

Mike Gravel Named to Powerful Senate Finance Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Mike Gravel has been named by his Democratic colleagues in the United States Senate to the powerful and prestigious Senate Finance Committee, a post he has sought since he was elected to the Senate in 1968.

The Senator's appointment as a freshman Senator to the Finance Committee is highly unusual. He said that it will enable him to work on many matters "of great benefit to Alaska."

The Finance Committee, considered to be one of the most powerful Committees in the Senate, had two vacancies, caused by the retirement of two Senators who did not seek re-election this past November.

Recently the Senate Democratic Caucus voted to expand the Finance Committee by one Democratic seat, thereby creating three Committee vacancies.

The three Senators appointed to the Committee by the Demo-

cratic Steering Committee are Senator Gravel, Senator Walter Mondale of Minnesota, and Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas.

Senator Gravel's other committee assignments include the Senate Public Works Committee and the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations.

The Finance Committee is charged with consideration of tax bills, trade measures, health insurance, social security, pension standards, budget, reform,

revenue sharing, welfare reform, social services funds, and other similar legislation.

In effect, it is the Senate counterpart of the House Ways and Means Committee. Many of the major matters to be considered in the new 93rd Congress are expected to come before the Finance Committee.

Senator Gravel campaigned actively and effectively for this appointment. He spoke many times with his colleagues on the

Senate Democratic Steering Committee. He argued that the Northwest Region of the Nation should be represented on the Finance Committee. In reality, Senator Gravel is now the only Democrat from a State west of the Central U.S. on the Committee.

Senator Gravel spent most of the week between Christmas Day and New Year's Day traveling around the country visiting with Senators. He also enlisted the support of Senators high in leadership of the Senate who then campaigned on the Alaskan's behalf. Washington observers have said that the Senator's efforts, were in large measure, successful in obtaining the appointment.

The Senator first requested assignment to the Finance Committee after his election to the Senate. He repeated his request when new assignments were made in 1971. This year was the first time he had campaigned so actively for the post. His four years of service in the Senate and his deepening working relationship with his colleagues are seen as key in enabling his campaign to be successful.

His appointment is seen as an unusual move in the traditionally seniority-oriented Senate. A Finance Committee staffer said today that most Senators appointed to the Committee have been named only after a reelection to a second or third term. Even for such Senators, a Finance Committee appointment is a cherished goal. Some Senators have spent a lengthy Senate career hoping for such an appointment.

"I am extremely gratified with this appointment," Senator Gravel said. "I have sought this post because it will enable me to work for many things of great benefit to Alaska that were previously beyond my reach. For example, if I had been on the Finance Committee this past fall when we were fighting a major battle to save Alaska's Social Service funds, I am sure that the outcome of that struggle could have been different. The Finance Committee has complete jurisdiction over such matters. It wrote the bill providing the social services funds in the first place and it wrote the amendment which cut them off. It also wrote the legislation we used to restore the funds.

"Another example is the Revenue Sharing Bill, which can be a great help to our State. This also came through the Finance Committee. I will be involved in future deliberations on Revenue Sharing and will now be able to assure that Alaska's unique problems are recognized," Senator Gravel said.