

CETA jobs bail-out bill stalls for year

By Sept. 30, many Alaskan villages may have to do without their policemen, emergency medical technicians and other public service employees because the federally funded Comprehensive Employment and Training Act money which pays for them will be cut off.

A state bill aimed at averting that cessation of public employees and the services they

provide has been stalled this year because not enough money was left in state coffers to pay for a program which would have picked up those employees.

Sen. Frank Ferguson, (D-Kotzebue) said his legislation, Senate Bill 318, stalled in the Senate Finance on May 20 because "there was a shortfall (in funding) this year. We

thought we had \$6 billion to spend but revenue projections by the treasury said there was \$5½ billion." His bill would have cost \$17 million to implement.

Ferguson said the bill, which he co-sponsored with Sen. George Hohman, (D-Bethel), will be a priority next year.

The problem with legislation next year, however, is "They needed it yesterday. We need an employment plan, CETA funds have dried up."

The legislation would have provided a number of employment services similar to CETA jobs but with less stringent qualifications.

The State Department of Labor would be responsible for keeping a survey on occupational demands in Alaska and would also be responsible for identifying potential employees and matching those employees with existing job openings.

The Department of Community and Regional Affairs would administer a work site training program.

Both agencies would have youth programs that would provide guidance to young people who are entering the job market. Both agencies would also have current information for evaluation of their programs. Through this bill employees would also be able to receive on-the-job training. To qualify for this program employees would have to reside in Alaska for 30 days, live in the state, and claim only Alaskan residency.

But there also are major differences between the CETA program and the proposed state employment plan.

CETA jobs are targeted for entry level positions and CETA has income requirements.

If a single person has earned more than \$4,960 a year he or she is ineligible and if a head of household with six children has earned more than \$19,020 he or she is automatically ineligible. Neither of these requirements would apply to the state plan and the state plan isn't targeted to entry level positions.

Lois Lind, Alaska CETA

director, said the state would look at CETA employees to see if employers could work with them. The list of jobs which will be left open when the CETA money runs out is endless and varied. It stretches into all rural Native corporations and villages as well as local state jobs.

The cuts are too many to list individually and reach virtually every area in the state. The jobs lost include paralegals, park service trainees, day care aides, city administrators, dental and health assistants, carpenters, policemen, maintenance personnel and people who work with the elderly.

Clerks, mechanics, psychiatric nursing assistants, librarian assistants, and correctional officer trainees are included in the cuts.

The CETA funds being cut were Title II and IV monies which paid for public employees. Only a portion of the CETA act which trains previously untrainable personnel was retained.