

TESTEMONY
of
Nelson N. Angapak, Sr.
Senior Vice President
Alaska Federation of Natives
Before the 27th Legislature
In Support of SB 11

Good afternoon Madam Chair,

My name is Nelson N, Angapak, Sr., Senior Vice President, Alaska Federation of Natives. The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska. Its membership includes 178 villages (both federally-recognized tribes and village corporations), 13 regional Native corporations and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and run federal and state programs. AFN is governed by a 37-member Board elected by its membership at the annual convention held each October. The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community.

AFN's major goals are to:

- Advocate for Alaska Native people, their governments and organizations, with respect to federal, state and local laws;
- Foster and encourage preservation of Alaska Native cultures;
- Promote understanding of the economic needs of Alaska Natives and encourage development consistent with those needs;
- Protect, retain and enhance all lands owned by Alaska Natives and their organizations; and
- Promote and advocate for programs and systems which instill pride and confidence in individual Alaska Natives.

Over the 40 plus years, one of the issues that our organization has faced is that of hate crimes. I will keep my comments brief and may not give the need time to fully express the need for this legislation. It is unfortunate that we still have to address this issue.

We will not pretend that racism has miraculously disappeared in the 16 years since Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, or 46 years since the voting rights act was passed or in the 66 years since Elizabeth Peratrovich addressed this body. It is still present, it is quieter, and it is whispered. We only pay attention when it makes headlines. Many of you may remember the Paintball Incidents in January 2001. When some kids thought it would be funny to shoot natives with paintballs. Redskins is still used even when the plain evidence is when you look at any natives skin, chances are it's not red, we are of many colors and shades of the human family.

I would like to thank Senators Davis and French for sponsoring this bill. We all must acknowledge the presents of this type of crime, and take measures to insure that it will not be tolerated in this civil society. Ignoring hate crimes will not make it go away, it only passively signals that is ok to prey upon someone because of their race, creed, sex, and color. Inclusion in the American dream is the goal of everyone in this nation, the ability to pursue a life constructed by your own sweat and toil. When another person interferes with this pursuit, because of perceived differences, it shames us as a nation and a state.

As the 20th century closed, there were nearly 190,000 Native American military veterans. It is well recognized that, historically, Native Americans (including Alaska Natives), have the highest record of service per capita when compared to other ethnic groups. The reasons behind this disproportionate contribution are complex and deeply rooted in traditional American Indian culture. In many respects, Native Americans are no different from others who volunteer for military service. They do, however, have distinctive cultural values which drive them to serve their country. One such value is our proud warrior tradition.¹

Dr. Carlos Gonzales, a Pascua Yaqui Indian and a medical doctor offered a prayer for the recovery of U. S. Representative from Arizona, Gabrielle Giffords, and during his prayer, he invoked Native American culture. Brit Hume, one of the most nationally recognized Fox News analyst dismissed the blessing as “most peculiar” and he also thought what Dr. Gonzales did was disturbing.² While this is not a hate crime, it does illustrate some intolerance within our American culture.

¹ <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq61-1.htm>

² “The Language of Savagery,” Indian Country Today, Vol 1, Issue 3, February 2, 2011, pp. 20-25

Media plays a major role, we believe, unintentionally or otherwise, to perpetuate hate crime. A case in point is the question asked during "Woody and Wilcox", on Station KBFX a couple of years ago: **"Have you ever made love to the Yukon River or peed in a Native woman?"** How often have you heard a single sentence that racist and that sexist? This was hate speech, intended to amuse bigots. Some listeners were shocked - but many Natives, while sickened, thought it was all too typical of Alaska's race relations. A copy of letter to the radio station regarding this statement on the radio by Julie Kitka, President of the Alaska Federation is attached, and we ask that her letter also be included in the hearing record on SB 11.

We could continue with examples but in the interest of time, Alaska Federation of Natives goes on record supporting SB 11. We urge the committee to report SB 11 out of the committee and once it reaches the Alaska State Senate, we urge the members of this committee to speak strongly for a favourable consideration by the full Alaska Senate.