

\$1.5 million for Bethel hospital

WASHINGTON — A Senate resolution to free \$1.5 million for the Indian Health Service hospital complex at Bethel has been cleared by the Senate Appropriations Committee for action by the full Senate.

Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, joined in introducing the resolution to overturn the President's action in January so the money would be available this spring to complete the architectural design documents and install the pile foundation.

Gravel said deferral of the funds because the total estimated amount had not been appropriated in one lump sum "indicates a lack of understanding, both of the construction process and the urgent need for these Indian health facilities."

The Alaska lawmaker joined Sen. Hubert Humphrey, D-Minn., in sponsoring the resolution disapproving the proposed deferral of budget authority for the Indian Health facilities. The resolution requires only the action of the full Senate before the funds are freed for this construction season.

Gravel said, "This initial work must not be delayed, as the short construction season in Alaska dictates that, already, completion of this project is several years in the future."

The Alaska Democrat originally requested the funds for the replacement hospital for Bethel, to serve over 52 villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim area of Alaska.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Affairs acted favorably on Gravel's request and included a \$1.5 million appropriation in a bill which was signed into law in December.

One month later the President impounded those funds.