ALASKA LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE FILES, 1989-1990 8672
6104 HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS

528

HB 105

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS

RECAP OF
HB 105

Mandatory Seatbelts

Received January 20, 1989
by Reps. Cotten, Ulmer, Zawacki, Gruenberg and Hanley

Heard January 31, 1989

Passed Out of Committee January 18, 1989
4 Do Pass
2 No Recommendation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HB 105: Mandatory Seatbelts

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)
Date Referred: January 20, 1989 FURTHER REFERRALS: JUDICIARY

Date of Committee Action: _____

The STATE AFFAIRS Committee recommends that:

HOUSE BILL NO. 105
"An Act relating to mandatory use of safety devices in motor vehicles."

[ ] be replaced with _____ [ ] the same title
[ ] a new title

[ ] have attached amendment(s)

[X] do pass
[ ] do not pass
[ ] no recommendation
[ ] individual recommendations
[ ] additional referral to the _____ Committee

ADOPTS: _____ letter of intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(s):

[ ] fiscal impact
[ ] zero fiscal note
[X] zero with analysis

APPROVES PREVIOUS:

[ ] fiscal note(s) published:

_____

[ ] zero fiscal notes(s) published:

_____

SIGNING DO PASS:

Joyce Hanley
Irma Edwards
Caille P. Mayhew
D/C Parker

SIGNING OTHER THAN DO PASS:
(Do Not Pass, No Recommendation, Amend)

Dave Donley no rec
Ted Long no rec

D/C Parker
Chairman's signature

Item 2

BILL NO: HB 105

DATE: January 26, 1989

TITLE: "An Act relating to mandatory use of safety devices in motor vehicles."

CONTACT: Ellen Moore
Highway Safety Planning Agency
465-4375

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

The intent of this legislation is to reduce deaths and serious injuries to occupants of motor vehicles by promoting the great use of safety belts by the motoring public.

Thirty-one states have enacted bills requiring the use of safety belts. Jurisdictions that have had the longest experience with their laws have found that the greater the level of increase in seatbelt use, the greater reduction in fatalities and serious injuries.

House Bill 105 has the potential to save as many as 35 lives in Alaska each year. This figure assumes a 70% compliance rate and a 50% effectiveness rate. Because the bill allows only "secondary" enforcement, it may be difficult to achieve this level of use; however, surveys conducted since 1985 by Hellenthal and Associates indicate that approximately 80% of the Alaskans surveyed will wear safety belts simply because such a law exists.

We recommend passage of HB 105 as written.

Arthur English
Commissioner

STATE OF ALASKA
1989 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL VERSION: HB 105
PUBLISH DATE: _____

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST: _____

Revision Date: _____
Title: Mandatory use of safety devices in motor vehicles
Sponsor: Representative Cotten, et al
Requestor: House State Affairs

Agency Affected: Public Safety
BRU: Highway Safety Planning Agency,
Component: _____

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars) (Inflation not included)

OPERATING	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
CAPITAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
REVENUE	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

No fiscal impact is anticipated. Revenue generated will be negligible. Section 3 provides for judicial waiving of the $15.00 fine if a donation is made to the Emergency Medical Services entity serving the locale where the violation occurred.

Prepared by: Ellen Moore, Program Coordinator
Division: Highway Safety Planning Agency
Phone: 465-4375
Date: 1/26/89

Approved by Commissioner: Arthur English
Agency: Department of Public Safety
Date: _____

Item 3

Tuesday, January 17, 1989

Make it mandatory

The Legislature could do a simple thing that would save lives, reduce injuries and save money. It could pass a law making the use of safety belts in vehicles mandatory.

Many people don't like the idea of mandatory safety belt laws. The use of safety belts should be a personal choice, they say. The government has no business dictating personal choices.

It's a compelling argument, but not so compelling as the harm that is done by not wearing safety belts. According to a 1987 study, mandatory use of safety belts in Alaska would save 35 lives a year, reduce injuries to more than 600 persons, save $5 million worth of lost labor and decrease other economic losses associated with highway death and injury by $13 million. Not just the victims, but everyone pays the cost of not wearing safety belts in terms of increased taxes, insurance premiums and health care costs.

Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia have passed mandatory safety belt laws. In every state, use of safety belts has increased substantially.

Educational programs promoting safety belt use fail to provide the incentive to buckle up that a law requiring it does. We reluctantly move from a position of advocating voluntary compliances to urging the Legislature to make safety belts mandatory. They should, however, avoid some of the problems that Washington state encountered when they initially failed to provide for exemptions for certain types of delivery vehicles.

FAIRBANKS
Daily News - Miner

ANCHORAGE TIMES

— 1.25.89

A matter of safety

THERE IS truly only one basic question to be answered when it comes to trying to decide whether Alaska should adopt a law which requires motorists to buckle up their seat belts when they get behind the wheel.

Do seat belts save lives?

And the overwhelming evidence — from all kinds of national statistics down to the doctors in the emergency rooms of Anchorage hospitals — is that they do.

It also is evident that without a law some people will not buckle up. So the law is necessary.

It is necessary in the same way that everyone who boards an airplane is required to fasten his or her seat belt.

And it is no more onerous a requirement than making it a law that motorists must halt at stop signs and red lights, yield to emergency vehicles or obey speed limits.

THIS ISN'T a debate over the infringement of personal liberties, as some opponents attempt to make it.

If you think your freedom would be abridged by a mandatory seat belt law, you no doubt are in a simmering fit right now because the state requires you to have a driver's license before you can legally operate a motor vehicle.

What's the difference?

Both items, as a matter of fact, are life-saving ingredients to making our streets and highways safer. You don't want to be on the same road with drivers who are not licensed. That's a law that looks after your own safety. So, too, would one requiring you to do what you may now forget to do when you slip behind the wheel — and that's to snap the seat belt in place.

Opponents argue that the lobbying for enactment of the seat belt law is nothing more than a deceitful ploy by the auto industry to try to avoid eventually providing air bags in all vehicles.

But so what if auto makers support the use of seat belts? So do a lot of other people, including the insurance industry, various medical societies and individual doctors, and every other motorist whose life has been saved because a seat belt was secure at the time of an accident.

Sen. Arliss Sturgulewski, the Anchorage Republican who is a prime sponsor of the seat belt law in this session of the legislature, is correct.

It's simply a matter of safety, pure and simple. Forget all the extraneous arguments. Stick to the basic reason why.

JUST THE other day, new statistics proved the point.

A study of all traffic accidents in North Carolina from 1983 to 1987 showed a dramatic drop in the number of deaths and serious injuries after a mandatory seat belt law was enacted. This report estimated that North Carolina may have 1,100 fewer severe and fatal highway injuries every year as a result of mandatory seat belt use.

A second study of 1,364 accident victims taken to trauma units of four Chicago-area hospitals showed that hospital admissions decreased by nearly 65 percent and related costs dropped 66 percent for those who were wearing seat belts. This study said the average cost of treating accident victims who were wearing seat belts was $534, compared to $1,583 for victims who didn't wear belts.

The Journal of the American Medical Association, reporting on the new studies, said this: "Safety belts turn out to be an economical way of trying to reduce that health-care dollar."

Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia have seat belt laws.

Alaska should become the 32nd state to get on this safety bandwagon.

POSITION PAPER/Department of Health & Social Services

Item 5

Position Paper

HB 105

For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to mandatory use of safety devices in motor vehicles."

This act repeals and reenacts AS 28.05.095 to require that "a person 16 years of age or older may not occupy a motor vehicle while being driven unless restrained by a safety belt."

Children under four years old are required to be in a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) approved child safety device, and children between four and sixteen must be in an approved safety device or secured by a safety belt.

This bill would exempt emergency vehicles from the requirement, vehicle operators engaged in the delivery of mail and others as determined by regulation.

The bill would establish a penalty of up to $15 in fines which could be waived in lieu of a contribution to the local Emergency Medical Service (EMS).

The Department of Health and Social Services supports the passage of this bill for the following reasons:

1) Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death, injury and long-term disability;

2) Numerous studies have shown that safety belts and other vehicle safety restraints substantially reduce the likelihood of death or injury to motor vehicle occupants involved in crashes;

3) Efforts to educate the public about the benefits of safety belts have failed to convince the majority of vehicle occupants to use their safety belts.

4) Motor vehicle crashes are the single most frequently mentioned cause of injury responded to by EMS ambulances. The proposed donation in lieu of a fine would help to defray the cost of these services.

Background

Nationally, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death to persons between one and 35 years of age. For teenagers, car crash fatalities out-number the next five causes of death combined. Over the past decade more than 450,000 persons have died on America's highways. Every year over 40,000 persons are killed in automobile accidents in the United States, and more than 300,000 people suffer moderate

to severe and critical injuries. Many of the [illegible] are young people who will never work again for the rest of their lives.

In Alaska, from 1980 through 1985, unintentional injuries (accidents) have been the leading cause of death for all ages. Motor vehicle crashes and drowning have been the chief causes of these deaths. In 1986 there were 101 deaths and more than 5,000 Alaskans were injured as a result of motor vehicle crashes in this state.

According the Highway Safety Planning Agency, property damage from motor vehicle crashes amounted to over $40,000,000 in 1986. This does not include bodily injury claims payments for private passenger non-fleet automobile liability in Alaska which totaled over six million dollars in 1983 and was over eight million in 1984. These amounts do not include paid losses from other third party payers, such as Medicare, Medicaid, General Relief Medical, Indian Health Service or Workers Compensation. Clearly, in addition to the unacceptable losses from premature death and disabilities, motor vehicle crashes create a significant financial burden which is shared by all citizens.

Worldwide, almost 40 countries have mandated safety belt use. In Great Britain seat belt use rose from about 40% to 90-95% with the passage of a mandatory use law. At the same time the number of individuals treated in emergency rooms as the result of motor vehicle crashes has dropped 15%. There were also 15% to 20% fewer fatalities in the years since the passage of the law.

In Canada, all provinces have enacted mandatory safety belt use laws. The effectiveness of these laws in increasing belt use has been shown to be dependent on the degree to which they are enforced. In provinces where strict enforcement has been practiced belt use has been up to 80%. Deaths due to motor vehicle crashes have declined 11% and injuries 6%, in provinces with mandatory use laws.

In this country, 31 states and the District of Columbia now have mandatory belt use laws. New York was the first state to pass such a law. Safety belt use there is now about 64%. This use rate have resulted in about a 9% drop in motor vehicle crash fatalities.

It is clear that the use of safety belts can reduce the number of deaths and disabilities due to motor vehicle crashes. A mandatory safety belt use law would go far to achieve this goal and complement existing traffic safety

POSITION PAPER/Department of Health & Social Services

legislation regarding driving while intoxicated, maximum speed limits, and licensing requirements.

Position

The Department of Health and Social Services strongly supports this bill because it can result in significant decreases in the number of deaths, disabilities and injuries caused by motor vehicle crashes.

Recommended by: [signature]
Elizabeth Ward, M.N.
Director
Division of Public Health

Date: _____

Approved by: [signature]
Myra M. Munson
Commissioner
Department of Health and Social Services

Date: 1/29/89

STATE OF ALASKA
1989 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL VERSION: HB 105
PUBLISH DATE: _____

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST:

Revision Date: 01/30/89
Title: "An Act relating to mandatory use of safety devices in motor vehicles."
Sponsor: Cotton, Ulmer, Zawacki, et. al.
Requestor: _____

Agency Affected: Health & Social Services
BRU: State Health Services
Components: Emergency Medical Services

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
CAPITAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
REVENUE	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The enactment of HB 105 would have no direct fiscal impact on the Department of Health & Social Services.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Ward, Director
Division: Public Health
Phone: 465-3090
Date: _____

Approved by Commissioner: Myra M. Munson
Agency: Department of Health and Social Services
Date: 2/2/89

Distribution (by preparer):
Legislative Finance
Legislative Sponsor
Requestor
Office of Management and Budget
Impacted Agency(ies)

HB 105

exclude < less a passenger Dodge trucks e.g.
OK to require; however, Big
Yellow Buses - NO

HANLEY

- insurance co: coverage ; no co. Restricts
insurance because of seatbelts

COTTON

DOES NOT effect BAGS REQUIREMENT
IS FINE / - SECONDARY offense - Police
can't pull you over - involved in
accident can be cited e.g.

Law on books, people more likely to comply

MARK JOHNSON

EMS coordinator DHSS - State level

Donley

STATES Poll is ACCIDENTAL - 1 MIL - NO
health care - cost to state? STATE EMPLOYEE
insurance pays - END RESULT / everyone shares
IN that cost -

what are free programs that pay under cost.
where someone has no insurance.
- rates are adjusted for the rest of us
- state program that compensates?
Medicaid - low income - if eligible
Tied to state contributions.

look beyond individual rights

Item 4

COUNTRIES WITH SAFETY BELT USE LAWS

Country	Effective Date
Australia	1/72
Austria	7/76
Belgium	6/75
Brazil	6/72
Bulgaria	1976
Canadian Provinces	
Alberta	7/87
British Columbia	10/77
Manitoba	1/84
Newfoundland	8/82
New Brunswick	11/83
Nova Scotia	1/85
Ontario	1/76
Quebec	8/76
Saskatchewan	7/77
Czechoslovakia	1/69
Denmark	1/76
East Germany	1/80
Finland	7/75
France	10/79
Greece	12/79
Hong Kong	10/83
Hungary	7/77
Iceland	10/81
Ireland	2/79
Israel	7/75
Ivory Coast	1970
Japan	12/71
Jordan	12/83
Luxembourg	6/75
Malaysia	4/79
Netherlands	6/75
New Zealand	6/72
Norway	9/75
Poland	1/84
Portugal	1/78
Singapore	7/81
South Africa	12/77
Spain	10/74
Sweden	1/75
Switzerland	1/76
Turkey	10/84

Country	Effective Date
United States and Territories	
California	1/86
Colorado	7/1/87
Connecticut	1/1/86
Dist. of Columbia	12/12/85
Florida	7/1/86
Hawaii	12/16/85
Georgia	9/1/88
Idaho	7/1/86
Illinois	7/1/85
Indiana	7/1/87
Iowa	7/1/86
Kansas	7/1/86
Louisiana	7/1/86
Maryland	7/1/86
Michigan	7/1/85
Minnesota	8/1/86
Missouri	9/28/85
Montana	10/1/87
Nevada	7/1/87
New Jersey	3/1/85
New Mexico	1/1/86
New York	12/1/84
North Carolina	10/1/85
Ohio	5/6/86
Oklahoma	2/1/87
Pennsylvania	11/23/87
Puerto Rico	1/1/74
Tennessee	4/21/86
Texas	9/1/85
Utah	4/29/86
Virginia	1/1/88
Washington	6/11/86
Wisconsin	12/1/87
United Kingdom	1/83
USSR	1/76
West Germany	1/76
Yugoslavia	1/85
Zimbabwe	7/80

SOURCE: University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute.

