



## **ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES 2007 Federal Priorities**

### **Reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act**

Federal delivery of Indian health services and funding of tribal and urban Indian health programs is an abiding component of the federal government's legal relationship with Native Americans, grounded in the U.S. Constitution, treaties, federal statutes and common practice throughout the history of Indian Affairs. The quality and length of life for Native Americans and Alaska Natives fall well below all other Americans. Healthcare expenditures for Native Americans are less than half what this country spends on health care for federal prisoners.

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (P.L. 94-437), first enacted in 1976, provides the framework for the Indian healthcare system; and it is currently up for reauthorization. While Congress came close to enacting S. 1057 during its last session, last-minute opposition from the Administration blocked the health bill's passage, further delaying its reauthorization. Health facilities and resources in Native communities are unequipped to face a burgeoning load of health issues.

Recommended Action: AFN and its member organizations urge Congress to reauthorize and amend the Indian Health Care Improvement Act along the lines originally set out in S.1057. That bill would have authorized a range of health programs that would permit IHS, tribes and urban Indian organizations to respond to the needs of local populations - including mental health, substance abuse, violence and youth suicide. It would also have helped to attract and retain qualified healthcare professionals. Congress should provide, as a matter of policy, improvements that bring the health care of American Indians and Alaska Natives up to the level of care received by other Americans.



## **ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES 2007 Federal Priorities**

### **Increased funding for BIA and IHS budgets for FY 2008**

In July 2003, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission issued a report calling the shortfalls in federal funding for unmet needs of Native Americans and Alaska Natives a “quiet crisis.” The report is a comprehensive analysis of unmet needs, including law enforcement, health care and education. Federal efforts to raise Native American living conditions have long been in motion, but Native Americans and Alaska Natives still suffer higher rates of poverty, poorer educational achievement, more substandard housing and higher rates of disease and illness than any other group of Americans.

The report of the Alaska Native Policy Center, “Our Choices, Our Future,” shows that, while Alaska Natives have more jobs; higher incomes; better living conditions, health care and education than at any time in the past 30 years, they remain several times more likely than other Americans to be poor and unemployed. The report found that alcohol continues to fuel widespread social/behavioral problems. Native students continue to do poorly on standard tests and are dropping out of school in growing numbers. Rates of heart disease, cancer and diabetes are rising; and these are often related to behaviors that people can change (e.g., smoking, drinking, other drug use, diet, etc.)

The Administration’s FY 2008 budget request falls far short of what is needed to address these issues. The BIA budget would be funded at \$2.2 billion, about \$1 million less than current levels. The Housing Improvement Program and the Johnson O’Malley program would be eliminated. The Urban Indian Health Program of the Indian Health Service, currently underfunded at \$33 million, would also be eliminated. Without federal funds, half the clinics would be forced to reduce services or shut down altogether. Facilities construction would receive only \$13 million, a loss of \$24 million, despite a continuing backlog of critically needed health care facilities. Sanitation construction, which ensures that Indian communities have safe water and waste disposal, would be cut by \$4 million.

Recommended Action: As Congress considers FY 2008 funding for Indian programs throughout the federal budget, AFN and its member organizations urge the Senators, Representatives and cognizant federal agencies to review “A Quiet Crisis” and “Our Choices, Our Future” (copies of which are available on the Internet); to restore the proposed cuts; and to expand funding for such programs beyond current levels.



## ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES 2007 Federal Priorities

### Reauthorization and Amendment of the Telecommunications Act

**Topic 1:** The list of service providers eligible to receive federal subsidies under the Universal Service Fund does not include Tribal Human/Social Service Providers and Tribal Educational Service Providers in areas of the country that lack terrestrial lines of telecommunication.

The high cost of telecommunications technology in rural Alaska prevents tribes that provide essential human services from accessing such technology - because they do not qualify for Universal Service Fund subsidies as *rural health providers, schools or libraries* under the Telecommunications Act.

The Telecommunications Act requires “access to advanced telecommunications and information services” for “all regions of the Nation,...including rural, insular and high costs areas...” See §§254(b) (2) and (3) of the Act. Such access includes “inter-exchange services and advanced telecommunications and information services” that reasonably compare to those services provided in urban areas, at rates that reasonably compare to rates for similar services in urban areas. *Ibid.*

Due to the remoteness of Native communities in rural Alaska and the high cost of providing services, development of telecommunications infrastructure in rural Alaska has lagged behind the urban areas of our state - and far behind the telecommunications infrastructure of the lower 48. The resultant costs of accessing such technology in remote Alaskan villages are staggering and not at all comparable to the costs for the same services in urban areas of Alaska. An unsubsidized T1 line in Anchorage, for example, costs \$824.55 per month. It costs \$12,256 per month to provide that same service from a regional office in the Bering Straits region to a village within that region - almost 15 times the cost of the same service in Alaska’s cities.

