

Bill calls for the return of human skeletal remains

The U.S. Senate approved legislation Oct. 3 to require the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. to inventory thousands of human skeletal remains and funerary objects and return them to the rightful tribes.

Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, said that the bill would call for the return of Alaska Native skeletal remains and artifacts.

"It's my understanding that about one-tenth of the remains which were collected for academic and medical study are from Eskimo, Koniag and Aleut populations," he said.

"The Senate has taken proper action in seeing that the skeletal remains will be returned to Alaskans," Murkowski said.

Smithsonian has collected about 34,000 funerary objects and human skeletal remains.

The bill, which goes to the House next, would also establish a National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C.

The museum would house over one million Native American artifacts from the Heye collection, which include Eskimo masks, carvings from the northwest coast, and Native artifacts from other parts of the world.

The legislation, authored by Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, was cosponsored by 49 senators.