Anchorage Daily News

Winner, 1976 Pulitzer Prize Gold Medal for Public Service

Gerald E. Grilly
Publisher

Howard Weaver
Managing Editor

Michael Carey
Editorial Page Editor

Katherine Fanning, Editor and Publisher 1971 to 1983
Lawrence Fanning, Editor and Publisher 1967 to 1971

Founded in 1946 by Norman C. Brown

A way to prevent needless deaths

This year, the legislature has a chance to help fight one of the most serious health problems in the state — and it can do so with very little money or effort.

The health problem is accidental injuries. They are the second leading cause of death for all Alaskans — and the leading cause among young Alaskans. Too many of these deaths come in motor vehicle accidents — some 231 over the past three years.

AGENDA 89

There's a simple way to cut this carnage on the state's highways: Require people to wear seat belts. Of those 231 victims, 201 were not belted in.

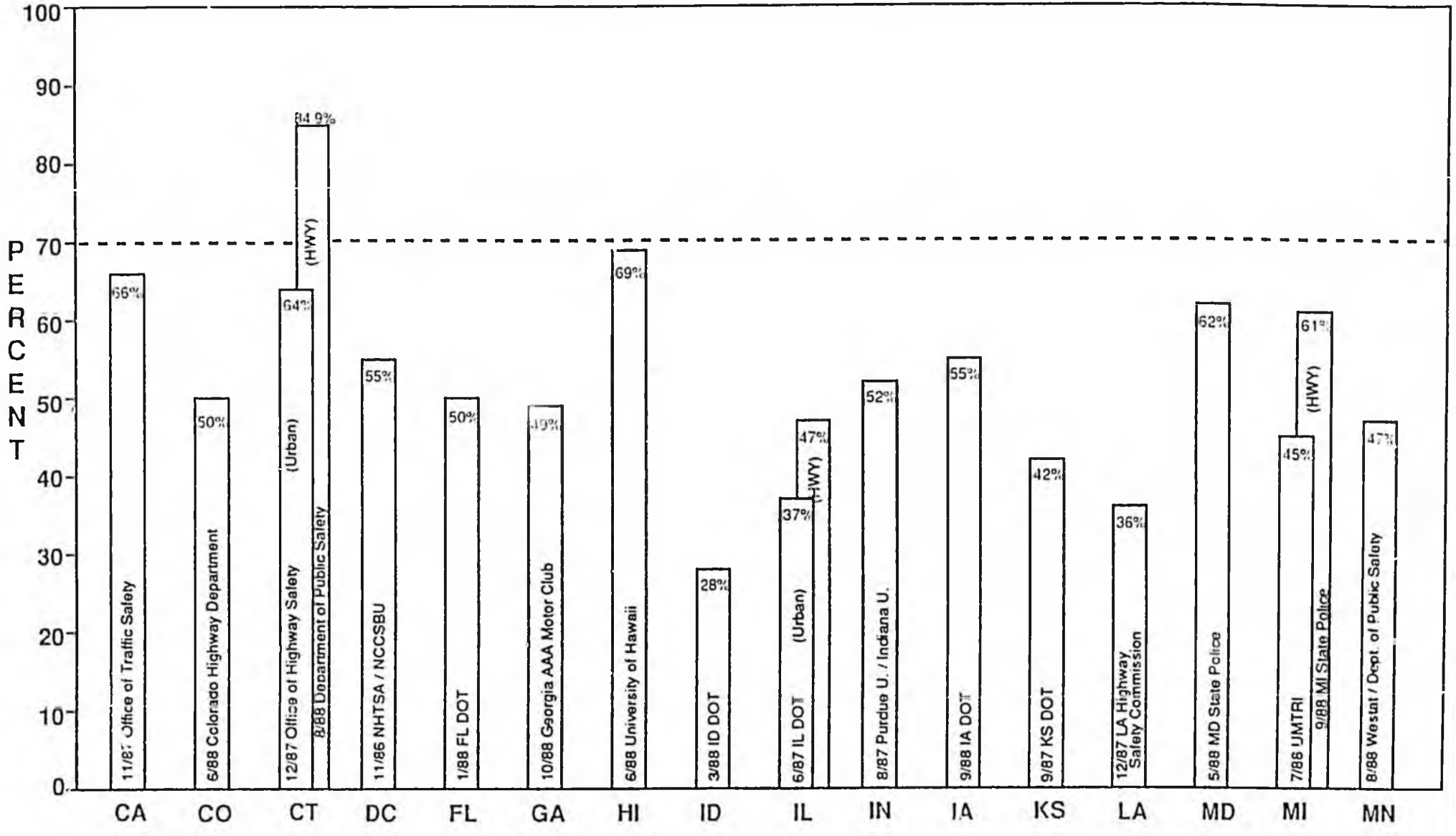
A bill to mandate seat belt use passed the state House last year but never made it to the Senate floor for a vote. This year, with new legislative leadership, prospects for a seat belt law look much better.

In the past, some people have resisted a seat belt law because they see it as an infringement on their personal freedom. Why they object is a mystery. The resulting "intrusion" into people's lives is on a par with a parking ticket — and has considerably more justification. When a parked car overstays its welcome, there's just one less parking space available. When car passengers fail to buckle up, they invite serious injury and death, and increase the costs we all pay for emergency services, insurance and health care.

Alaska's proposed seat belt law offers us all a gentle reminder to do what's good for everyone. The violation would be a secondary offense, meaning that drivers cannot be cited unless they are stopped for some other violation. The fine would be a mere $15. If violators don't want to send their checks to the government, they can donate the $15 to emergency medical services.

Seat belts save lives — but only if people wear them. A mandatory seat belt law is a reasonable way to get more people to buckle up.

COMPLIANCE RATES IN POST-LAW STATES

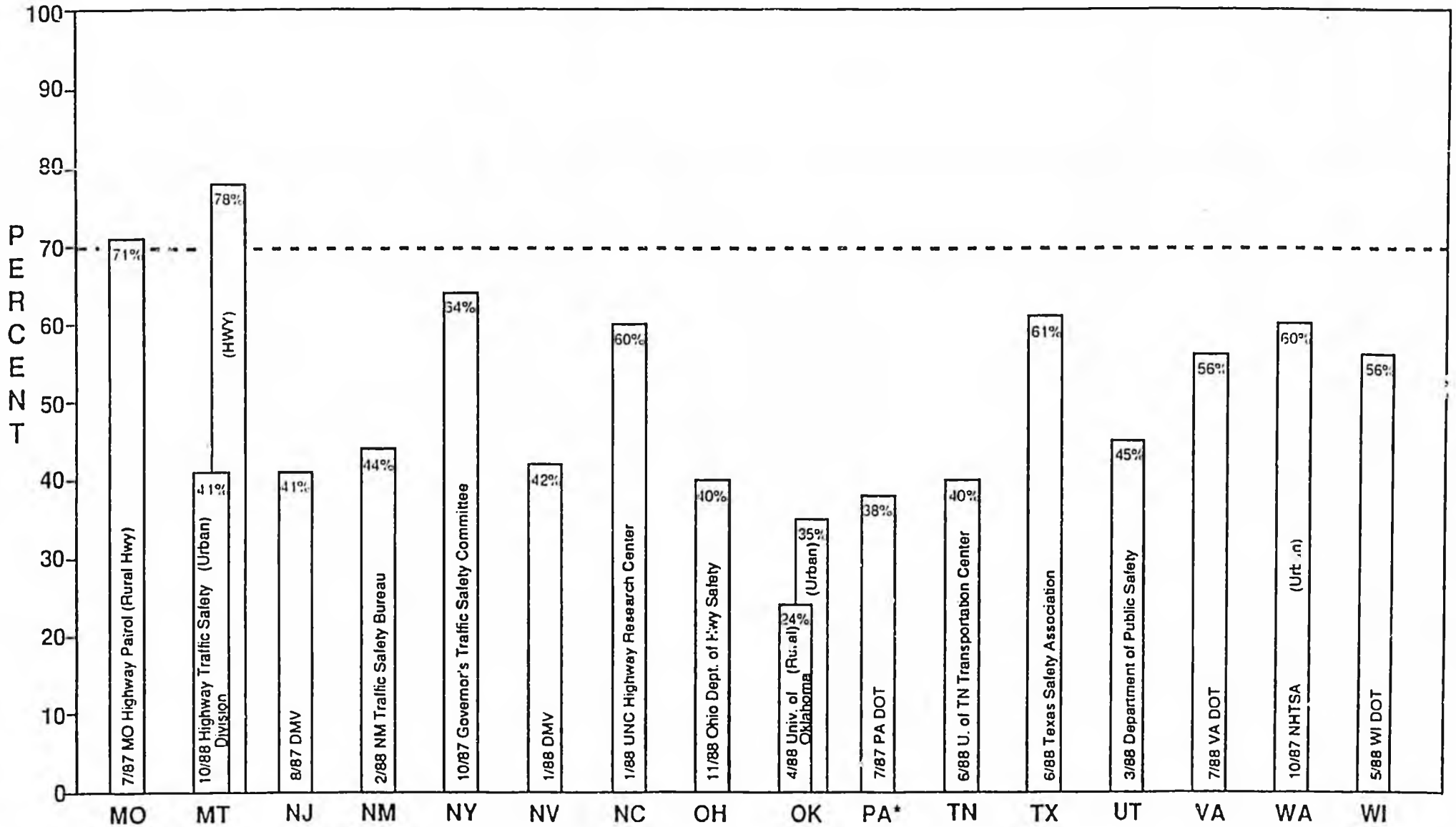


December 1988

(OVER)

COMPLIANCE RATES IN POST-LAW STATES

Page 2



* Use rates prior to law taking effect

Facts and Attribution

* Safety-belt use has saved **10,938 lives** since 1983. Of those, state safety-belt-use laws were credited with saving **6,906 lives.** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 1988

* The probability of being involved in a motor-vehicle injury accident during a 75-year lifetime is better than **86 percent.** NHTSA, 1987

* There were **41,435** fatal accidents resulting in **46,386** fatalities in 1987. (Includes drivers or passengers in all types of motor vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.) NHTSA, 1988

* There were **25,144** passenger-car fatalities and **8,042** light-truck fatalities in 1987. NHTSA, 1988

* Approximately **3,896,000** people were injured in traffic crashes in 1986. (2,835,000 in passenger car accidents alone.) NHTSA, 1988

* The severity of approximately **100,000 injuries** is reduced each year as a result of states having passed safety-belt-use laws. University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center, 1987

* In 1986, an average of **one person** was killed in traffic accidents **every 11 minutes.** NHTSA, 1988

* Unrestrained passenger car occupants are **twice** as likely to receive moderate to critical injuries in the event of a crash as restrained occupants. NHTSA, 1987

* On a national basis, each 10 percent increase in safety-belt use results in **30,000 less** serious and moderate injuries and a savings of approximately **$800 million** in direct costs to society. David A. Sleet, San Diego St. University, 1986

* Traffic crashes rank as the **No. 1 killer** of Americans ages 1-40. NHTSA, 1988

* In terms of years of life lost to Americans (based on life expectancy data), injuries as a result of motor vehicle accidents exceed cancer by 1.1 million years and top heart disease and strokes by 900,000 years. Institute of Medicine, National Research Council and the National Academy of Sciences, 1985

* Of motor vehicle-related deaths, **82 percent** occur during normal weather conditions. NHTSA, 1988

* **Less than one half of 1 percent** of all injury-producing, passenger-car collisions involve fire or submersion. NHTSA, 1988

* Safety belts reduce the likelihood of fatal or serious injuries by **40 to 55 percent.** NHTSA, 1988

* Automobile accidents cost employers an average of **$120,000 per death** and **$1.9 billion annually.** National Highway Users Federation and the American Safety Federation (HUF), 1985

* The cost of all traffic deaths and injuries in the United States during 1986 was about **$74.2 billion,** including:

  - **$27.4 billion** in property damage
  - **$16.4 billion** in lost productivity
  - **$ 4.1 billion** in medical costs
  - **$26.3 billion** in other costs (such as insurance administration, legal and court costs and emergency services.) NHTSA, 1988

* People thrown from their cars are **25 times** more likely to be killed than if they stayed in their vehicle. About **three out of four** people involved in a fatal crash who were thrown from their vehicles in 1984 were killed. NHTSA, 1986

* Of the total passenger-car fatalities, **92 percent** occur in the front seat. NHTSA, 1988

* **Three out of every four** traffic accidents happen within 25 miles of the home. National Safety Council, 1986

* The overall fatality risk of back-seat passengers is reduced by **24** to **40** percent through lap-belt use. NHTSA, June 1988

* Safety-belt-use legislation has been passed in **31 states** and the District of Columbia, covering **nearly 207,000,000 persons.** Traffic Safety Now, Inc., 1988

* It is estimated if **70 percent** of passenger car occupants regularly wore their safety belts in 1985, **7,400 lives** would have been saved and **135,000 moderate to severe injuries** would have been avoided. NHTSA, 1986

* NHTSA estimates lap belts in the rear seat could have saved an estimated **660** lives and prevented **10,200** serious injuries in 1987 if use were 100 percent. NHTSA, 1988

* Safety-belt use among drivers has risen from 14 percent in 1984 to more than **43 percent** in 1988. Among states with safety-belt-use laws, **51 percent** of motorists observed in 1987 wore their safety belts compared to only 27 percent in states without laws. NHTSA, 1988

December 1988

SAFETY-BELT FACTS:
JUDICIAL DECISIONS

TEXAS

- The Texas First Court of Appeals ruled that the legislature can regulate highways. The judgment was in response to a suit which claimed front-seat occupants should be exempt from safety-belt-use laws because the law excludes postal workers. (Richards v. Texas, 1987)

- The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals refused to review an appeal of the state's belt law by attorney R. D. Richards, who claimed the mandate infringed on his personal liberties.