In addition, most telephone and Internet service in rural communities is not available through terrestrial copper, fiber optic or microwave lines used in urban Alaska and the lower 48. Such services are available in remote Alaska only via satellite service. Satellite service in rural Alaska is also very costly and economically feasible only with the assistance of federal telecommunications subsidies.

Advances in wireless technology have not eliminated these prohibitive costs because the cost of such service is double the cost of the same service in Anchorage and requires a large investment in hardware. Private telecommunications companies that provide wireless service do not make consumers aware of available federal programs to help pay for hardware installation - because federal regulations do not require the companies to do so. Moreover, existing wireless service in rural communities is less than 60% reliable, and there is no available technical support.

Tribes and tribal consortia serving rural Alaska provide a wide array of essential services not available from any other entities. Access to low-cost telecommunications technology would enhance their ability to deliver these services more efficiently and would improve the general wellness of such regions of the state.

**Recommended Action:** AFN and its member organizations urge the Congress, in its reauthorization of the Telecommunications Act, to expand the list of service providers eligible to receive federal subsidies under the Universal Service Fund to include Tribal Human/Social Service Providers and Tribal Educational Service Providers in remote areas of the U.S that lack terrestrial telecommunications lines, even if such entities do not provide specific health, primary/secondary education or library services.

**Topic 2:** Federal law and regulations must stimulate competition among Internet providers in order to provide low-cost telecommunications to regions that are either under-served or completely un-served by the private sector.

Lack of competition among Internet service providers has resulted in substandard IT service in many rural Alaska communities, where large companies receive federal subsidies to develop infrastructure in areas that are completely un-served. But there are no federal subsidies available to ISPs in under-served areas.

The high cost of telecommunications technology in rural Alaska has prevented competition between Internet Service Providers and has forced some of them to cease rural operations. Lack of competition among ISPs has resulted in gross disparities between communities that have access to terrestrial lines and those that do not - the latter having no choice but to tolerate substandard service for which there is no readily available technical support.

**Recommended Action:** AFN and its member organizations urge the Congress, in its reauthorization of the Telecommunications Act, to designate Native American tribes and tribal consortia as entities eligible for federal subsidies for the purpose of developing and enhancing telecommunications infrastructure in both “un-served” and “under-served” areas of the country where terrestrial telecommunications lines are not available.

**Topic 3:** Federal laws and appropriations should enable Alaska’s state court system, as well as the courts of other states with large Native American populations, to utilize modern telecommunications (such as televideo transmissions) during trials and hearings on criminal prosecutions, probation, sentencing, etc.). This would make the judicial process more understandable to the families and peers of the people charged. For decades, the judicial process has been largely a mystery to Natives in Alaska’s villages; and they have not seen themselves as having any opportunity to participate in the process, even to the extent of actually seeing and hearing it.

**Recommended Action:** In reauthorizing the Telecommunications Act, and in the appropriations process, Congress should provide modern, effective telecommunications to the judicial process for remote Native American communities nationwide.



## **ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES 2007 Federal Priorities**

### **Protection of Subsistence Hunting, Fishing and Gathering in Alaska**

**Topic 1:** Federal law (Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act) protects rural Alaska's subsistence users who hunt, fish and gather for personal consumption on U.S. public lands, including reserved navigable waters. It gives such users a priority over other users (e.g., sport or commercial harvesters) in times of resource shortage. Today, the only remaining protection of our villages' protein base and traditional way of life is the federal law. Without it, most villages could not feed themselves and would slowly disappear through out-migration. The cost of the resulting economic collapse and social dislocation would fall on every Alaskan - Native or non-Native, urban or rural. Whether we recognize it or not, every resident of our state has an interest in the survival of the villages by their own productive labor, rather than through greater welfare dependency.

But, for the past two years, the State of Alaska, in cooperation with federal officials, has been engaged in an effort to take control of the membership and processes of the Federal Subsistence Board, which is charged with implementing Title VIII. This campaign intends to subvert the FSB and to turn it into an instrument of state policy (which has no priority), regardless of the congressional policy enacted in 1980.

