

Cash assistance program gets reprieve

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Some \$5.7 million in Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance funding for Alaska has been reinstated in the Department of the Interior Budget at least for fiscal year 1982.

But if that re-instatement survives a presidential veto, it is only expected by Alaska observers to last through that year and is viewed as only a transition funding before the program is phased out in fiscal year 1983.

The announcement that the funding would remain in the budget was made by U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens who announced that this year's Department of the Interior budget also will include \$1 million to help pay for land conveyances of federal lands to the state and to Native corporations;

* \$4.6 million for cooperative fish and wildlife units;

* \$500,000 to help the villages of Shee Atika, Goldbelt and Kootznoowoo pay for costs they accrued to obtain their land selections;

* \$12 million for the Institute program, which pays for the Mineral Research institute at the University of Alaska.

The Interior Department did reduce the amount of funding for the management of the Subsistence Management fund from \$1.5 million to \$1 million.

The \$5.7 million re-funding will furnish Native Alaskans the general assistance cash allotment funding that was cut from the federal budget in the spring. That money is a direct cash grant to families on a monthly basis. The maximum allotment to a family with four children is \$760 monthly.

The rationale behind cutting off that program was that the state government — with its oil wealth — could replace the lost funds.

However, the federal government allowed grant money only to one ethnic group such as Natives. The state can't make that discrimination. Under the state program which grants cash to individuals, only \$80 per month can be given.

The federal money is used for a variety of needs including food, clothing, bullets for hunting, replacing nets or anything deemed necessary for life in the bush.

And while the amount is in the budget at this point, the budget itself may not face smooth sailing through the Congress.

The Department of Interior budget was approved by the U.S. Senate but now has been sent to the conference committee which can add, cut, or alter the budget at will.

It also has been approved at

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Budget process not properly followed in budget cuts

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a level that is \$1 billion more than President Ronald Reagan ordered so it may be vetoed by the president, according to Gordon Jackson, an aide to the Alaska State House Finance Committee, who is responsible for tracing the effects of the federal budget cuts upon the state.

The latest news on the federal budget was considered at a meeting last week of the Alaska Federation of Natives Human Resources Board.

That board heard a report from Tommy Richards, the delegate from the Association of Village Council Presidents. He said that AVCP president Harold Napoleon and two other representatives met with Sen. Stevens last week to discuss the human realities of the federal cuts as they affect Alaska.

Richards said that Napoleon reported to Richards that Stevens was unhappy with the way that BIA did not consult the villagers which will be effected by the phasing out of

some 20 BIA-operated schools in the villages. Department of Interior BIA regulations mandate that the villagers be consulted before their schools are closed. Instead of this, the villagers have been told their schools will be closed and BIA teams are now being sent out to "consult" with the villagers.

Napoleon reported through Richards that Stevens was unhappy with that process and may recommend that the BIA suspend all consultations and start all over.

Stevens also was "incensed" when he found out that the Bethel Hospital would be receiving \$3 million less than Congress had allocated for it for this fiscal year.

The hospital last year received \$11 million. This year hospital administrators have been told the hospital will receive \$8 million.

Richards said Stevens is tracing the budget process to find where the money was sidetracked.

HRB chairman John Hope

who also is chairman of the Tlingit/Haida Central Council, said "That sounds more like our senator instead of being a spokesman for the administration." Stevens is the Senate Majority Whip.

Jackson told the board members that statutory process for budget considerations was not followed by Congress during this year's budget cuts process.

Jackson said that law requires that a lengthy period of time be allocated for the public to comment on budgets but that no time was allowed for such comment. In many cases, massive cuts were made in budgets on the basis of a few hours.

Jackson told the Board that they might be able to challenge the cuts on that basis.

Because the required procedures were not followed "Congress was confused and so was I. We couldn't figure out what was happening until recently when we realized 'My goodness, the party was over in May.'"