

Alaska Legislature

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Sponsor Statement – House Joint Resolution 6 FEDERAL CONTAMINATION OF ANCSA LANDS

When the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was passed in 1971, a new chapter in first peoples' history was created. Rather than being confined to the reservation system of the continuous forty-eight states, Alaska Natives had lands conveyed to them through their corporations to own. They quickly learned the land they fought so hard to reclaim had a serious problem, it was polluted with industrial waste and toxic chemicals left behind by various federal agencies.

In December of 1998, the Department of the Interior released its required report to Congress. The report stated that approximately 650 contaminated sites were on lands conveyed pursuant to ANCSA. Because the lands are now held privately, Native Corporations are subject to liability by the State of Alaska and the Federal Government to remediate those lands. Congressman Don Young said it best "It was clearly not the intention of ANCSA to extinguish Native claims by conveying contaminated property to recipients."

House Joint Resolution 6 asks the Alaska Legislature, to encourage the United States Congress to pass legislation, holding the federal government responsible for the remediation of contaminated lands under ANCSA. The federal government has a financial and moral obligation to make the contaminated sites whole again.

Native Corporations have already spent millions of dollars at remediation sites. Meanwhile, the United States Department of the Interior has failed to fully implement any of its six recommendations to clean up native owned land.

I urge your support for HJR 6. Our state needs to say, in a unified voice, that if private industry should be held to strict environmental standards, even from years before, than federal actions need to be raised to the same standard. We owe it to the Alaska Native community to not have their rights trampled on yet again. Let us right this wrong.

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