Recently, the FSB has proposed that 30% of the members of each of its Regional Advisory Councils (which funnel recommendations for local regulations to the full FSB) must represent sport and/or commercial users. But the Federal Subsistence Board is not the "Federal Subsistence, Sport and Commercial Board." It exists to protect subsistence from a numerically overwhelming urban majority. If this quiet, incremental campaign by the State continues - and there is no indication that it will not - membership on the Federal Subsistence Board itself will be subverted, and meaningful federal protections of subsistence will disappear, despite the language and intent in Title VIII.

The Federal Subsistence Board also recently denied "rural" status to the Native Village of Saxman, despite the fact that its people are heavily dependent on subsistence.

#### Recommended Actions:

1. Federal regulations implementing the rural priority should be changed to ensure that Saxman and other communities do not lose their right to the subsistence priority, based on questionable interpretations of socio-economic data.
2. Due to growing urban pressures on finite resources, a trend that will certainly continue, Congress needs to consider regulatory and statutory changes that will better protect our way of life. Several federal laws now provide a "Native" or "Native-plus-rural" or "Native-plus-local" subsistence priority in Alaska (e.g., for marine mammals, migratory birds, and under the Endangered Species Protection Act). The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council has adopted subsistence regulations for halibut that provide

harvest opportunities for Natives and other rural residents. The Secretary of the Interior and Congress should support our efforts to strengthen federal protections and oppose any legislative or regulatory effort to undermine federal protections.

3. AFN and its member organizations urge the Department of the Interior to defend the subsistence regulations adopted in January, 1999 to implement the *Katie John* decision. The State of Alaska filed suit seeking a reduction of the waters subject to Title VIII of ANILCA. If the State succeeds in this effort, Alaska Natives will be left with virtually no protections of subsistence fishing, which provides 59% of the statewide subsistence diet in rural Alaska. We urge the Secretary to interpret broadly the scope of federal jurisdiction in order to fulfill his trust responsibility to Alaska Natives.

**Topic 2: Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps**, commonly known as “Duck Stamps” are federal licenses required for hunting migratory waterfowl. All persons over 16 must purchase a Duck Stamp each year, if they want to hunt migratory birds. At the time the legislation was enacted, Alaska Natives were prohibited, by the Migratory Bird Treaty between the U.S. and Canada, from engaging in customary and traditional spring and summer harvests of migratory birds and their eggs. In 1996, however, the Treaty was amended to recognize and allow such harvests. The protocol in the amended treaty requires that any “regulations implementing the non-wasteful taking of migratory birds and the collection of their eggs by indigenous inhabitants of the State of Alaska shall be consistent with the customary and traditional uses of such indigenous inhabitants for their own nutritional and other essential needs.” Canada Protocol, Art. II, § 4(b)(1). The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. § 708 implements the Treaty. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service grafted this licensure requirement onto the regulations.

**Recommended Action:** AFN and its member organizations urge Congress to amend the Duck Stamp Act by adding an exemption for “eligible indigenous inhabitants of the State of Alaska engaged in the customary and traditional harvest of waterfowl and their eggs.” We also urge the Department of the Interior to support this amendment.

**Topic 3: Reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act** remains a high priority for AFN. The Indigenous Peoples’ Commission on Marine Mammals (IPCoMM), an AFN subcommittee, has negotiated with federal agencies amendments to section 119 of the MMPA to allow the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior, in coordination with Native organizations, to develop harvest management plans within existing or newly developed harvest management agreements. These plans would implement measures taken by Native organizations and their member tribes to regulate subsistence takings of marine mammals for conservation purposes prior to a finding of depletion. The Alaska Native community fully supports these amendments. The amendments to Section 119 were included in the Prescott Marine Mammal Standing Program Amendments of 2004 (H.R. 5104 in the previous Congress), which were pulled from the bill when objections were raised by the State of Alaska. AFN and IPCoMM have attempted to work with the State Attorney General’s office to resolve the State’s concerns, with little success.

**Recommended Action:** AFN and its member organizations urge Alaska’s Congressional Delegation to work with AFN and IPCoMM to resolve any problems with the proposed amendments in the process of reauthorizing the MMPA.



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### **Federal Erosion and Flood Control Assistance for Alaska Native villages**

184 of the 244 Native villages in rural Alaska are affected by serious erosion and flooding and must address imminent threats to community health and wellbeing as a result. But they have been denied assistance under federal erosion/flood prevention and control programs because agencies utilize cost/benefit analyses that fail to take into account the unique geographic, climatic and economic circumstances of the villages.

