

Regional Boroughs for Bush Planned

A plan to establish regional boroughs in rural Alaska with money for improvements is scheduled to go before the state legislature soon.

Developed by an ad hoc group known as the Rural Alaska Development Group, the proposal is directed at those parts of rural Alaska which are not in an organized borough but rather are part of what is known as the unorganized borough of the state.

According to John Shively, a member of the ad hoc committee, these areas currently have no regional government officially recognized by the state.

The structure proposed by the committee, he said, would provide a step between the sophisticated borough of the urban areas and the unorganized borough, which, in effect, is no government at all.

Money would go to the regional bodies under a revenue-sharing plan for all boroughs, both regional and urban.

The sharing-plan of the committee calls for 40 per cent of all revenue from any state lands leased or sold to go to the boroughs.

Sixty per cent of this amount

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Rural Boroughs

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would be split equally among the boroughs with allowances made for economic factors.

For instance, Shively explained, if the per capita income of an area is lower than the state average then that area would receive more money.

The remaining portion of the money—40 per cent—would go to the boroughs on the basis of population.

Furthermore, 10 per cent of the total money going to each regional borough must be split equally among the villages in the borough.

The committee hopes that the bill, Shively said, will provide a structure through which other problems of the rural areas can be solved.

The regional borough, he continued, could use the money for whatever improvements it felt necessary—whether for health facilities, water and sewer, or for matching funds for federal projects.

Residents of the regional borough would not pay taxes, he said, and even if they did, they could not pay enough to support the services provided by most urban boroughs.

The committee has also developed a number of recommendations that it feels supports the needs of Alaska and plans to present these, as recommendations, to the legislature for it to use as it sees fit.

Both the proposed legislation and the recommendations were drawn from opinions and suggestions made by villagers and specialists with particular experience in rural Alaska.

The agencies sponsoring the committee's work are the Rural Alaska Community Action Agency Program; Greater Anchorage Area Community Action Agency; Alaska Federation of Natives; Alaska Training and Planning Center; Community Enterprise Development Corporation; Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, Inc.; and Alaska Legal Services Corporation. Shively is the deputy director of RurAL CAP.