

Bob Willard Reacts Strongly

ANCHORAGE — The head of the Alaska Human Rights Commission reacted strongly to a taped interview by State Representative John Holm, R - Fairbanks, today in his (Holm's) remarks concerning the House passed budget.

Holm said in an interview with Radio Station KFRB of Fairbanks that Anchorage and the "bush" got three and six times more money, respectively, than did Fairbanks.

"That is pure blackmail," Holm said, "Fairbanks really got the shaft . . . while the non-taxpaying 'bush' took home the kitchen sink."

Executive Director Robert Willard said, "I've heard of 'gutter journalism' but this is 'gutter reporting' by an elected official who serves the State."

"This type of report, publicly broadcast, is irrevocably and unequivocally an act of irresponsibility not in the best public interest, and serves only to further polarize the citizens of our state."

"I feel I must remind Representative Holm that the number one (1) industry in Alaska is the commercial fishing industry," Willard said, "and a vast, vast, majority of that industry is comprised of what Holm calls 'bush' people, who work, own boats and appertinent gear, and pay taxes."

"If that isn't adding to the economy, I don't know what is," the director charged.

"Mr. Holm would have you believe that 'bush' people pay no taxes whatsoever."

Holm further commented " . . . the least they (the House Finance Committee) can do is divide it up more equitably amongst those who work and pay the taxes in this state."

Willard reacted to that statement also, by saying, "This type of reporting is totally uncalled for, when comparing equity with priority — in terms of immediate need."

"Were it within the power of Representative Holm to create more jobs in the bush, I'm sure more of those 'bush' people would be working," Willard said, "and to so blatantly condemn the total 'bush' people for idleness in the absence of job opportunity is no call for a State Representative to address the people out of context."

"I fully realize that I may jeopardize my position and any hope of an expansion budget for my agency," Willard said, "but, how do you sit and listen to these kinds of utter falsehoods without reacting to set the record straight? I think Representative Holm should necessarily apologize publicly to the people in the bush."

Willard has just returned from Nome via Fairbanks where he testified before the U.S. Subcommittee on Oceans and Atmosphere on Sea Mammals.