ILLINOIS

- Elizabeth Kohrig of Illinois was convicted of failing to wear her safety belt. She appealed, claiming a safety-belt-use law violates a motorist's right to privacy. The case went through several courts in Illinois. Kohrig's claim lost at every level, including the United States Supreme Court which said safety-belt-use laws do not pose a "substantial federal question."

HAWAII

- The Hawaii Intermediate Court of Appeals rejected Diana Darnell's challenge to a citation for driving without a safety belt. The court said the "enormous social cost of unnecessary death and injury" justifies the safety-belt-use law. (Darnell v. Hawaii, 1987)

NEW JERSEY

- The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled defendants in accident litigation can resort to a "seat-belt defense" to reduce their financial responsibility. Juries are given a formula by which they can reduce a financial award if the plaintiff was not buckled up when involved in an accident. (Waterson v. General Motors, 1988)

* * *

FACT SHEET:

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Effects Of Mandatory Safety Belt Use On Hospital Admissions"

August 1988

This study assessed the effects of Michigan's safety-belt-use law on more than 8,000 motor-vehicle injuries which resulted in hospitalizations at 14 area hospitals.

It was conducted by the University of Michigan School of Public Health from data collected through the Michigan Inpatient Database from January 1980 through October 1986. Major findings of this study include:

- The Michigan safety-belt-use law passed in July 1985 has resulted in a 19-percent reduction in hospitalizations due to automobile accidents.
- There were 20 percent fewer injuries to body extremities following the passage of Michigan's belt-use law.
- Hospitalizations lasting more than one week decreased nearly 25 percent after the law went into effect.
- After the state safety-belt-use law went into effect, minorities experienced 22 percent fewer injuries.
- A 32-percent decline in injuries occurred among patients using public-health insurance after passage of the state law.
- With regard to the contention that safety belts may cause injuries, researchers concluded "the benefits of restraints far exceed the risks associated with them."

* * *

12/27/88

WHY ALASKA NEEDS A SAFETY BELT USE LAW

**By Frank Bickford, Executive Director
Alaska Safety Belt Use Coalition, 360 W.
Benson #101, Anchorage, Ak 99503, 907-
561-7525.**

One thing alone can save 35 lives a year, reduce the the hardship and costs of over 600 injuries, save $5 million worth of lost labor, and decrease economic losses associated with highway death and injury alone by as much as $13 million(Estimates from The Alaska Highway Users Study, 1987): Wearing The Safety Belts Already In Our Cars.

These facts are just four of the reasons Alaska needs a law requiring safety belt use. Although a major purpose of a Alaska Safety Belt Use Law would be to promote the safety of drivers and passengers using their safety belts, such a law would also:

- promote the safety of street and highway travelers other than safety belt users;
- promote the public welfare and safety by reducing highway deaths and injuries and public expenditures

In other words, if Alaska requires safety belts to be worn -- everyone can benefit!

Belt use laws that have been passed in 31 States and D.C. motivate people to buckle up. Those states found that voluntary use was low and through legislating the use of safety belts the incentives to use them have resulted in significant numbers of lives saved and costs reduced.

Educational campaigns promoting safety belt use have been launched here and across the country. Safety belt usage increases temporarily during the campaign and then returns to a low percentage. The amount of money spent is great and the residual impact slight. Safety belt use laws and an aggresive educational campaign must be combined to achieve maximum use. In the absence of a law even with an educational campsign, less than 32% of the population will buckle up. However, a Hellenthal statewide poll (Alaska) last year showed that 81% of Alaskans would wear safety belts if required by law.

A safety belt use law is the incentive to establish the safety habit in those who otherwise wouldn't buckle up.

If a person is killed or injured, it affects more people than the victim. Persons are not allowed a "freedom to choose" to pay the health care costs of those who "choose" not to wear their safety belts.

The cost of needless fatalities and serious injuries are paid by all persons - not simply the victim- in increased taxes, insurance premiums and health care costs.

Unbelted occupants cause injuries to other occupants by becoming "unguided missles." Thus, the "freedom to choose" to wear the belt does affect others directly.

Other similar traffic - safety laws protect motorists and others, such as speed limits, drinking and driving and driver licensing. Safety belt use laws are consistent with these and other laws.

Traffic accidents do not happen on personal highways and streets ---- the costs to society in terms of medical, rehabilitation, unemployment and welfare services supercede the "right" of people to seriously or fatally injure themselves or others by not buckling up.

As a citizen and taxpayer, your rights are infringed upon by those who aren't responsible enough to buckle-up voluntarily; they leave you to pick up the tab for increased costs.

Ninety percent of those persons killed in motor vehicle accidents in Alaska during 1985, 1986, and 1987 were not wearing safety belts.

The proposed safety belt use law in Alaska is a secondary offense - requiring that a motorist be stopped for another offense before a $15 ticket(which may be donated to Emergency medical services) can be issued for not using safety belts.

Secondary enforcement will not impose additional burdens on law enforcement officers responsible for citing motorist under this act. Safety belts reduce traffic fatalities, which are eight times as expensive to investigate as non-injury accidents. In fact, officers would have more time to concentrate on other traffic enforcement programs.

In the past three years Hellenthal & Associates (Polling Firm) have conducted extensive Statewide & Local polls that show over 65% of Alaskans supporting a safety belt use law.

In the past three years over 8,000 Alaskans have signed letters of support for the proposed safety belt use law and over 50 businesses have passed supportive resolutions.

The Alaska State House in 1987 passed the safety belt use law with bipartisan support. The Senate in 1988 failed to act on the legislation but 1989 looks a lot more favorable for passage - Reasons; The Speaker of the House for '89 is Sam Cotten who was the author of the safety belt use bill in 1987. The President of the Senate Tim Kelly has been a supporter of the proposed law and in December of '88 at the Eagle River Valley Community Council again stated his support. The Governor has also stated support for the proposed law and this year's sponsor of the safety belt use bill is State Senator Arliss Sturgeluwski - Chairman of the Rules Committee.

The statistics, the public support, the editorial support(Anchorage Times, Anchorage Daily News, Frontiresman, Valley Sun, Juneau Empire), and legislative support shows that the proposed safety belt use law is one that Alaska can live with.

USA TODAY
Life
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1988

The big benefits of buckling up

By Dan Sperling
USA TODAY

Wearing seat belts reduces car-crash victims' injuries by 60 percent and cuts their hospital costs by more than $1,000, a new study suggests.

Dr. Elizabeth Mueller Orsay, assistant professor of emergency medicine at the University of Illinois School of Medicine in Chicago, and colleagues studied 1,364 emergency-room patients who had been in auto accidents.

Fifty-eight percent wore a safety belt when the accident occurred; 42 percent didn't.

Seat-belt wearers had a 60 percent reduction in injury severity, a 65 percent decrease in hospital admissions and a 66 percent reduction in hospital costs compared with those who wore no seat belt.

How seat-belt wearers fared compared with those who didn't:

▶ Seven percent of the seat-belt wearers had to remain in the hospital overnight, compared with 19 percent of the other patients.

▶ The average hospital charge for seat-belt wearers was $534, compared with $1,583 for those not wearing a seat belt.

"This study very strongly shows the benefits of buckling up, both for the individual and for society as a whole," says Orsay, whose study is reported in today's *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Car accidents are the USA's leading cause of death among people age 5 to 34, and cost the country an estimated $57 billion a year, says Orsay.

About 3.2 million people are injured each year in car accidents. Though the government estimates that if everyone used seat belts, traffic fatalities would be cut in half and injuries reduced by 65 percent, only 31 states and the District of Columbia have laws requiring their use.

Another report, in the same issue, estimates that North Carolina's mandatory seat-belt law, enacted last year, has resulted in 1,100 fewer severe and fatal highway injuries annually.

Robert B. Atwood
President and Publisher

Elaine Atwood
Assistant Publisher

William J. Tobin
Vice-President, Editor-in-Chief

Editorials

You buckle up in Canada

IN THE for-what-it's-worth department, all the provinces of Canada now have laws making mandatory the use of seat belts by motorists.

Prince Edward Island was the last to join the national movement, putting its mandatory seat belt law into effect this past January.

British Columbia was an early member of the buckle-up brigade, enacting its mandatory law in October 1977. Alberta, among the Western provinces, joined the flock last July.

The reason, of course, is that seat belts save lives — even though their use is a habit that many motorists find hard to adopt.

Arguments that it infringes on personal rights to make it illegal to drive without seat belts are no more valid than saying that requiring a motorist to have a driver's license is an attack on one's liberties.

A bill to make it illegal to drive in Alaska without seat belts snapped into place was killed in the last legislative session. It died in committee, despite indications that it would have passed given the chance to reach the floor.

ONCE AGAIN, the argument was that it's none of the state's business whether a person buckles up — and that without the requirement, independent Alaskans will do what's right and they don't need the state telling them what to do.

The same Alaskans, however, apparently have no reluctance to fasten their seat belts when they board an airplane — something that also is mandated by the long arm of the law.

And the fact remains that there is more danger of a fatal accident on the highway than there is in the air.

So what's the problem, anyway?

HB 109

'Policy failure' stokes crisis in rural Alaska

AFN pushing for change

By BOB ORTEGA
Times Writer

Alaska natives must come up with their own strategies and convince government to change its approach to break a slowly tightening noose of alcoholism and unemployment that may destroy their community, according to a report released Friday by the Alaska Federation of Natives.

It's never been a secret that Alaska natives suffer from high rates of alcoholism, suicide, child abuse and many other health and social problems, or that rural villages often have no economic base, or that natives often don't get what they should out of the educational system.

But Friday, the AFN status report on Alaska natives tied together all the depressingly familiar figures, and placed them in the context of what AFN President Janie Leask called "a fundamental failure of state and federal policies in rural Alaska."

The report concludes that in most cases, policies and actions intended to help native people have created and maintained dependence on the government, instead of encouraging self-sufficiency.

And the report says a rapidly growing native population — expected to double in the next 26 years — will place tremendous strains on villages where there are no jobs or opportunities.

"It's not our intention to point fingers at the federal or state governments and say 'this is your fault,' " Leask said.

"But we really need to have a different way of looking at the problem."

The report, produced with the help of the University of Alaska's Institute for Social and Economic Research, is intended to be a call for action. It does not include concrete suggestions for addressing the web of problems.

Leask said Sen. Daniel In-

See Natives, page A-8

Natives: New way of looking at problem

Continued from page A-1

ouye, D-Hawaii, chairman of the Select Committee on Indian Affairs, has agreed to hold a March 10 hearing in Washington, D.C., on the issues raised by the report. She said she hoped discussions among native and state leaders would lead to some specific suggestions at the hearing.

In addition, she said the AFN would host what she called an economic summit in May, to discuss ways to develop whatever economic opportunities exist in rural Alaska villages.

In essence, the report documents that natives in rural Alaska are likely to get a poorer education, and are more likely to face health problems while growing up. Once they're out of school, they are less able to compete for jobs; and if they live in villages, increasingly there may not be jobs. Finally, natives are more likely to be drawn into the vicious circle of alcoholism and drug abuse.

In many ways, the report shows that rural natives have seen huge improvements in recent decades, particularly in health care.

Tuberculosis caused 43 percent of native deaths as recently as 1946; in the last seven years, 13 Alaskans died of the disease. There have been similar improvements in combating other deadly diseases.

Also, state spending has brought schools and other benefits to many villages.

But at the same time, the changes have been so great and so rapid that it's been difficult for natives to cope; and often, the programs and services provided by the government at great expense just haven't worked out, the report says.

Some of the the most damning information focuses on the rural school system.

"Native children enter and exit village schools with serious educational handicaps and their education is worse than mediocre," the report says.

Rural students tend to have standardized test scores far below the national average; and they are far more likely to drop out, figures show.

Ironically, they leave school to compete for work against non-natives who tend to be far-better educated than the national average. Whites in Alaska are five times likelier than natives to have college degrees.

Statistics cited in the report demonstrate that most of the health and social problems facing the native community revolve around alcohol abuse. A good example is suicide, which for natives is four times the U.S. rate; and for male natives between 20 and 24 the suicide rate is 14 times the U.S. rate.

Autopsy reports show that three out of every four natives who committed suicide had been drinking beforehand. For homicides, sexual assaults, other crimes and accidental deaths, the link to alcohol also is clear.

"But you can't look at alcoholism in the villages without looking at the economies," Leask said.

The report's introduction states that despite millions of dollars in federal and state investment in rural Alaska over the past 20 years, "the investment has not established an economic base sufficient to enable Natives living in rural villages to build an economically self-sustaining future or to prevent the accelerated disintegration of traditional cultures."

With the best of intentions, the federal and state governments have built houses, water and sewer systems, airstrips, electrical systems, and other infrastructure, to stimulate growth.

Unfortunately, the report concludes, "the government's strategy assumed that rural Alaska possessed widespread, untapped and marketable resources sufficient to support village and regional economies."

With some exceptions — like the Red Dog mine, near Kotzebue, or the North Slope oil fields, or the Bristol Bay fisheries — that assumption has not proven true, the report states.

Meanwhile, these subsistence communities increasingly have grown dependent on heating oil, electricity, and the benefits that cost money. Since most villages don't have viable cash economies, that has left many natives dependent on government handouts.

Leask said she hoped the report would help lead to a cooperative effort between the native community and the state and federal governments to develop new policies to address all these inter-related problems.

"We can't afford not to do anything," she said.

alaska federation of natives, inc.

411 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 301 • Anchorage, Alaska 99501 • Phone (907) 274-3611

January 25, 1988

Representative H.A. "Red" Boucher
Box V
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Representative Boucher,

Enclosed is a copy of "The AFN Report on the Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action." The report was produced by AFN with assistance from the Institute of Social and Economic Research.

This is the first major status report that has been written on Alaska Natives in more than ten years. A review of the data shows that despite substantial improvements in health, educational opportunity, standard of living and access to government services, an increasing number of Alaska Natives face grave risks and declining economic opportunities. The rates of health and social disorders among Alaska Natives are abnormally high and, in some instances, are accelerating. Certain groups of Alaska Natives, such as rural residents and young male adults, are at even greater risk.

