

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 3973

To provide for a study of the recommendations of the Joint Federal-State Commission on Policies and Programs Affecting Alaska Natives.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 2, 1996

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Resources

A BILL

To provide for a study of the recommendations of the Joint Federal-State Commission on Policies and Programs Affecting Alaska Natives.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS AND DECLARA-**
4 **TION OF POLICY.**

5 The Congress finds and declares the following:

6 (1) The Joint Federal-State Commission on
7 Policies and Programs Affecting Alaska Natives
8 (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Alaska Na-
9 tives Commission”) was established by Public Law
10 101–379 (42 U.S.C. 2991a note) following the publi-

1 cation in 1989 of the “Report on the Status of Alas-
2 ka Natives: A Call for Action” by the Alaska Fed-
3 eration of Natives and after extensive congressional
4 hearings which focused on the need for the first
5 comprehensive assessment of the social, cultural, and
6 economic condition of Alaska’s 86,000 Natives since
7 the enactment of the Alaska Native Claims Settle-
8 ment Act, Public Law 92–203.

9 (2) The 14 member Alaska Natives Commission
10 held 15 regional hearings throughout Alaska be-
11 tween July 1992 and October 1993, and 2 statewide
12 hearings in Anchorage coinciding with the Conven-
13 tions of 1992 and 1993 of the Alaska Federation of
14 Natives. In May 1994, the Alaska Natives Commis-
15 sion issued its 3 volume, 440 page report. As re-
16 quired by Public Law 101–379, the report was for-
17 mally conveyed to the Congress, the President of the
18 United States, and the Governor of Alaska.

19 (3) The Alaska Natives Commission found that
20 many Alaska Native individuals, families, and com-
21 munities were experiencing a social, cultural, and
22 economic crisis marked by rampant unemployment,
23 lack of economic opportunity, alcohol abuse, depres-
24 sion, and morbidity and mortality rates that have

1 been described by health care professionals as “stag-
2 gering”.

3 (4) The Alaska Natives Commission found that
4 due to the high rate of unemployment and lack of
5 economic opportunities for Alaska Natives, govern-
6 ment programs for the poor have become the foun-
7 dation of many village economies. Displacing tradi-
8 tional Alaska Native social safety nets, these well-
9 meaning programs have undermined the healthy
10 interdependence and self-sufficiency of Native tribes
11 and families and have put Native tribes and families
12 at risk of becoming permanent dependencies of Gov-
13 ernment.

14 (5) Despite these seemingly insurmountable
15 problems, the Alaska Natives Commission found
16 that Alaska Natives, building on the Alaska Native
17 Claims Settlement Act, had begun a unique process
18 of critical self-examination which, if supported by
19 the United States Congress through innovative legis-
20 lation, and effective public administration at all lev-
21 els including traditional Native governance, could
22 provide the basis for an Alaska Native social, cul-
23 tural, economic, and spiritual renewal.

1 (6) The Alaska Natives Commission recognized
2 that the key to the future well-being of Alaska Na-
3 tives lay in—

4 (A) the systematic resumption of respon-
5 sibility by Alaska Natives for the well-being of
6 their members,

7 (B) the strengthening of their economies,

8 (C) the strengthening, operation, and con-
9 trol of their systems of governance, social serv-
10 ices, education, health care, and law enforce-
11 ment, and

12 (D) exercising rights they have from their
13 special relationship with the Federal Govern-
14 ment and as citizens of the United States and
15 Alaska.

16 (7) The Alaska Natives Commission recognized
17 that the following 3 basic principles must be re-
18 spected in addressing the myriad of problems facing
19 Alaska Natives:

20 (A) Self-reliance.

21 (B) Self-determination.

22 (C) Integrity of Native cultures.

23 (8) There is a need to address the problems
24 confronting Alaska Natives. This should be done
25 rapidly, with certainty, and in conformity with the

1 real economic, social, and cultural needs of Alaska
2 Natives.

3 (9) Congress retains and has exercised its con-
4 stitutional authority over Native affairs in Alaska
5 subsequent to the Treaty of Cession and does so now
6 through this Act.

7 **SEC. 2. ALASKA NATIVE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY.**

8 (a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds and declares
9 that—

10 (1) the Alaska Natives Commission adopted
11 certain recommendations raising important policy
12 questions which are unresolved in Alaska and which
13 require further study and review before Congress
14 considers legislation to implement solutions to ad-
15 dress these recommendations; and

16 (2) the Alaska Federation of Natives is the rep-
17 resentative body of statewide Alaska Native interests
18 best suited to further investigate and report to Con-
19 gress with proposals to implement the recommenda-
20 tions of the Alaska Natives Commission.

21 (b) GRANT.—The Secretary of the Interior shall
22 make a grant to the Alaska Federation of Natives to con-
23 duct the study and submit the report required by this sec-
24 tion. Such grant may only be made if the Alaska Federa-

1 tion of Natives agrees to abide by the requirements of this
2 section.

3 (c) STUDY.—Pursuant to subsection (b), the Alaska
4 Federation of Natives shall—

5 (1) examine the recommendations of the Alaska
6 Natives Commission;

7 (2) examine initiatives in the United States,
8 Canada, and elsewhere for successful ways that is-
9 sues similar to the issues addressed by the Alaska
10 Natives Commission have been addressed;

11 (3) conduct hearings within the Alaska Native
12 community on further ways in which the Commis-
13 sion’s recommendations might be implemented; and

14 (4) recommend enactment of specific provisions
15 of law and other actions the Congress should take
16 to implement such recommendations.

17 (d) CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL CONTROL.—In devel-
18 oping its recommendations pursuant to subsection (c)(4),
19 the Alaska Federation of Natives shall give specific atten-
20 tion to the ways in which the recommendations may be
21 achieved at the local level with maximum local control of
22 the implementation of the recommendations.

23 (e) REPORT.—Not later than 12 months after the
24 date on which the grant is made under subsection (b), the
25 Alaska Federation of Natives shall submit a report on the

1 study conducted under this section, together with the rec-
2 ommendations developed pursuant to subsection (c)(4), to
3 the President and the Congress and to the Governor and
4 legislature of the State of Alaska. In addition, the Alaska
5 Federation of Natives shall make the report available to
6 Alaska Native villages and organizations and to the gen-
7 eral public.

8 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
9 authorized to be appropriated \$350,000 for the grant
10 under subsection (b).

11 (g) ADDITIONAL STATE FUNDING.—The Congress
12 encourages the State of Alaska to provide the additional
13 funding necessary for the completion of the study under
14 this section.

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