

# Seeks Hearings on Indian Health

Alaska's Senator Ted Stevens has urged the chairman of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee, Senator Ralph Yarborough (D-Texas), to initiate hearings on a review of the entire scope of the Indian Health Service programs.

"The Indian Health Service is a vital part of Alaska's health

care system. It represents approximately one-third of our state's hospital delivery system for health care and is absolutely essential to the well-being of Alaska's natives," Senator Stevens said.

The Alaska Republican stated he was becoming increasingly concerned over the viability of

the program. He said he has been receiving letters from the state expressing a severe financial strain on the community hospitals who take part in, and depend on, the contract medical care program of Indian Health Service.

"The personnel ceiling under which the Indian Health Service is operating is causing a severe staffing shortage," Stevens said. He added, "A potential personnel morale problem which could reach serious proportions and affect the quality of health care delivered is developing."

Stevens also informed the committee chairman that construction of Indian Health hospitals and health centers in Alaska was not proceeding fast enough.

"The boom-city of Fairbanks is planning the construction of an urgently needed new hospital with EDA, Hill-Burton, state and local funds. But unless PL 86-151 funds are made available by a supplemental appropriation this year for the Indian Health Service, the native community of over 3,000 will continue to have to go without access to Indian Health Service hospital facilities," Stevens said.