The report is intended not only for state and federal policy makers, but for the Native community as well. When we look at the statistics compiled in the report and reflect on outlook for improvement, we are gravely concerned. Unless fundamental changes are made, we are not confident that Native people can look forward to a secure economic and cultural base for the future.

AFN is committed to working with both federal and state officials to address the findings of this report. We ask for your help as we deliberate on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Janie Leask
President

The AFN Report on the Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action

The AFN Report on the Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes health, social and economic data that describe the current status of Alaska Natives. The data indicate that, despite improvements in health, educational opportunity, standards of living and access to government services, an increasing number of Natives face grave risks and declining economic opportunities. The report documents a social, cultural and economic crisis in Native villages, analyzes its causes and suggests new policies and governmental priorities.

In many Native villages the rates of health and social problems, particularly those engendered by alcohol abuse, are abnormally high, and many are accelerating. The segments of the Native population least capable of protecting themselves, notably children and young adults, are most at risk.

The data are stark. Absent timely and dramatic action, they indicate that the prognosis for positive change is poor. Time is running out.

Over the past two decades, the federal and state governments have invested millions of dollars in rural Alaska. Although important improvements have been made (e.g., public works and improved delivery of government services) the investment has not established an economic base sufficient to enable Natives living in rural villages to build an economically self-sustaining future or to prevent the accelerated disintegration of traditional cultures. Indeed, in recent years, the pace of economic, social and cultural change in Native villages has been

so rapid and the change so profound that many Natives have been overwhelmed by a world not of their making - a world of conflicting values and increasingly limited economic opportunity. For many Natives, the sense of personal, familial and cultural identity that is a prerequisite to healthy and productive life is being lost in a haze of alcohol-induced despair that not infrequently results in violence perpetrated upon self and family.

But in acknowledging that grim reality, the data in this report summarize the status of Alaska Natives in the aggregate and should not be confused with the personal status of all 75,000 Alaska Natives. Most Native people, whether they live in village or city, are coping with change, maintaining their families and cultures and trying to help others do the same. Indeed, Native people have a long history of active involvement in efforts to improve life in their own communities. Non-profit Native regional corporations, village governments and other Native institutions have been organized to provide technical and other resources to assist in that endeavor.

Government in its many forms has been a valuable partner in the effort. However, despite the fact that government programs have brought needed services and improvements, they have been provided at high cost: a loss of Native control over community, family and self that frequently exacerbates the very problems the programs are intended to eliminate.

Government and Alaska Natives need to forge a new partnership while there is still time to do so. But in seeking innovative solutions to problems of social and economic change, the new partnership must acknowledge and respect the fact that Alaska Natives are a people of the land and that maintaining traditional relationships to land they have historically used and occupied is essential to the physical, emotional and cultural well-being of all Alaska Natives, whether they live in the village or one of Alaska's urban areas.

The stakes are high and the challenges immense. But if Alaska Natives and the federal and state governments jointly commit themselves to developing and implementing new policies to address today's problems, progress is possible. To that end, this report is a call to action.

NATIVE HEALTH: A PLAGUE OF ALCOHOL ABUSE VIOLENCE AND SELF-DESTRUCTION

> Across the state more and more Alaska Natives are killing themselves and damaging their loved ones, deciding that life's no longer worth cherishing. Almost always, alcohol is their final companion.
>
> Anchorage Daily News
> January 1988

Since 1907 when Congress first committed the resources of the federal government to improving Native health (see appendix), the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and Native regional health corporations have made significant progress in eradicating infectious diseases.

Tuberculosis, for example, was once a major cause of Native mortality. Between 1926 and 1930 the disease accounted for 35.5 percent of all Native deaths, as compared to 4.7 percent of white deaths. Of 2,010 Eskimos examined during the same period by the Bureau of Education physician stationed at Nome, 16 percent were diagnosed as having tuberculosis in some form. In 1936 the Bureau of Indian Affairs estimated the Native death rate from tuberculosis at 655 per 100,000 as compared to 56 per 100,000 for whites. As recently as 1946 tuberculosis accounted for 43 percent of all Native deaths. Treatment required quarantine for long periods of time, frequently in hospitals distant from a patient's home village, a medical intervention that saved lives but disrupted Native family life.

In addition to tuberculosis, other infectious diseases, all introduced by whites, periodically rolled like waves thrcugh Native villages. As early as 1819, a smallpox epidemic killed 68 Natives living near the Russian American Company trading posts at Sitka and Kodiak. In 1837 a second smallpox epidemic swept through Native villages from the Alaska Panhandle to the Arctic Ocean. In 1919 an influenza epidemic killed 1,500 Natives living on the Seward Peninsula. According to Territorial Governor Thomas Riggs, "Whole villages of Eskimos lost their entire adult population. Many infants were frozen in their dead mothers' arms." In 1940, diphtheria decimated villages throughout rural Alaska. In 1945 an influenza epidemic killed 9 Natives at Barrow, the northernmost community in the United States, before moving village to village along the coast of the Arctic Ocean. In the 1950s came polio.

However, in recent years, many of the most virulent infectious diseases that have historically afflicted Native people have been arrested. Only 13 Alaskans died of tuberculosis between 1981 and 1988. In the 1940s average life expectancy in rural Alaska was 35 years. It is now 67 years, although life expectancy for Native males is still 10 years less than that for white males. In 1950 the rate of Native infant mortality was more than 100 per 1,000 live births, one of the highest rates in the world. By contrast, by 1988 the Native infant mortality rate had fallen to 22 per 1,000 live births.

Although Alaska Natives have never been more free from communicable disease, a new epidemic has emerged. In a 1988 speech to the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, Dr. John Middaugh, the State Epidemiologist, characterized the present status of Alaska Natives as a "health crisis," and a "modern plague of our young." The plague has a name: alcohol abuse.

More insidious than tuberculosis or influenza, alcohol abuse is a common plight of cultures in transition. Although its causes are complicated, the pathology of alcohol abuse includes a cycle of despair which breeds hopelessness and violence and too frequently ends in suicide and death.

In January 1988 the Anchorage Daily News published a series of investigative articles entitled "A People in Peril." The articles documented the heartbreaking epidemic of suicide and violent death among Alaska Natives. Although the series may have been shocking in the cities, the story was old news in the bush, where virtually every Native family has been affected by alcohol abuse and senseless death.

Even more tragic, much of the violence is perpetrated by family members upon other family members, particularly children. Once inflicted, alcohol-induced child abuse bequeaths the legacy of despair and violence to the next generation.

The details of the Alaska Native health crisis are presented in the following pages by five categories of data: suicide, homocide, accidental death and injury, crime and incarceration and children in peril.

SUICIDE

> (Alakanuk, Alaska) In March 1985, a young man walked out onto the tundra behind this Yukon River village and carefully, neatly shot himself in the heart . . . The sound of the shot rolled across the flat delta land through the suppertime darkness of a cold spring day. It breached the walls and windows of the wooden houses, marking the moment as a beginning, for Louie Edmund had begun a 16-month suicide epidemic that ended the life of eight young villagers . . . In a community of 550 people, eight suicides is the equivalent of more than 3,000 in Anchorage. It is an unimaginable tragedy.
>
> Alakanuk's Suicide Epidemic
>
> Anchorage Daily News
> January 1988

In 1950 there were six reported Native suicides in Alaska, a rate below the national average; but by the 1970s the Native suicide rate had exploded. Between 1980 and 1985, suicide moved up the ladder from the eighth to the fourth leading cause of Native mortality. Despite enormous advances in health care and the delivery of social services to villages, the Native suicide rate has continued to accelerate, a trend that most experts agree shows no signs of abating.

For all ages, the Native suicide rate is almost four times the national average (Table 1).

Alaska Native Mortality and Morbidity
Selected Comparisons to U.S. Conditions

Cause of Death or Disease	Multiple of U.S. Incidence
Suicide	4 times the U.S. rate
Homicide	4 times the U.S. rate
Death due to injury (accidents)	5 times the U.S. rate
Postneonatal mortality	Over 2 times the U.S. rate
SIDS	At least 2 times the U.S. rate
tuberculosis mortality	23 times the U.S. rate •
respiratory disease mortality	Over 2 times the U.S. rate •
- infants only	10 to 14 times the U.S. rate •
FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome)	Over 2 times the U.S. rate
haemophilus influenzae B	3 to 5 times the U.S. rate •
- under age five only	4 to 6 times the U.S. rate •
infant pneumococcal meningitis	36 to 37 times the U.S. rate •

• Western Alaska Yup'ik populations only.

Table 1. Alaska Native Mortality and Morbidity

Figure 1 compares the average Native suicide rate, both male and female, with the average national suicide rate during the years 1982-84. It shows that Native males between 20 and 24 years of age are killing themselves at a rate 14 times the national average. Native women in the same age group are killing themselves at a rate five times the national average.

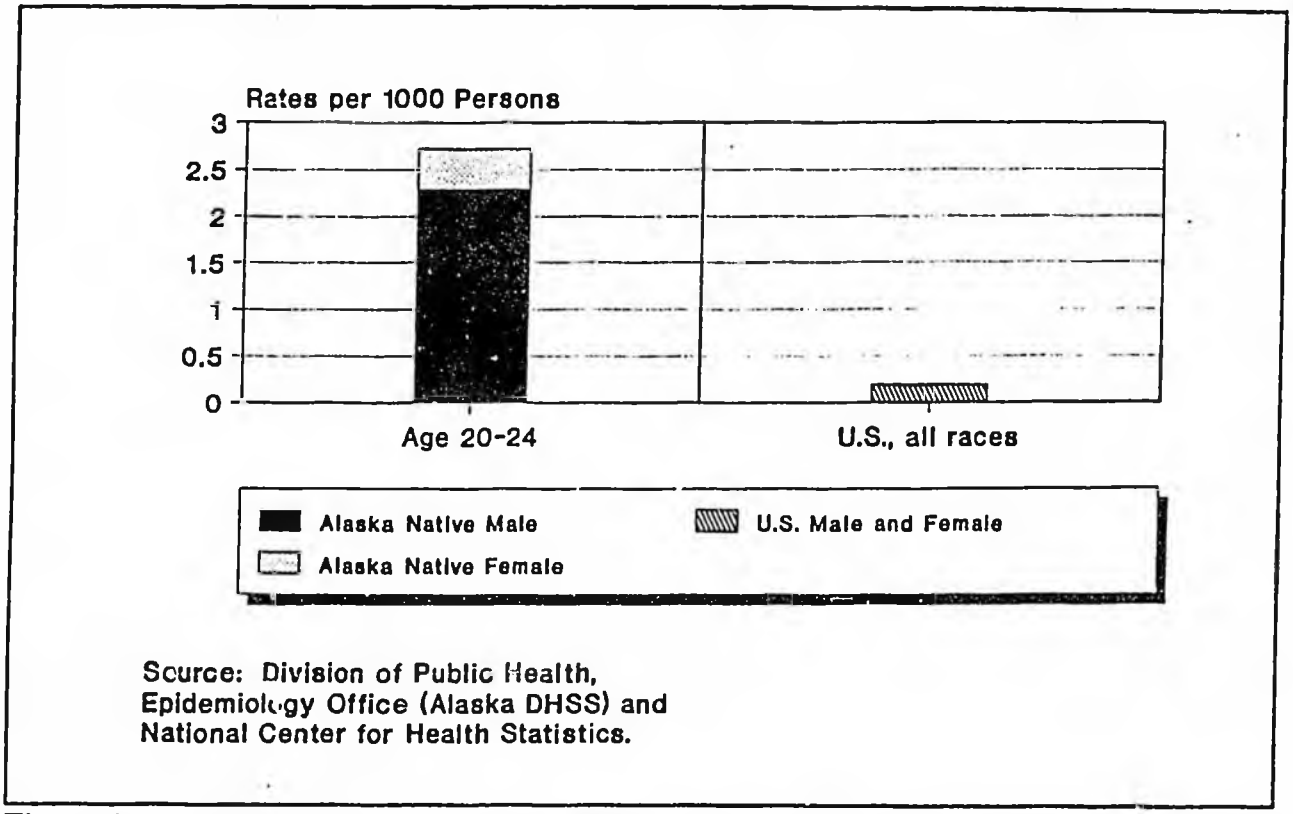

Figure 1. **Average Suicide Rates (1982-1984), Alaska Natives in the High-Risk Group (Age 20-24), Compared to the U.S. Rate**

Although individual causes of suicide are frequently difficult to determine, most Native suicides share the common denominator of alcohol abuse. More than three-fourths of the autopsy reports on Native suicides record measurable blood alcohol levels at the time of death.

The clear consensus among health professionals is that the increase in Native suicide will not be arrested, absent aggressive countermeasures. In particular, intervention should be focused on Natives between 10 and 29 years of age - those who are in, or about to enter, the highest-risk age group. However, since age groups with historically high suicide rates tend to retain high rates in later years, the adult population should also be closely monitored.

HOMICIDE

> (Pilot Point, Alaska) It was nothing really. A fight over a girl on an afternoon of whiskey and cocaine. But something in Chris Connors snapped. He got a gun and when he finished using it, three were dead and four injured.
>
> A Youth's Despair Erupts
>
> Anchorage Daily News
> January 1988

For the past decade, homicide has ranked as the sixth or seventh most common cause of death among Alaska Natives, a murder rate four times the national average.

Figure 2 compares the average Native homicide rate with the national average between the years 1982-84. Native male homicide victims outnumber Native women victims by about three to one.

Nevertheless, Native women face a higher risk of death by homicide than women elsewhere in the United States.

