

# Telecommunications law a boon for Alaska



## The dawn of the telecommunications future

Davis Nashalook, Alaska Village Initiatives, gets an early start at his personal computer at AVI's headquarters in Anchorage. Congress has taken a significant step in paving the way for continued growth in technology and services related to computers and telecommunications. Changes in federal policy should reduce the cost of telecomputing for the average consumer as well as businesses.

The Senate has passed and sent to the President the most sweeping overhaul of telecommunications law since 1934 by a vote of 91 to 5. The measure would enable Americans to get local phone service from their cable company and buy cable and long-distance service from their local phone company or electric utility.

The rewrite would promote competition and reduce regulations on telephone, cable, and other communications services. It would also lift long-standing limits on many TV and radio stations one company may own nationally. The measure also contains tough anti-pornography provisions which would ban indecent and obscene materials on computer services and the Internet.

In working to promote new technology and competition, Stevens has been a leader in ensuring that rural areas, such as Alaska, have the same opportunities as major population centers. Included in the legislation are strong provisions to ensure that universal service will be available in all parts of the nation. The bill passed today included an evolving definition of universal service which guarantees that Alaskans will have access to the information superhighway at affordable rates.

The legislation requires that new TV sets contain a computer chip that would allow television shows that are given a violent or sexual rating to be automatically blocked. Parents and others could then program the set not to display those shows.