on present legal services.

On another matter, several board members of the Legal Services Corporation are urging a letter-writing campaign to U.S. Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, to support legislation before Congress to establish the Legal Services Corp. as a separate entity on the national level.

Since 1966, Legal Services programs have been funded through the Office of Economic

(Continued on page 6)

Paralegal . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Opportunity. OEO is to be phased out by June, 1974.

State Sen. Chancy Croft, D-Anchorage and chairman of the board of Alaska Legal Services Corp., said he hoped those who want to see strong legal services programs continue would write Young, asking his support of the U.S. Senate-administration version of the bill (H.R. 7828).

No formal action was taken but Croft and several other board members said the House version of the bill would result in restrictions on the quantity and quality of legal services.

U.S. Senators Ted Stevens, R-Alaska and Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, backed the Senate-administration compromise in the Senate, but in the House, Young has favored the more restrictive measure.