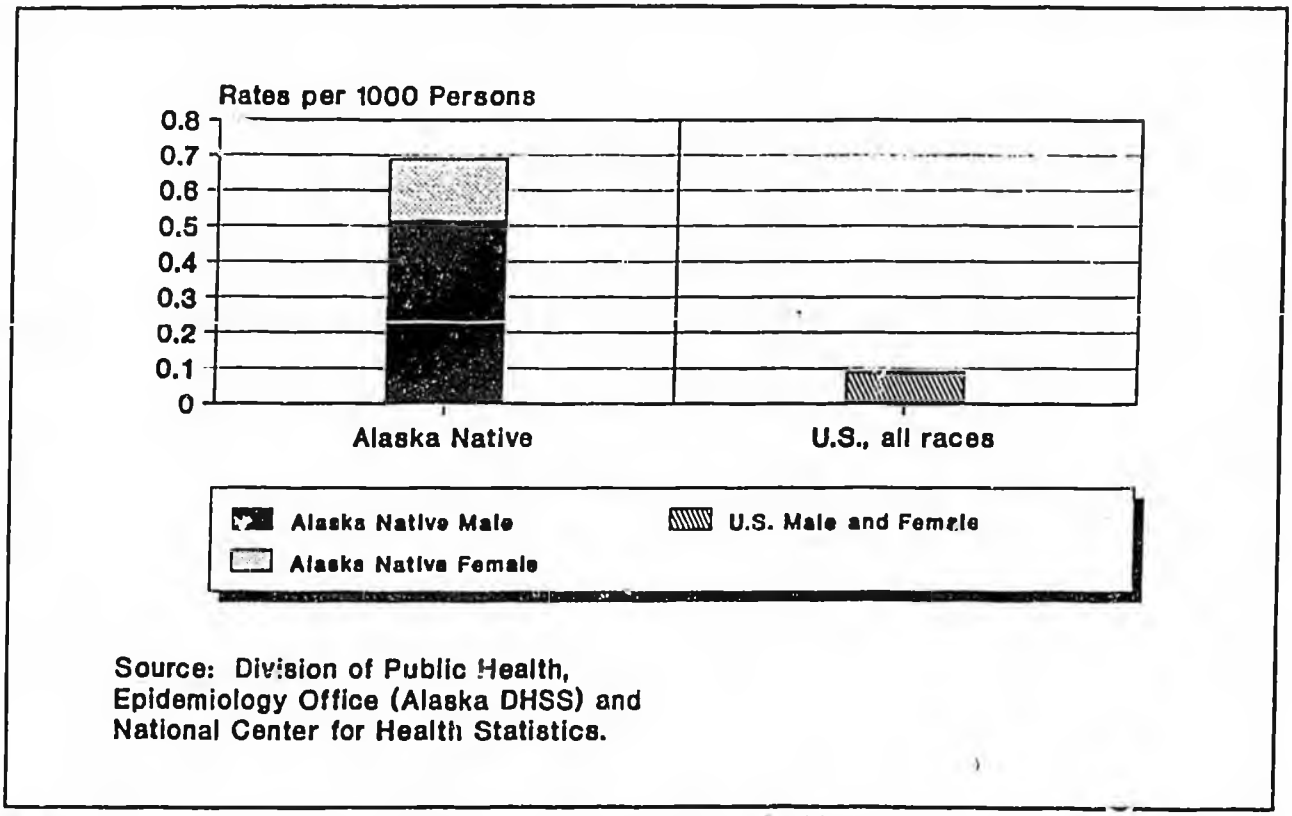

Figure 2. Average Homicide Rates, 1982-1984, Alaska Natives Compared to Overall U.S. Rate

ACCIDENTAL DEATH AND INJURY

Accidents are the leading cause of Native mortality. They are more than 50 percent higher than the second and third leading causes of Native deaths, cancer and heart disease. The Native accident mortality rate is more than three times the national average. Throughout the 1980s, accidents and injuries have been the first and second-ranked causes of hospitalization among Alaska Natives. Figure 3 compares average accidental death rates of Alaska Natives with the national average between the years 1982-84.

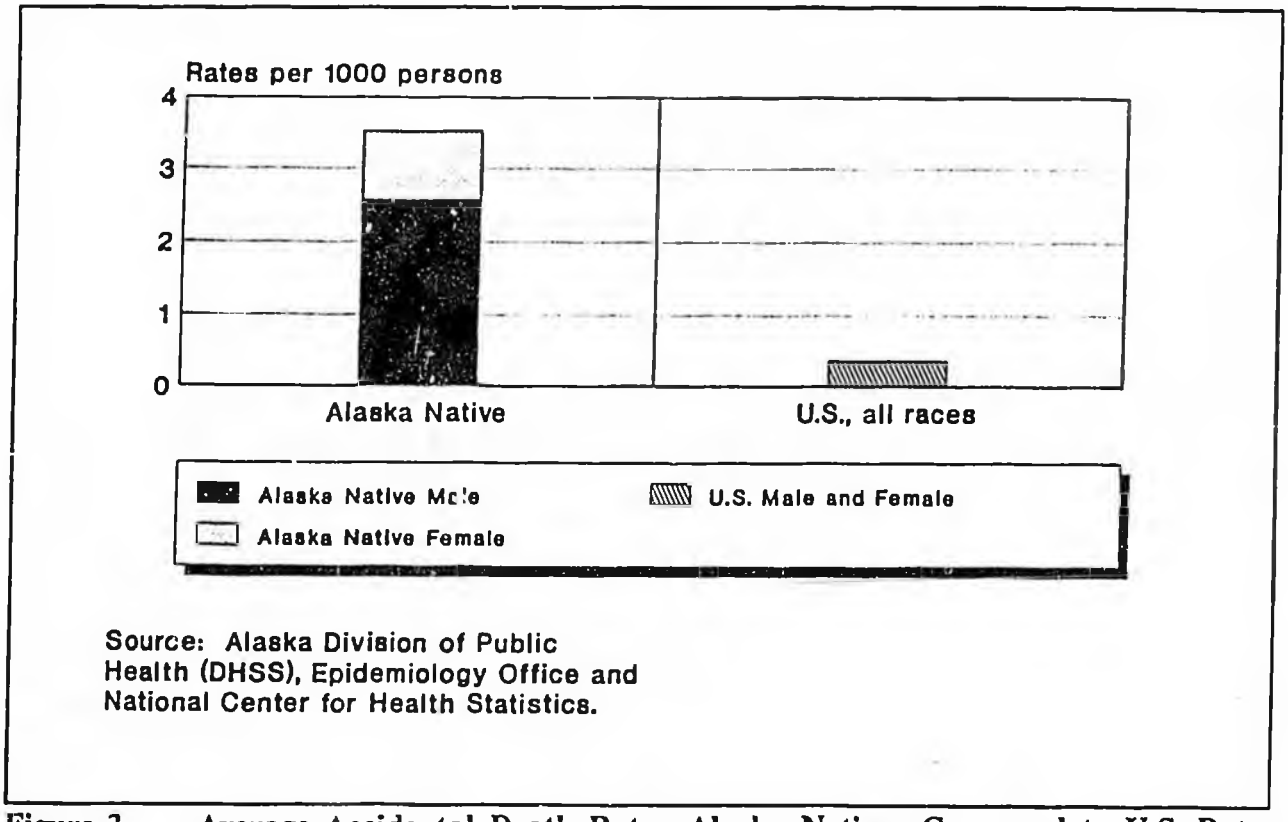

Figure 3. **Average Accidental Death Rates, Alaska Natives Compared to U.S. Rate, 1982-1984**

On the surface the high accident mortality rate appears to be a natural consequence of living in a harsh physical environment. But as in suicide and homicide, alcohol-related violence accounts for a significant percentage of Native deaths due to accident. Indian Health Service records for inpatient services at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage indicate that from 1978 to 1987 between one-quarter and more than one-half of all injuries were intentional, i.e., either self-inflicted or inflicted by a second party.

CRIME AND INCARCERATION

In addition to the high Native death rates, alcohol abuse accounts for a substantial percentage of Native crime. In the past decade Alaska Natives have comprised between 14 and 16 percent of the statewide population. But approximately 25 percent of all persons arrested, 25 percent of all persons convicted of felonies and 34 percent of all persons incarcerated were Native. Fifty-nine percent of inmates incarcerated for violent crimes and 38 percent of those convicted of sex-related offenses were Native. In 1987 sexual assault in the first degree was the leading cause of incarceration among Natives. Available evidence indicates that between 80 and 100 percent of Native-perpetrated violent crime is alcohol-related.

Because any legacy of alcohol abuse and violence is passed from generation to generation, the emotional stability and social adaptation of young adults entering parenthood inevitably impacts the children they will have. Young Native adults are a generation in peril, and, unless timely steps are taken, the next generation will be even more so.

CHILDREN IN PERIL

When pregnant mothers drink, their babies can be born deformed or retarded -- doomed to a life of misery. No group in the United States has a higher rate of alcohol-caused infant deformities than Alaska Natives.

A Curse Upon the Unborn

Anchorage Daily News
January 1988

In significant measure, infant health depends on maternal health and stability. Although Natives comprise 14 percent of Alaska's population, 30 percent of Alaska's teenage mothers are Native. These young women desire the best for their babies, but they frequently lack the maturity, parenting skills, family support and money needed to raise children. Native teenage mothers are a particularly high-risk group.

Figure 4 compares the proportion of Natives in the statewide population to the proportion of births by Native teenage mothers between the years 1975-85.

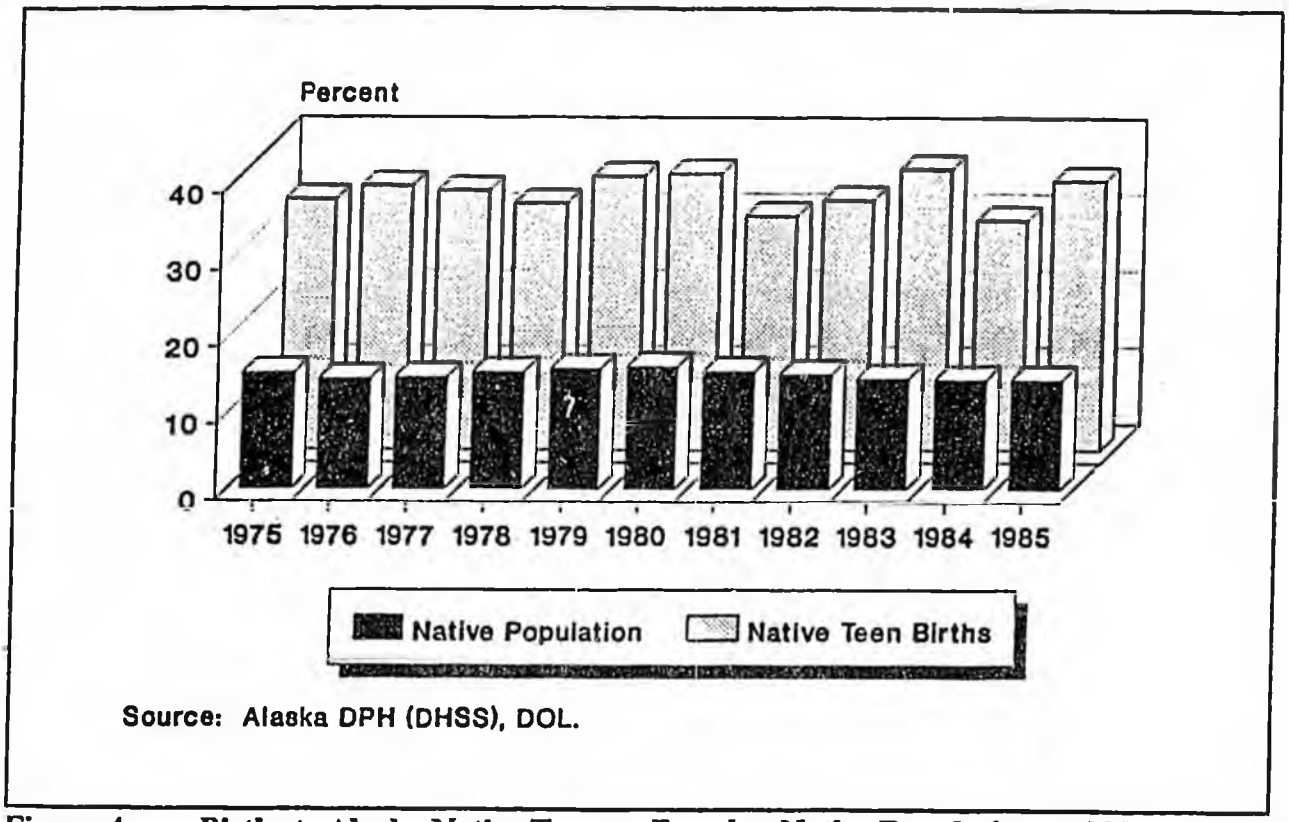

Figure 4. Births to Alaska Native Teenage Females, Native Population and Native Teen Births as Percentages of State Totals

At birth, the health status of Native infants is good. Most Native mothers have access to IHS or other hospital care. Consequently, the Native neonatal mortality rate (i.e., death between birth and 28 days) is not a pressing problem.

The risks arise after birth. The Native infant mortality rate (i.e., death between 28 days and one year) consistently exceeds the national average. Although the causes of this disparity are poorly understood, they are probably environmental, since once an infant returns home, the risk of death increases. Figure 5 compares the average Native and national infant mortality rates between the years 1982-84, and identifies the leading causes of death for Native infants.

