

Housing Suffers \$1 Million Cut

A \$1 million appropriation to start the Native housing program in Alaska was cut from the Federal budget last Friday by the House Appropriations Committee.

The committee "is of the

opinion that plans and standards for this program need further refinement and no funds for this program are recommended at this time," according to reports from Washington.

The appropriation was requested by President Johnson to start the \$10 million program to help provide adequate housing in the rural areas of Alaska.

At a meeting held in Anchorage Saturday by the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Cook Inlet Native Association, Senator Ernest Gruening said that he and Senator Bartlett would work for restoration of the funds when the appropriation bill-reaches the Senate.

However, he warned that this could be chopped in half as a compromise between the

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House and Senate versions. "The House is more chintzy than the Senate," he commented.

At the meeting, the former executive director for housing for the Alaska State Housing Authority, Charles Blomfield, charged that the cut had been made because the new State administration had failed to complete plans started under Governor Egan's administration.

Blomfield earlier stated that funds for the planning were included in a Federal grant of almost \$200,000 made to ASHA, and that the authority had worked on the plans, even though it had never been formally told to do so.

Edwin Crittenden, the present executive director of the authority, said he had been surprised to learn that the agency had not been so designated but that it was starting to develop the necessary program materials.

He defended the administration, saying the planning could not come "until we

have the money in hand."

A Native housing meeting, including state officials, Federal observers, and Native leaders, was announced for May 25-26 in Anchorage by Governor Hickel to develop a specific program for the solution of Native housing problems.

The governor said he plans to appoint 10 Native leaders as a Native housing task force, under authority given by the 1967 legislature in the creation of a Rural Affairs Commission.

Hickel said he was confident that funds would be restored by the Senate to allow the problem to begin.

State Representative Willie Hensley of Kotzebue, returning from his visit to Washington, reports that the State has until July 10 to work out a plan.

On that date, the Senate Appropriations Committee will meet, says Hensley. "If a plan is submitted by that time, Senator Bartlett will have something to work with.