

Alaska senators to consider AFN 1991 concerns

Sens. Ted Stevens and Frank Murkowski have denied a request by the Alaska Federation of Natives to introduce proposed AFN 1991 legislation for a hearing in Washington, D.C., according to Janie Leask, AFN president.

"They felt it would bog down the process," she said, explaining that if the AFN version were introduced there would be three versions of 1991 legislation — the Senate bill, the House bill and the AFN bill.

Leask said, however, that the senators have agreed to consider AFN's two key concerns about the Senate version of the 1991 bill, designed to protect Native lands and stock ownership after 1991.

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Currently, the Senate version of the bill calls for regional corporations to have their shareholders vote to continue restrictions on the sale of stock beyond 1991. AFN would prefer that the restrictions be continued unless shareholders voted against it.

Also, the Senate version calls for mandatory dissenters' rights, which means that shareholders who wanted to sell their stock — even if the restrictions were continued — would have to be paid off by the regions. AFN has said this provision could have devastating financial effects on some of the regions if even a small percentage of shareholders insisted on selling their stock.

Leask said Alaska's senators have informed AFN they will not negotiate on those or other points until after the hearing on the 1991 bill Tuesday in Washington, D.C., before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Written testimony on the 1991 issue is to be accepted by the committee up to two weeks after Tuesday's hearing, AFN officials said.