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WHAT ARE STATE SELECTIONS?

Before Alaska became a state in 1959, 99.8 per cent of Alaska lands were owned by the federal government. Alaska had petitioned for statehood in the first half of the century, but each time Congress pointed out that Alaska was too geographically remote, too small in population, with resource development potential too limited to support statehood. At that time, the fishing and mining industries were virtually the only sources of income for the territory.



Then, in the 1950s, a timber-pulp industry was established in Southeastern Alaska. Oil exploration and development began in Cook Inlet with promises of more in other regions of Alaska. The wartime-built Alaska Highway had opened Alaska to ever-increasing settlement and air travel brought Alaska closer to the parent nation. The status of Alaska had improved in the eyes of Congress enough to support statehood.

STATEHOOD

The Congress of 1958 wanted to assure the new state's survival. Therefore, when the Statehood Act finally passed, Congress promised large land grants to Alaska, enough land to assure the state's economic independence.

The statehood compact allowed the state to select 103.15 million acres of unreserved federal land to provide an economic base and to provide for community needs. And, since most of Alaska was relatively unsurveyed and assessed for mineral and other resource



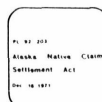
potential, Congress gave the new state 25 years, until 1984, to study and select its lands.

The state's early selections were small and carefully calculated because the cost of study and selection was large and the young state's budget small. The federal government charged two cents an acre for fire protection for newly chosen state lands. (It now charges from five to 11 cents an acre.) Each acre tentatively approved for conveyance to the state reduces Alaska's share of federal highway funds.

LAND FREEZES

While the state was making these early selections, the Alaskan Natives were asserting their aboriginal rights to Alaska land. To protect these Native rights, Interior Secretary Stuart Udall ordered the first land freeze in 1966 on federal land transfers, including state selections. The discovery of oil on the North Slope in 1968 intensified the need to resolve land ownership questions and to speed federal action on all land claims.

The 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) satisfied Native interests by allowing withdrawal of lands finally totaling some 116 million acres, from which Natives would select their 44 million acres promised by ANCSA. And, to satisfy national conservation interests, section 17(d)(2) of ANCSA authorized the Secretary of Interior to withdraw up to 80 million acres for



study for possible inclusion in the national conservation systems of National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. In spite of a sharp reduction of the original federal pool of lands from which the state could select, (as a result of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act), Alaska continued its land selection process. In the 20 years since statehood, only 21 million acres have actually been patented to the state, and another 15 million acres tentatively approved.

On Nov. 14, 1978, the state filed selections totaling 41 million acres, to round out its statehood entitlement. However, the validity of most of these selections has been challenged by the Department of Interior, and the state has gone to court to validate those selections.

D2 ALASKA LANDS LEGISLATION

While all the D2 bills would protect some state selections, there are conflicts between proposed D2 legislation and the Nov. 14 selection. Those conflicts range from 6.3 to almost 21 million acres of proposed National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, and Wilderness overlapping state selections, depending on the bill.

Some of the D2 bills provide for "instant convey-



ance" of much of the remaining statehood entitlement, and have special language aimed at improving the selection and conveyance process contained in the Statehood Act.

The Secretary of Interior has recently made certain lands available for selection. However, a complete resolution of the statehood lands problem is blocked

until Congress enacts legislation or the state's court suit is resolved.

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