In 2003, the U.S. General Accounting Office's report to Congress concluded that "[t]he unique circumstances of Alaska Native villages and their inability to qualify for assistance under a variety of federal flooding and erosion programs may require special measures to ensure that they receive certain needed services."

Coastal and river flooding and erosion resulting from rising temperatures in recent years have caused grave damage. Melting sea ice has left coasts vulnerable to waves, storm surges and erosion; and thawing permafrost has caused serious damage, as buildings and runways sink into unstable ground. This threatens bulk fuel tanks and other vital infrastructure. Erosion, accelerated by a series of near-catastrophic storms, has given rise to public health, safety and welfare concerns. Eroded land has exposed sewer and septic systems, jeopardized community water lines, affected the availability of groundwater and surface water, undermined roads and utilities structures, and rendered unusable many road systems that are the only available escape routes in times of emergency.

At least four villages are now in imminent danger from flooding and erosion and must relocate as soon as possible. Other affected communities need immediate federal and state assistance to undertake preventive measures that will mitigate future damage and restore infrastructure that is critical to their health and safety. Time is of the essence as villages become increasingly susceptible to flooding and erosion. Development of a well-coordinated approach to mitigate current and future damage is essential.

**Recommended Action:** Congress should implement the four alternatives listed in the 2003 GAO Report to lower barriers that villages face in obtaining federal assistance:

- Expand the role of the Denali Commission to include responsibility for managing a flooding and erosion assistance program;

- Direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to consider social and environmental factors in their cost-benefit analyses for projects requested by Alaska Native villages;
- Waive the federal cost-sharing requirement for flooding and erosion programs for Alaska Native villages that don't have matching resources; and
- Combine funds from various agencies to address flooding and erosion problems in Alaska Native villages.



## **Alaska Federation of Natives 2007 Federal Priorities**

### **The Public Education of Alaska Native Students**

Alaska's public education system is failing to teach Alaska Native children. While Natives account for almost one of every four children enrolled in K-12 schools, they are dropping out of school at a rate of 7.8%, which is twice the rate of other students. Native youth are graduating from high school a rate of 47%, compared to 67.3% for all other students. During the 2003-2004 school year, four of the five regions with Native enrollments greater than 80% had the lowest proportion of schools meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress ("AYP") benchmarks under the No Child Left Behind Act, and the percentage of Native students passing the reading, writing and math benchmark exams was 30% below all other students statewide. These statistics compel a new approach to education for Natives, if they are to raise their level of educational achievement. The State of Alaska's failure to provide an adequate education to every child in Alaska, as required by the Alaska Constitution, has led a group of educators, rural school districts, students and parents to file a class action lawsuit against the State (*Moore v. Alaska*).

Recommended Actions: AFN and its member organizations urge Congress and the Administration to take the following actions:

1. Establish and fund an Alaska Native Education Commission, led by a Federal and State Co-Chair, and comprised of a diverse group of experts in the field of education, to conduct an in-depth review of the academic performance of Alaska Native students and of existing federal and state educational policies. The commission should look closely at the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act; state and federal educational policies and their impacts on the academic achievement of Native students; incorporation of Alaska Native languages and cultures in school curricula; teaching methods that connect with Native methods of learning; proposals to create regional educational institutions; and identification of research priorities for improvement of public school instruction for Alaska Native students.

2. Increase appropriations for the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) to ensure adequate funding for programs implementing the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006. Native language is intrinsic to community wellness, cultural survival and subsistence - and is vital to the processes of teaching and learning. Native American languages throughout the country are in rapid decline. It is estimated that only 20 indigenous languages will remain viable by the year 2050. Recognizing the importance of aboriginal language revitalization, Congress passed the Esther Martinez Act. It provides assistance to on-

going Native American language restoration efforts by a grant program through ANA which specifically authorizes grant funding for three purposes: language survival schools; language nests; and language restoration programs. Unfortunately, the President's FY 2008 budget calls for flat funding of ANA, at \$44 million, which jeopardizes implementation of any new language grant programs. AFN joins NCAI in recommending a \$10 million increase in funding for ANA, to \$54 million in FY2008, which should be allocated toward Native language immersion and restoration programs.

