

# Sen. Stevens Sponsors Bill to Authorize Satellite Project

Sen. Ted Stevens has co-sponsored a bill to authorize funding for a satellite to continue the communications program under way through the newly-launched Applied Technology Satellite.

ATS-6, launched May 30, will begin bringing educational and medical television communications to 17 interior Alaskan villages this fall.

The project, sponsored jointly by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, will also serve several Appalachian and Rocky Mountain states.

However, Stevens said, the experimental program is scheduled to end next year, when the satellite will be shifted into an orbit to permit the government of India to beam similar educational programming to its remote villages.

"The ATS-6 satellite project will bring a new era of communications to much of rural Alaska," Stevens said. "Especially in the area of medical communications between villages and

and central medical facilities, this is a tremendously important project. It would be a terrible shame to lose this new communications ability so soon.

He said the program could be continued through ATS-F prime, a satellite prepared as a backup for the May launching.

Since the original satellite was launched and orbited successfully, Stevens said, the space agency has no present plans for launched and orbited successfully, Stevens said, the space agency has no present plans for the backup satellite.

The bill Stevens co-sponsored would authorize expenditure of \$41.7 million for the follow-up satellite, the amount estimated to complete preparation and launch ATS-F prime.

The senator said hopefully the bill will pass in time for funds to be included in a supplemental appropriations package later this year.

This, he said, could get the satellite in orbit in time to continue the various communications programs without lengthy interruption.