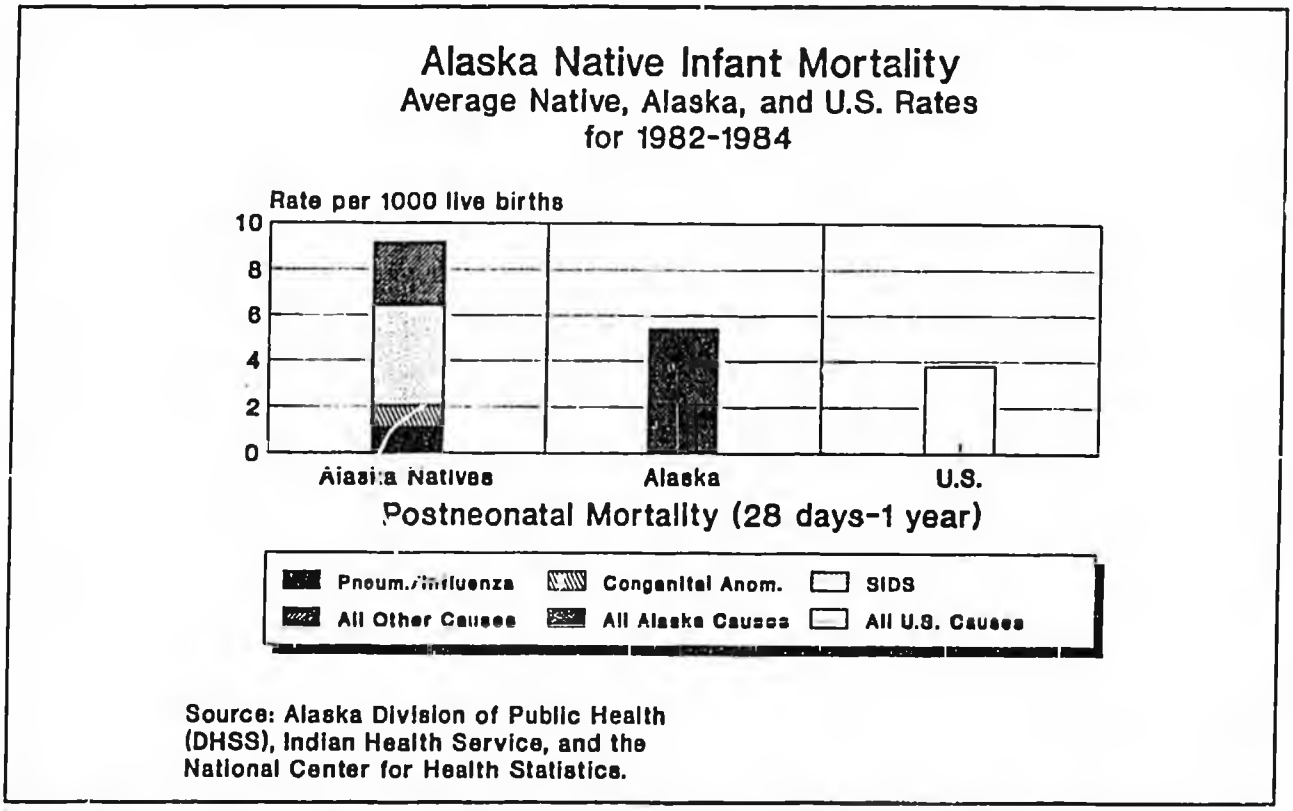

Figure 5. Alaska Native Infant Mortality, Average Native and U.S. Rates, 1982-1984

The Native mortality rate for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) exceeds the total national rate for all infant deaths. The Native rates for congenital anomalies (birth defects), influenza and pneumonia, when added together, are about half the total national infant death rate. Although more than 90 percent of Native infant deaths are autopsied, no clear cause of death can be determined for SIDS infants. Most experts agree that Native SIDS results from a combination of factors that include respiratory infections, low-level nutritional deficiencies and similar factors linked to inappropriate or inadequate parental care or to an infant's physical environment, e.g., overly cold or warm living conditions.

Native birth defects and infant pneumonia/influenza mortality rates warrant special attention.

Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), a condition engendered by maternal alcohol use during pregnancy (and, to an unknown extent, by fathers prior to conception) is a leading cause of Native birth defects. The Native FAS rate is more than twice the national average. FAS is also a leading cause of mental retardation among Alaska Natives. Since its cause is exclusively behavioral, FAS is preventable.

The high infant pneumonia/influenza mortality rate is a legacy of the Native community's low natural immunity to viruses historically introduced by whites. However, environmental factors that relate to the behavior of adults, including hygiene and nutrition, play an important role in the persistence of infectious disease.

Native children are also vulnerable to other infectious diseases that periodically appear in particular geographical areas. In some areas populated primarily by Eskimos, the incidence of hemophilus influenza B (HIB), a virulent infection with catastrophic potential to disable children, is higher than anywhere else in the world. In Alaska, HIB accounts for 68 percent of Eskimo meningitis cases, and the bacterial meningitis rate among Eskimos is ten times the rate elsewhere in the United States. In turn, meningitis is a leading cause of neurological deficiencies among young Natives, including deafness and paraplegia. Since neurological deficiencies

frequently require lifetime care, the long-term consequences are costly in both social and financial terms.

In addition to disease and birth defects, child abuse and sexual assault pose their own risks. Since 1980, when 185 cases were reported, the incidence of sexual assault has dramatically increased. In 1986, more than 1,400 Native children were reported victims of sexual assault. The number of Native children receiving protection services from the State of Alaska has also increased, from 2,035 cases in 1984 to 3,109 cases in 1988.

The statistics set forth above document the alcohol-driven plague of violence and death that is shredding the fabric of family and community life in Native villages throughout Alaska. This epidemic has inflicted intolerable emotional and physical damage on Native people. The cycle of alcohol abuse, violence and death must be broken.

NATIVE DEMOGRAPHICS: A GROWING "AT RISK" POPULATION

> Despite substantial growth of the Alaska Native population, Natives constitute a smaller minority group in 1980 than in 1970 . . . The Alaska Native birth rate is likely to remain high . . . Although the Native population is becoming increasingly urban, most Alaska Natives will continue to live in small communities.
>
> Changes in the Well-Being of Alaska Natives Since ANCSA
>
> Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska
> November 1984

In 1880 there were 33,426 Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts living in Alaska, 98.7 percent of the total population of the Territory. However, since 1940 the rate of non-Native in-migration has far outpaced the Native birth rate. Today, there are 75,000 Alaska Natives, but only 14 percent of the 540,000 persons living in Alaska are Native.

The preceding section documented the Native social and health crisis. The following demographic data outline the future dimensions of the crisis. The data indicate that young Native adults, the age group most at risk, compose the largest segment of the Native population. Between now and the year 2000 the numbers of young adults will increase. The Native birth rate, already high, will also increase. Although an increasing number of Natives are moving to urban areas, most Natives will continue to live in rural villages.

The implication of these projections is ominous. During the next two decades young Native adults, many of whom have been

brutalized by alcohol abuse, despair, violence and death in their homes and villages, will be having their own children. Unless the cycle can be broken, the projected high birth rate for young Native adults will create a new generation at risk in rural Alaska, far more numerous than the present one.

The demographic statistics that follow are presented by three categories: population growth, birth rates and geographic distribution.

POPULATION GROWTH

Figure 6 charts Native and non-Native population growth in Alaska from 1900 to 1980.

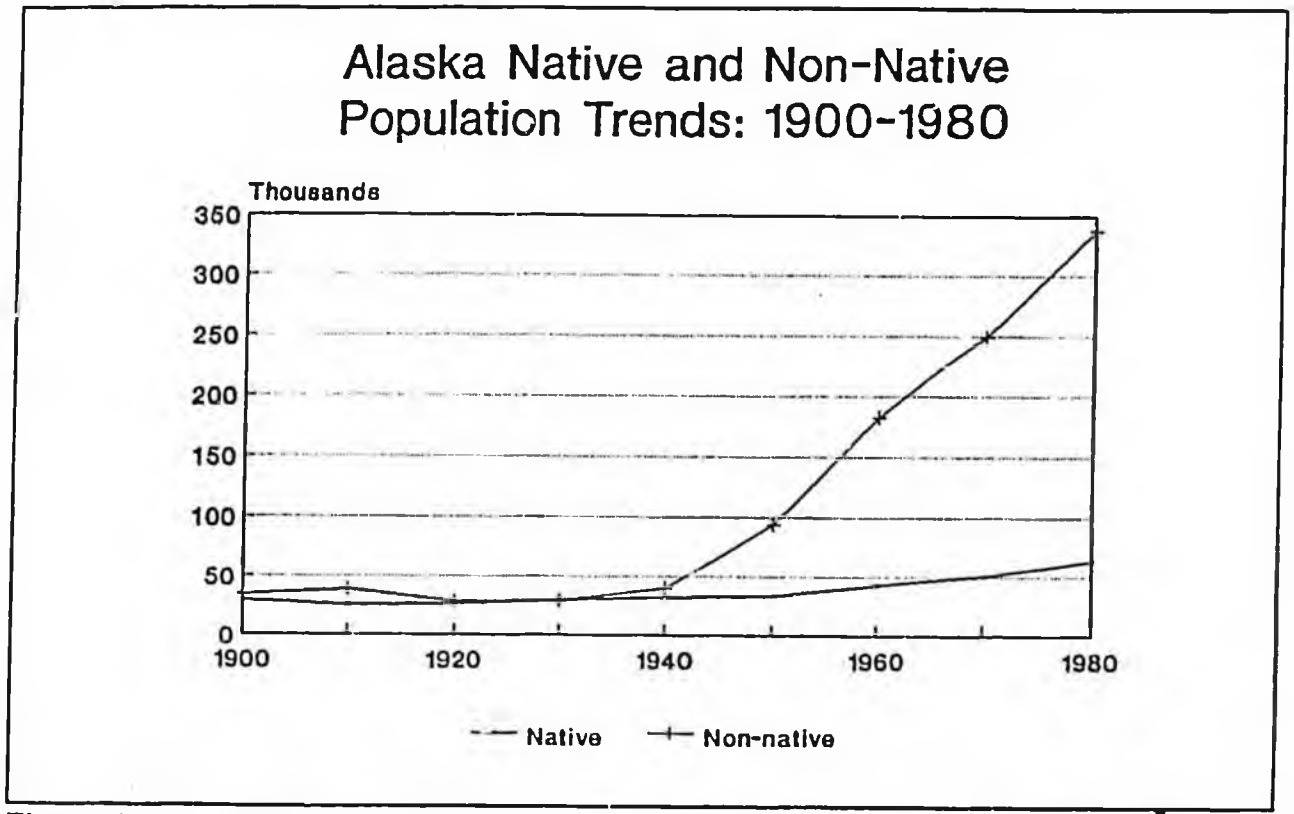

Figure 6. Alaska Native and Non-Native Population Trends: 1900 to 1980

Although the absolute number of Alaska Natives has increased, the Native percentage of the total population has steadily declined because of non-Native in-migration, mostly to Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau, since 1941. However, in rural Alaska, the majority of the population is, and will continue to be, Native.

Census data indicate that in 1980 there were 64,357 Natives living in Alaska. Another 22,500 Natives were estimated to be living outside the State. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of Natives living in Alaska increased by approximately 14,000 persons, and the number of Natives living outside increased by 4,500 persons. Thus, between 1970 and 1980, the Native population increased at an average annual rate of 2.4 percent, twice the national average. However, as the result of in-migration fueled by construction of the trans-Alaska pipeline and oil production at Prudhoe Bay, the non-Native population grew even faster during the same period, averaging 3 percent growth per year. As a result, despite their absolute increase, Natives as a percentage of the total population shrank from 16.7 percent to 16 percent.

Figure 7 documents the change in the number of Alaska Natives in different age categories between 1970 and 19 . The horizontal bars illustrate how each age group advanced or receded over the ten years between census counts. For example, by 1980 the Native males who were members of the 10-19 age group in 1970 had grown into the 20-29 age group, doubling the size of the latter group.

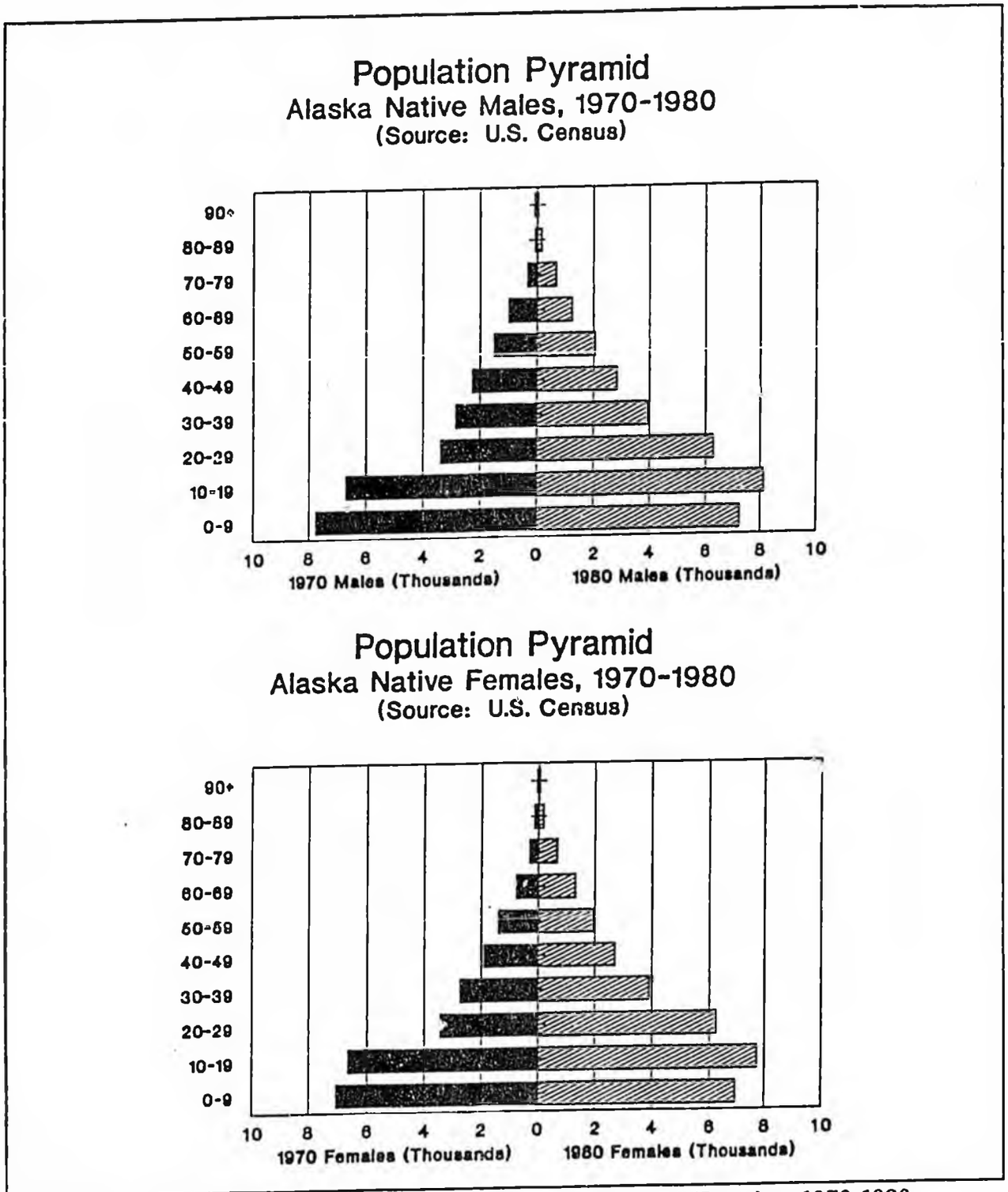

Figure 7. Population Pyramid, Alaska Native Males and Females, 1970-1980

As described in the preceding section, young Native adults are the generation most at risk, a generation that, due to the high Native birth rate, is continually expanding in size.