3. Increase per capita Head Start funding and broaden eligibility requirements to ensure earlier success among our youngest students. Brain connections grow dramatically from birth to age 6, affecting lifelong learning potential. Research demonstrates that educators, parents and childcare providers who read to young children promote the latter's brain development. Yet nearly half of Alaska's children enter school unprepared to read or learn. Sixty percent of the 3,656 children served by Head Start in Alaska are Alaska Natives or American Indians, many of whom do not speak English as their first language. Head Start serves 113 locations statewide, 90 of which are in predominately Alaska Native communities. Research demonstrates that Head Start prepares children for kindergarten and sets the stage for a lifetime of educational achievement, better health, improved family support and decreased criminal activity, when compared with children who did not attend Head Start. Federal Head Start suffered a 1% reduction in FY 2006, which represents a real decline of 11% since FY 2002, taking into account inflation, and which may be increased to a 13% decrease in FY 2008. Decreased funding has forced nine Alaska Head Start programs to cut 361 Head Start slots since FY 2003, while the number of eligible children has remained steady. We strongly urge Congress to increase FY 2008 funding for Head Start.

4. Reauthorize funding for the Alaska Native Education Equity Act and the Strengthening Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Programs. The Administration's FY 2008 budget eliminates funding for both programs. These federal efforts have brought a combined total of nearly \$19.5 million into the Alaska University system since 1998. They have enabled the five campuses of the College of Rural and Community Development to prepare hundreds of students who will be leaders of their own communities in the future. These programs have developed a variety of culturally appropriate courses; strengthened Early Childhood Education programs; developed Certificate programs in Tribal Management, Construction Trades and Para-Professional Education; provided faculty to teach in the Alaska Native-Serving campuses; and established partnerships with regional organizations and businesses. Bernice Joseph, Vice Chancellor of Rural, Community and Native Education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, warns that elimination of these programs would "...be devastating to the rural campuses. It would close or severely cripple them." It is imperative that these programs remain intact.

5. Amend the requirements for school accountability and teaching credentials in Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act to ensure that these requirements do not eclipse implementation of the culturally based educational approach embodied in Title VII of the same act. The NCLB Act is up for reauthorization during this Congress. The rigorous accountability requirements of Title I have focused school resources and attention on achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress ("AYP") benchmarks, often to the exclusion of Title VII, which emphasizes culturally based

education for Native students. To ensure that school efforts to achieve AYP do not eclipse the , culturally based education approach reflected in Title VII, Congress should amend the NCLB to:

- Include goals and accountability measures within Title I (AYP benchmarks) that measure school development and implementation of culturally based educational approaches for Native youth; and
- Include a mechanism within Title VII that aligns all of the NCLB titles to meet the unique needs of Native students.

6. Congress should amend the definition of High Quality Teachers in the No Child Left Behind Act to take into account the need for educators who are experts in local Native languages and cultures and should help to develop local Native populations as future educators. NCLB requires any K-12 teacher of core academic subjects to meet specific requirements as a “highly qualified teacher” (HQT), defined as someone who holds at least a bachelor’s degree and demonstrates subject matter competence in the core academic subjects that she or he will be teaching. This definition does not take into account the circumstances of Native students attending small, rural schools in Alaska where there is a limited number of teachers in each school and an abnormally high teacher turnover rate, as schools hire educators from outside the community to meet the HQT requirements. Research demonstrates that students who are taught by educators from their own culture achieve higher academic performance. Providing opportunities for Native educators to work in their own communities offers the additional benefit of reducing teacher turnover in rural communities - systemic problem in rural Alaska.



## **Alaska Federation of Natives 2007 Federal Priorities**

### **Expand Opportunities for Contracting and Compacting of Federal Programs**

Tribal self-governance has proven to be one of the most successful policies ever enacted for Native people. It has allowed Tribes and tribal consortia to assume and manage programs, services, functions and activities at the local level. Tribal self-governance has empowered Tribes to prioritize their needs and plan their futures consistent with their culture, traditions and institutions. While remarkable gains have been made over the last decade, Native people still have considerable odds to overcome: a typical American Indian is 510% more likely to die from alcoholism, 600% more like to die from diabetes, and 152% more likely to die from an accident than the rest of the US population. The rate of violent crime against American Indians and Alaska Natives is twice the national average. Alaska Natives commit suicide at three to four times the rate among non-Native Americans throughout the country.

In order to aid Alaska Natives and Native Americans in addressing these long enduring socio-economic disparities, we encourage Congress to continue to support tribal self-determination.

