

# Split May Not Hamper Bill Passage: Begich

Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives, Nick Begich said in Fairbanks Friday that he did not believe the Arctic Slope's split with the Alaska Federation of Natives will make passage of a land claims bill more difficult.

And, he added, these differences among the natives should not be used as a reason for any land claims settlement delays.

Talking informally in the Tundra Times office, the 38-year-old opponent of Republican Frank Murkowski said he thought the Arctic Slope Natives have a right to voice their opinion.

The Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA) announced last week in Anchorage that it is withdrawing from the AFN because it disagrees with the land claims position of the federation.

On the surface, Begich said, it would appear that any division would hurt chances for passage of a land claims bill during this session of Congress. But this is a complicated bill, he continued. "There are many viewpoints, and I don't think one more will hurt."

When asked whether he supported a land settlement on the basis of population (as in the recently passed Senate land claims bill) or on the basis of native claim to the land (as does ASNA), Begich replied that he felt the settlement must be a compromise of the two.

A land settlement, he explained, should be based on a formula that allocates so much land in fee simple, so much land for subsistence, and so much land that could revert to the public domain if and when it is no longer wanted and used by the people.

Decisions in the latter category, Begich continued, would be made by a commission created by the land claims bill. Three of the five members on this commission would be natives, he proposed.

"I do not fully support a land settlement of 40 million

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# Nick Begich . . .

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acres in fee simple," he said, "And I don't think most natives want 40 million acres in fee simple." Such a land settlement has been consistently called for by the AFN.

The Democratic candidate has said that he does not feel 10 million acres in fee simple is enough. That is the amount provided for in the Senate bill and the amount supported by his Republican opponent.

Begich has called for no specific acreage settlement but rather has advocated the use of a formula such as the one mentioned earlier.

Also, he said, written into the bill could be a provision allowing the natives to control the land through a leasing procedure. Possibly leases could be drawn up requiring a certain percentage of native hire.

There are many ways to increase one's wealth, he continued, and a guarantee of employment is one, just as is land.

Having traveled to some 60 or 70 villages, the educator and state representative said that he will be spending the last days before the election in Fairbanks and Anchorage.