BIRTH RATES

Between 1970 and 1980 the average number of children born to Native women between 25 and 34 years of age dropped from 3.8 to 2.5. However, a large increase in the number of Native women who entered their child-bearing years during that decade more than offset the declining fertility rate. In 1970 10 percent of the Native population were women between 20 and 34 years of age. By 1980 the number of Native women in that age group had expanded to 14 percent of the population. As a result, despite the decline in the average number of children born per Native woman, between 1970 and 1980 the Native birth rate slightly increased. In 1980 the Native birth rate was more than twice the national average and 53 percent higher than the birth rate for non-Natives living in Alaska.

The high birth rate and the increasing number of women who are entering their child-bearing years have altered the Native age profile in a significant respect: an unusually large number of Alaska Natives are children. In 1980 23 percent of all Alaska Natives were under 10 years of age.

Because of the large number of female children who are under child-bearing age, the Native birth rate will likely remain high, particularly in rural villages.

Figure 8 illustrates the sharp rise in the Native birth rate in rural Alaska. It will soon overtake the rate of increase in Native births statewide.

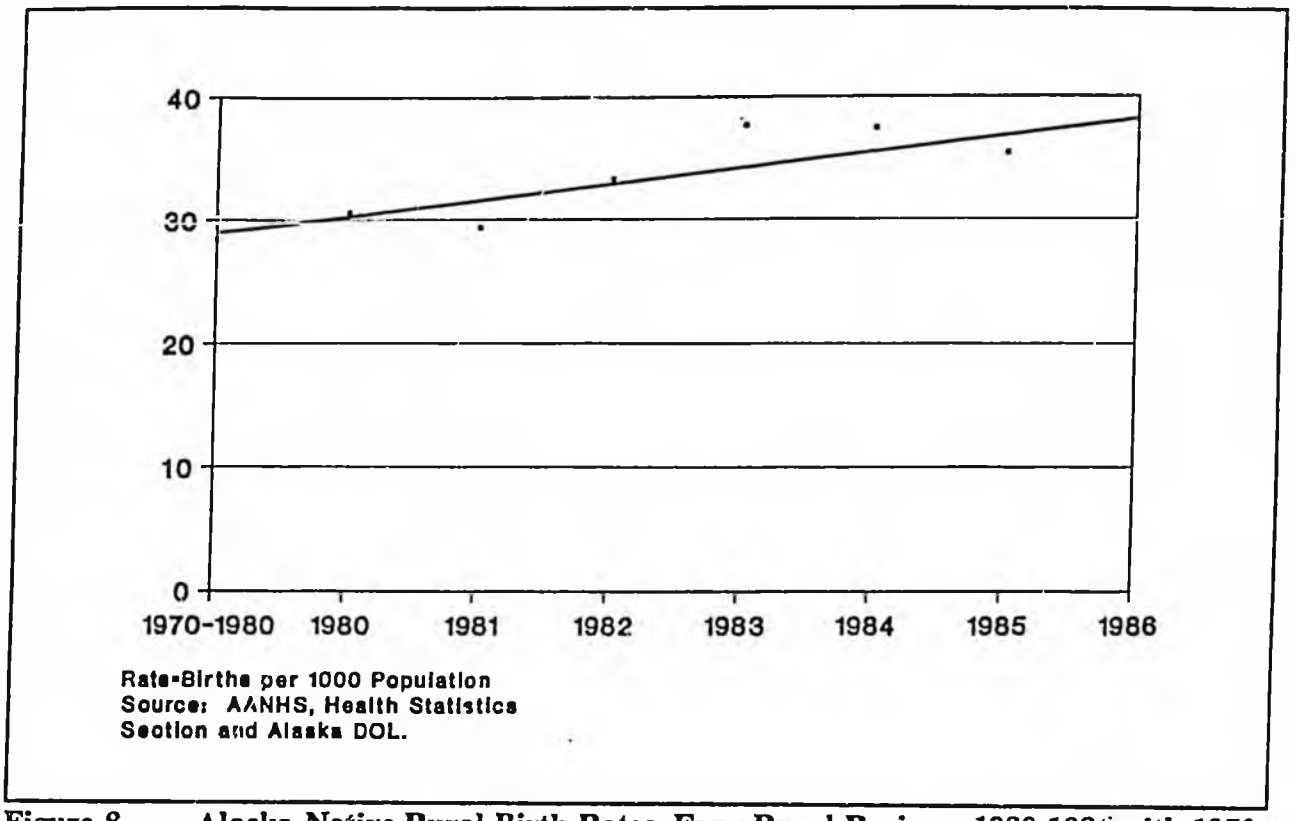

Figure 8. Alaska Native Rural Birth Rates, Four Rural Regions, 1980-1986 with 1970-1980 Comparison

Based on observed and projected birth rates, between 1980 and 1990 the number of Native children between 0 and 9 years of age living in rural Alaska will increase by 40 percent. This large population increase will place even greater strain on the limited natural and economic resources available to Native families and villages.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Between 1970 and 1980 the percentage of the Native population living in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Alaska's other urban areas increased from 17 percent to 31 percent. In some measure the increase resulted from a reclassification of certain rural locations from rural to urban between the 1970 and 1980 censuses. Consequently, analyzing the distribution of Native population by size of place in 1970 and 1980 presents a more accurate picture of geographic distribution.

Although the percentage of the Native population living in or close to Anchorage, Fairbanks and Alaska's other urban areas increased from 27 to 32 percent, in both 1970 and 1980 more than half of the Natives living in Alaska lived in communities with populations of less than 1,000 persons.

The increase in the number of Natives living in urban areas has not come at the expense of villages. Although the urban Native population is the fastest-growing segment of the statewide Native population, the number of Natives living in villages has been growing at an annual rate of 2.2 percent, a rate almost as high as that for total Native population growth (i.e., 2.4 percent).

Over 60 percent of Alaska Natives live in rural Alaska, a demographic reality that can be expected to continue despite the fact that Native population growth in the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas has been more than double the rate of growth in the statewide Native population. Assuming present trends

continue, by the year 2000 more than 29 percent of the Native population will live in the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas, but more than half the Native population will still live in rural Alaska.

As Figure 9 depicts, the village population is young, Natives between 0 and 9 years of age and between 10 and 19 years of age being the two largest age groups. At its current rate of increase, the Alaska Native population will double in 26 years.

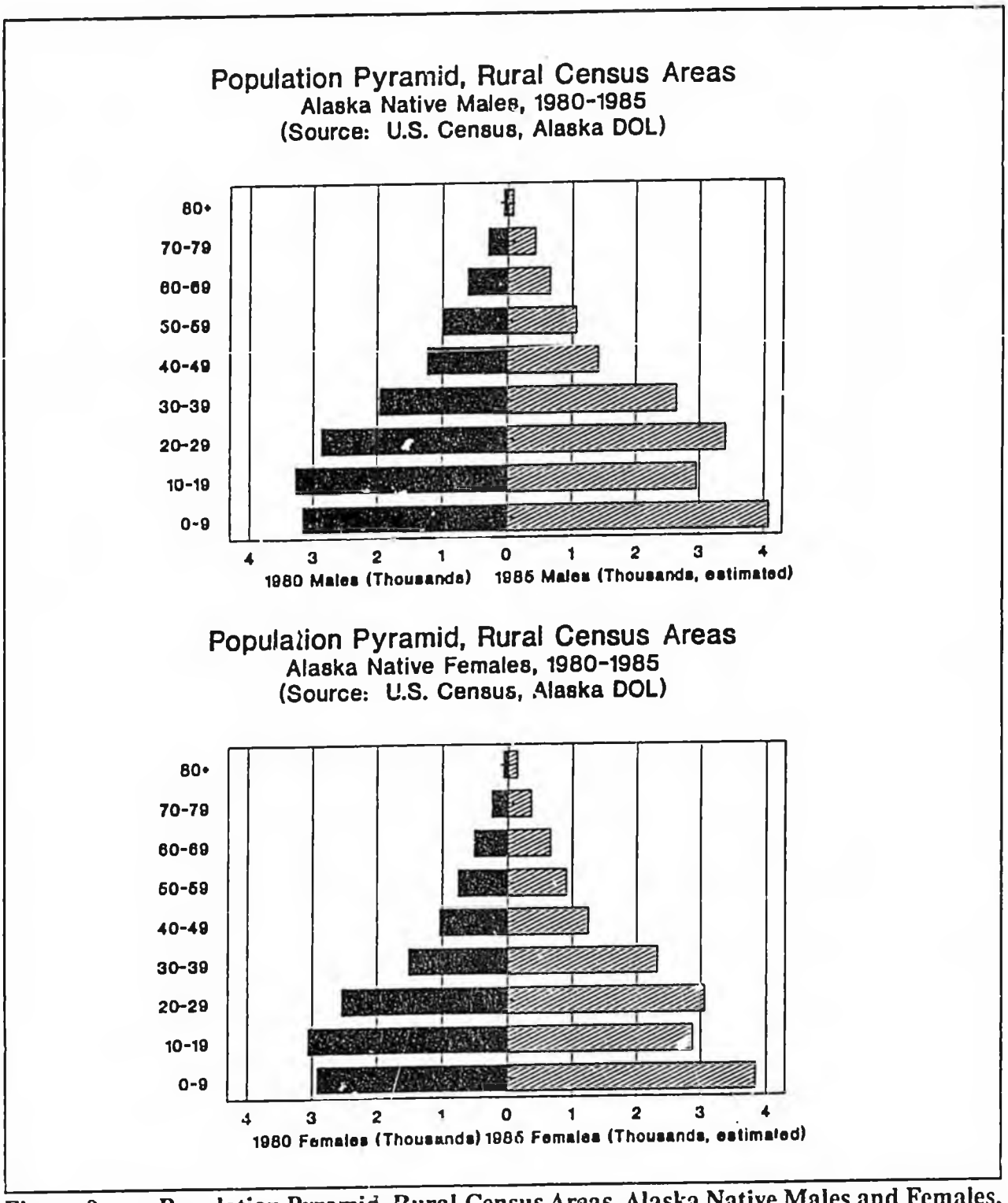

Figure 9. Population Pyramid, Rural Census Areas, Alaska Native Males and Females, 1980-1985

VILLAGE ALASKA: CONSTRAINTS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

> You tell kids to graduate from high school. Then they graduate and so what? I think the poor kids are batting their heads against the wall. Is that the only choice? To sit in your house and drink and watch TV?
>
> Teacher George Curren
>
> Alakanuk School
> January 1988

In rural Alaska, most villages were originally sites from which Alaska Natives ventured forth to hunt, fish, trap and gather. However, locations that are ideally situated for the traditional subsistence economy, are frequently ill-suited to the non-Native cash economy. Consequently, the absence of jobs in the cash economy is a chronic problem in rural villages where unemployment rates far outstrip the state and national averages.

Most jobs in the cash economy are located in the cities, economic marketplaces where many Alaska Natives, far from home and lacking adequate education and work skills, are at a competitive disadvantage. Because most villages have a mixed subsistence and cash economy, subsistence activities periodically draw Natives, particularly males, out of the labor force competing for the few available village jobs.

During the 1970s, the Prudhoe Bay oil discovery, and the massive revenues that oil production generated for State government, radically altered the Alaska economy. But while the number of available jobs rapidly increased, the employment profile for Native men did not change significantly. Most new

jobs were filled by non-Natives who moved to Alaska. On average, between 1970 and 1980, almost half of all Native men 16 years of age and older were outside the wage labor force at any given time.

During the same period, in most Native villages there was little real economic growth. For two decades the federal and state governments invested substantial amounts of money in rural Alaska, building houses, water and sewer systems, airstrips, electrical systems and other infrastructure. Government also made capital investments in village schools intended, in part, to improve the quality of the rural work force. The purpose of the investments was to stimulate self-sustaining economic growth.

Uncritically optimistic, the government's strategy assumed that rural Alaska possessed widespread, untapped and marketable resources sufficient to support village and regional economies. With few exceptions - such as the North Slope oil fields, the Bristol Bay and Bering Sea fisheries, the Red Dog mine in the northwest arctic and the increasing market for southeast timber - that assumption was wrong. Despite investment in infrastructure and education, in most Native villages the increase in self-sustaining economic growth has been minimal.

When Native population growth is factored into the equation, the future is even more disconcerting. Between 1980 and 2000, the Native population will almost double during a time when government spending that has funded most of the few jobs available in rural Alaska will be diminishing.

Data on employment, income and cost of living illustrate the situation.

EMPLOYMENT

Although the rural Alaska economy changed radically after the Second World War, by 1970, most Natives living in rural villages still participated in a material culture that operated outside the mainstream of the cash economy. Hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering dominated village economies. Unsurprisingly, the rural Native population lacked the education and skills that were prerequisites to effective participation in the cash economy centered in the distant urban areas.

Information on federal and state employment in Alaska generated by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Alaska Department of Labor is compiled by census division. Figures 10 through 14 use a sample of four census divisions in western Alaska (Bethel, Nome, Kobuk and Wade Hampton). The four divisions have the largest number of villages and the highest percentage of Native residents of any census divisions in Alaska. In 1980 23,000 Natives lived in the four divisions, 85 percent of the total population.

Figure 10 compares unemployment rates in each of the four census divisions with the statewide unemployment rate. In 1988 the statewide unemployment rate was 8.7 percent. In the four census divisions unemployment rates ranged from 9.8 percent to nearly 17 percent. Even more telling, only 42 percent of working-age Alaska Natives in the study group were members of the

active labor force, as compared to nearly 86 percent of working-age non-Natives. Since no jobs are available in the villages in which they live and lack of education and work skills prevents them from competing for jobs elsewhere, 58 percent of the potential Native work force in the four census divisions simply stopped seeking work.

