

BEGICH RAPS C. EDWARDSON

Congressman Differs With ASNA Official On 'Confrontation'

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—Response from Congressman Nick Begich (D-Alaska) indicates that he was greatly disturbed by remarks of Arctic Slope Native Association executive director Charles Edwardsen in last week's Tundra Times.

In a letter published in Tundra Times, Edwardsen noted that his confrontation with Congressman Begich was the second most significant accomplishment during his recent trip to Washington.

The so called confrontation occurred during a meeting with the Board of Directors of the Alaska Federation of Natives in mid March.

When Congressman Begich appeared to meet with the AFN Board members, Arctic Slope President Joe Upicksoun called for the board to give a standing ovation to the Congressman, thusly recognizing Representative Begich for his efforts on behalf of Alaskan natives paths to resolution of the native claims.

Edwardsen began his "confrontation". He moved that Congressman Begich support the AFN position.

"Are we going to make the Congressman our native representative or is he going to give lip service", said Edwardsen.

Without allowing for discussion on the motion, Edwardsen called the question.

"My point is this. If you assume that I am against you then this is a sad day," Congressman Begich responded to the AFN Board.

Congressman Begich added, "I ask you to weigh carefully before jumping into conclusions. Inside the Senate, I operated last year 147 days; and for 147 days I never missed the roll call.

"I spoke to the Governor at conferences and worked on the job night and day. I have to weigh things carefully and apologize to whoever is here for taking up your precious time deciding how to operate efficiently and effectively.

"I know your position is no compromise, but I've got to work with 435 other people."

"These next weeks are crucial, Begich told the AFN at the March meeting. "I want to get the most out of the Congressmen. The Senate may move

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Raps Edwardson . . .

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faster on native land claims as soon as the SST is over with. "Timing is important. Don't pass judgement until you can judge properly. Give me a chance."

After amending Edwardson's resolution to include Alaskan Senators Mike Gravel and Ted Stevens, the AFN Board passed the resolution, Begich told the Tundra Times.

This was the extent of Edwardson's "confrontation," he said.

Discussing the incident with the Tundra Times this week, on his first day out of the hospital after being hospitalized for several days with a kidney ailment, Congressman Begich stated, "there wasn't any 'confrontation'. You don't confront a friend. You confront an op-

ponent.

"The world 'confront' has a little more aggressive connotation. You have a discussion with a friend."

Congressman Begich was one of the sponsors of the House version of the AFN bill - HR 4049.

Last Tuesday, on his way to Andrews AFB in Washington to catch a plane to attend economic development hearings in Alaska, Congressman Begich was taken suddenly ill. He was rushed to Andrews Air Force Base in severe pain for emergency treatment. From there he was transferred to Bethesda Naval Hospital and was not released until Monday.

As of Monday he was home resting and reported himself as feeling much better.