Recommended Action: AFN urges Congress to continue to build on the solid success of tribal self-governance by expanding the opportunities for tribes and tribal consortia in Alaska to contract for federal programs administered by the DHHS and non-BIA programs within the Department of the Interior. Specifically, we call upon Congress and the Administration to support the following self-governance initiatives:

- 1. Tribal Self-Governance Demonstration Project for non-BIA programs within the Department of Interior:** In 1994, Congress amended the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act, adding Title IV, which established the permanent Tribal Self-Governance program within the Department of Interior and authorized funding agreements between tribes and tribal consortia with the Department for programs, services, functions or activities administered by the BIA and other Bureaus of the Department. Title IV was intended to expand the ability of Native organizations with self-governance compacts to include non-BIA Interior Department activities in their compacts where there is a close relationship between the federal activity and the Native community. In 2000, the Act was again amended to include Titles V, which established permanent self-governance authority for the IHS within the Department of Health and Human Services. Title V directly addressed many of the flaws that were in Title IV, which Interior officials used to impede the full implementation of Self-Governance within the Department of Interior. Almost immediately after the 2000 amendments, Tribal leaders sought amendments to Title IV to incorporate these beneficial provisions from Title V, and developed a package of amendments that were ultimately included in S.1715.

On June 16, 2004, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee approved S.1715, but the bill died at the end of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. Despite on-going tribal discussions with the Department of Interior, little progress has been made in efforts to craft legislation that would include all of Title V's provisions into Title IV. AFN urges Congress to enact a package of amendments like those contained in S.1715 so that Tribes can streamline the delivery of services to their people and carry out their governmental responsibilities in an efficient and coordinated manner.

2. **Alaska Federal Lands Management Demonstration Project Act:** During the 109th Congress, Congressman Young introduced HR 1810, to expand Alaska Native contracting of federal land management functions and activities and promote hiring of Alaska Natives by the federal government within Alaska. An identical bill (HR 4734) passed out of House Resources during the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, but failed to pass out of the House due to opposition from the Administration. The bill directed the Secretary of the Interior to establish a pilot program for Alaska Native tribes or tribal consortia to apply for contracts to perform certain services on federal lands in Alaska. The bill would have furthered the unique purpose of the conservation system units as they relate to subsistence practices, Alaska Native culture and the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat. To qualify, tribes would have to demonstrate significant use or reliance on the land in question and complete a planning process. Essentially, the bill would have extended the 638 contracting and compacting mechanisms, on a pilot basis, to non-BIA agencies in Alaska.

Federal lands constitute about 60% of the land area in Alaska. In some areas, park and refuge lands completely surround Native communities and are the primary location for village subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering activities. These communities' entire culture is inextricably linked to the land. Congress, through sections 1306 and 1307 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), recognized this and directed the Secretary of the Interior to establish programs whereby Native lands were given preference for locating Conservation System Unit (CSU) facilities and gave Native Corporations a preference in providing certain visitor services on CSUs. Congress recognized that Natives should be involved in the administering of the lands because of their special knowledge and expertise concerning the natural resources of such areas. More than twenty-five years have passed since ANILCA was enacted and Congress' goals regarding contracting and Native-hire remain largely unfulfilled by the Department of Interior.

AFN urges Congress to enact legislation like HR 1810, directing the Secretary to implement sections 1307 and 1308 of ANILCA and to enter into demonstration projects with no less than six eligible Alaska Native Tribes or their organizations. We also request the Department of Interior to lend its full support to passage of such legislation. Enactment of this bill would further the Administration's economic agenda of creating jobs and expanding economic opportunities for Native Americans.

3. **DHHS Tribal Self-Governance Amendments:** The 2000 amendments to the ISDEAA also included a new Title VI that provided for a study to determine the feasibility of conducting a Self-Governance Demonstration Project in other programs of the Department of Health and Human Services, which has since been completed. In the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee approved an amended version of S.1696, which would have amended Title VI of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act to authorize a five-year demonstration project. Under the Demonstration Project, up to 50 tribes would have been authorized to plan, conduct and administer programs with DHHS. The bill did not pass before the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned. AFN strongly supports amending the ISDEAA to allow for the contracting of programs within the DHHS, and urges Congress to move forward with such legislation during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.



## **Alaska Federation of Natives 2007 Federal Priorities**

### **Denali Commission**

The need for infrastructure in Village Alaska - whether for schools, health centers, housing, detention facilities, courts, or water and sewer systems - is dire. Yet a number of programs that provide infrastructure development in rural Alaska will suffer significant decreases in FY 2008 under the President's proposed budget. We are particularly concerned about funding for the Denali Commission, a federal-state partnership designed to provide critical utilities, infrastructure and economic support to Alaska's rural Villages. AFN urges Congress to continue the Denali Commission's funding at least at the FY2006 levels.