

Constitutional spending cap opposed

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The Alaska Federation of Native's Human Resources Board this week voted to oppose Alaska Gov. Jay Hammond's proposed constitutional state spending limit because board members fear it would result in diminished social services to Natives and the Bush.

The governor called a special session of the Legislature on July 13 to deal specifically with the spending limit. The Legislature had considered but took no action on the limit before adjourning last week.

Hammond wants the Legislature to vote to hold a constitutional referendum in 1982 to limit state spending.

In other action, the board withdrew from the Alaska Plan

Policy Board and voted to draft a letter of support favoring two bills that would facilitate state action in replacing monies which are being cut out of federal aid to the state.

Board members had a number of reasons for opposing the state spending limit. Greg Brelsford of the Aleutian/Pribilof Island Association said, "It's (spending limit) not dealing with equity. We would suffer terribly and I'm sure other Bush areas would."

John Hope of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes said, "The governor assumes everyone is starting from an equal base."

Spud Williams of Tanana Chiefs Conference said, if there was a spending limit, "you could flat out forget about Bush services." But Williams added, "A lot of our villages

don't want to develop."

He said many villages have the opinion of 'stay the hell out with your power plants and he went on to say when some villages received freezers the concept of sharing was lost because food could be preserved. Food didn't have to be shared before it spoiled.

"Every time you put something out there you don't know if they want it," Williams said. But there was still a concern of Natives and rural areas losing out if the state created a spending limit. Hope said, "The only way to get their (legislators) attention is to oppose. We're not even getting our share and you want to cut down?" Williams said, "Too much will be eaten up by administration. That's my real fear about a spending limit." Williams added,

"I don't think all that many legislators are for it but they're being blackmailed into it."

The Alaska Plan Policy Board which AFN's Human Resource Board withdrew from is a voluntary affirmative action board that has been funded by the Legislature for the past five years. One of its functions is to increase women and minorities in construction, Special Assistant Sylvia Carlsson said. Carlsson said, "This organization was ineffective as far as increasing Natives in the construction industry." Carlsson added, "They have, in my opinion, fought against Indian preference." Williams said, "If we sink the Alaska plan then maybe we can get help from the federal government."

The Human Resources Board also looked at the impact of the federal budget cuts and voted to

draft a letter to Hammond in support of House Bills 489 and 490. Both bills would offset federal budget reductions. House bill 489 would review the effect of federal budget cuts and 490 would implement a program where state funds would possibly replace federal funds.

The board would try to get these two bills passed during the July 13 special session.

Carlsson said, "People need to get a handle on the effect of the cuts." A board member said the bills weren't a high priority in the governor's office.

The board also discussed the Twelfth legislative session. One member commented, "I don't think anyone could adequately describe what happened. We could talk about what didn't happen."