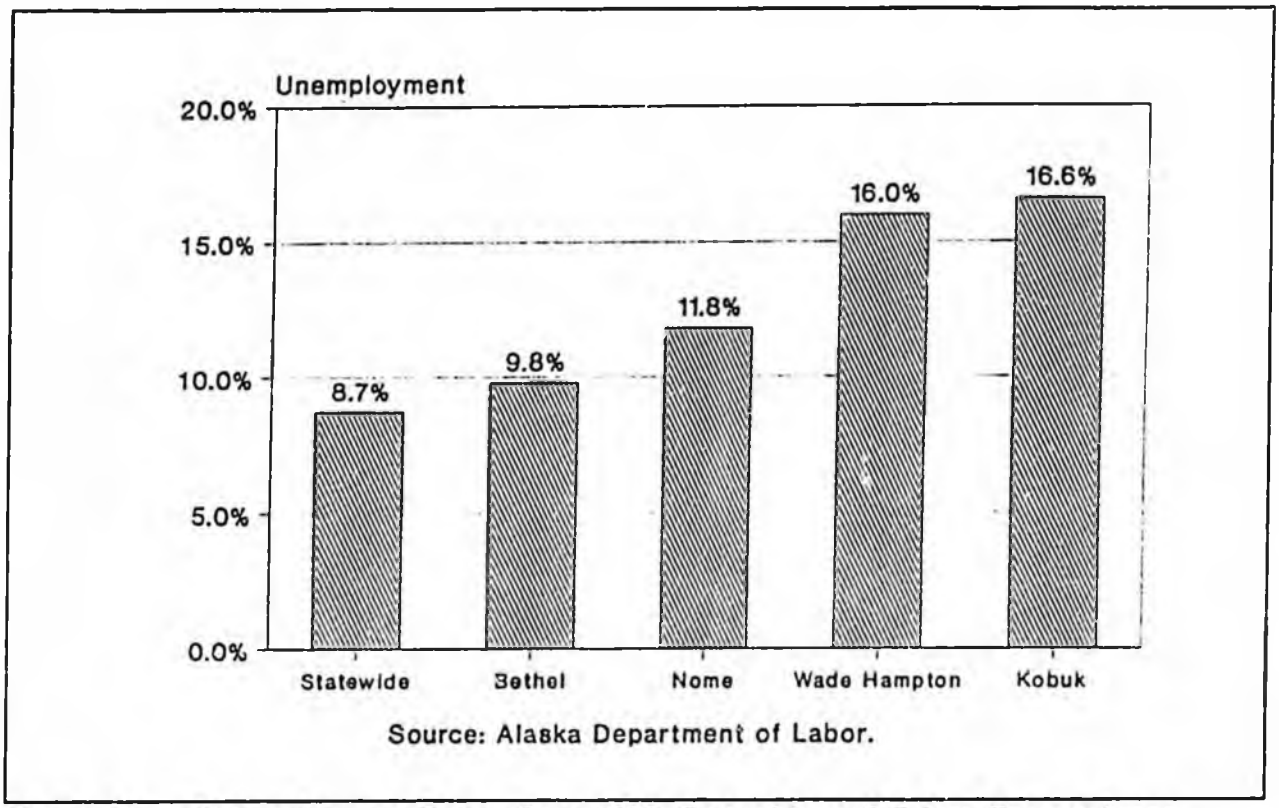

Figure 10. Unemployment Rates, June 1988, Statewide and Select Census Areas

Figure 11 depicts the rapid growth of the working age population of western Alaska between 1970 and 1980 and projects the continued population increase between 1980 and 2000.

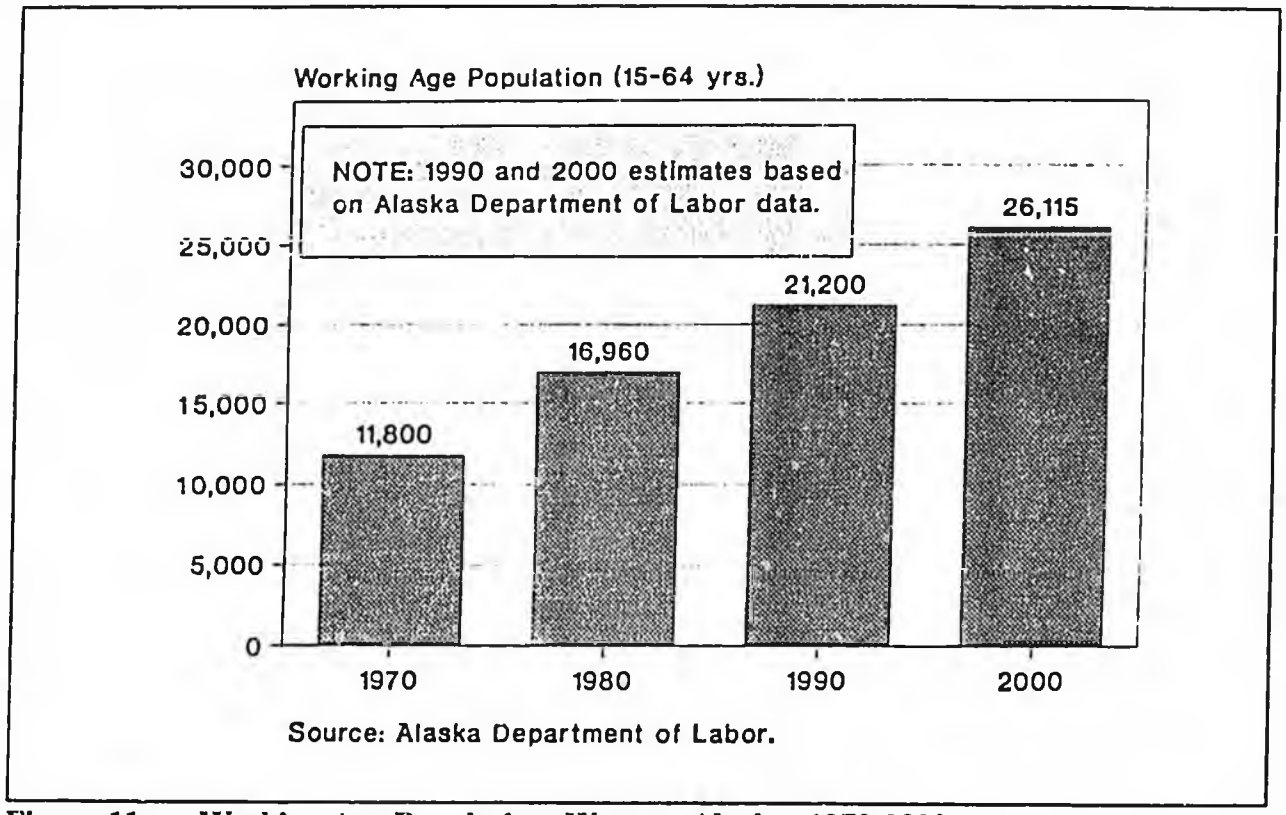

Figure 11. Working-Age Population, Western Alaska, 1970-2000

INCOME AND COST OF LIVING

Since 1970, western Alaska residents have made significant statistical gains in personal income, although to levels far short of the state and national averages. Figure 12 indicates that, despite the growth in government spending, between 1971 and 1986, the per capita income in western Alaska was significantly below the state and national averages. In 1986, the average Alaskan made $17,400 a year, the average American $14,200. But the average Native living in western Alaska made $11,300.

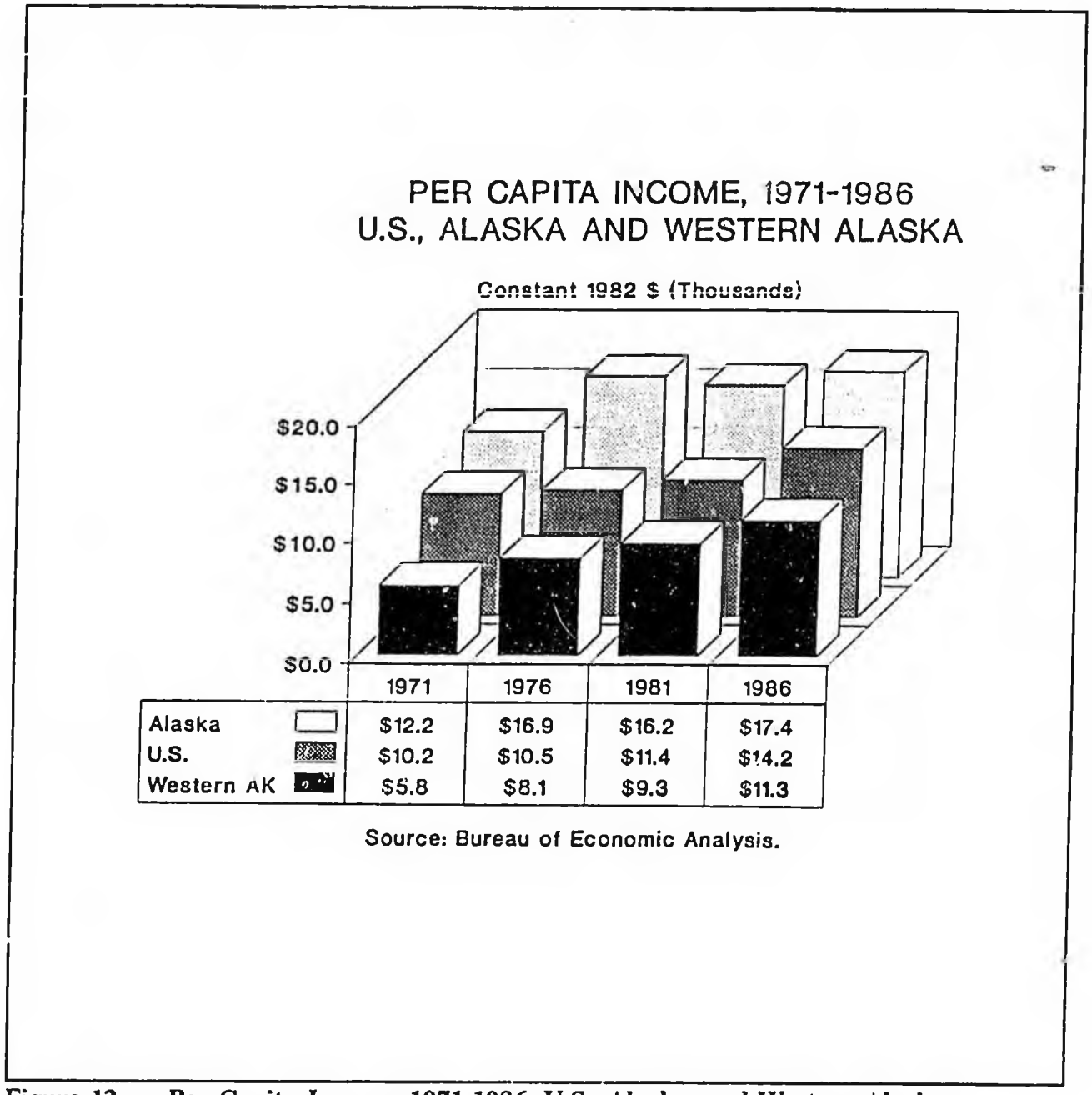

Figure 12. Per Capita Income, 1971-1986, U.S., Alaska, and Western Alaska

Figure 13 compares the ratio of per capita income in western Alaska to per capita income statewide and in the rest of the United States.

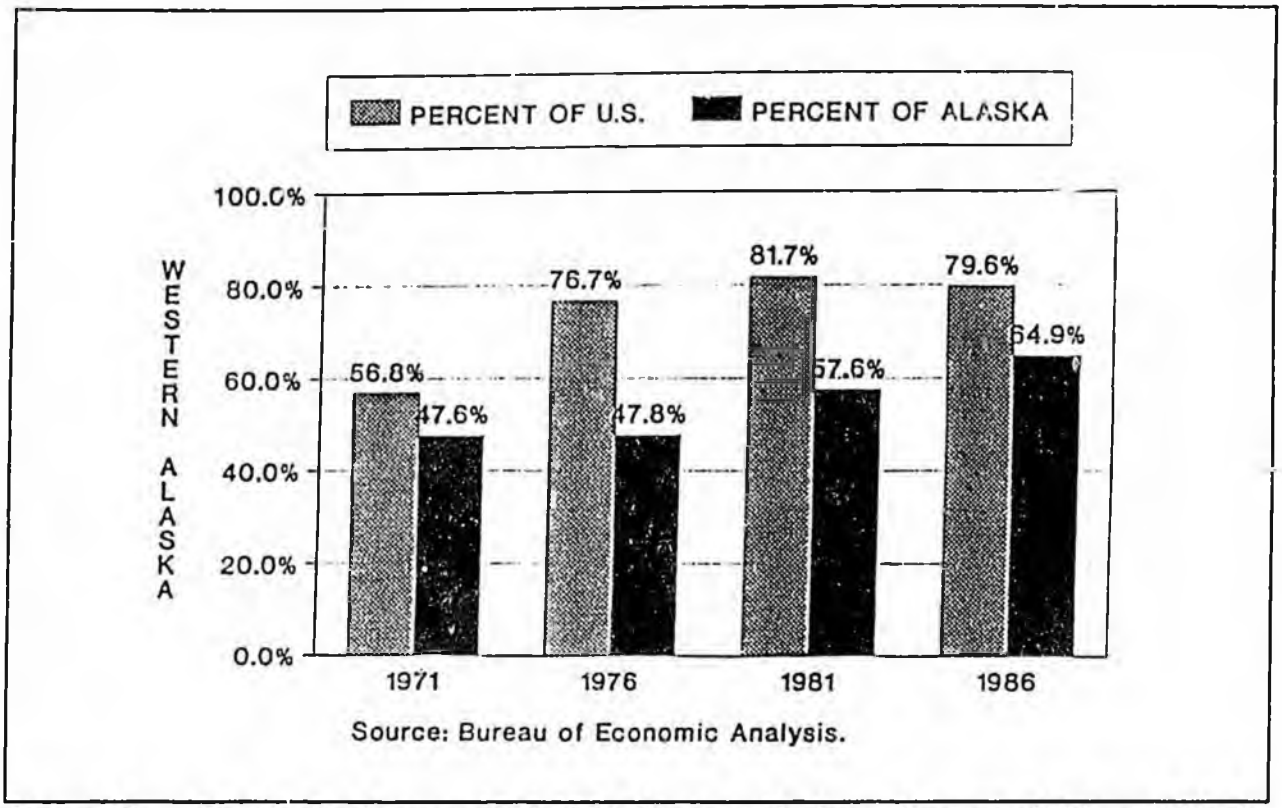

Figure 13. Per Capita Income, 1971-1986, Western Alaska as Percent of U.S. and Alaska

In addition to having less money than Alaskans who live and work in the cities, because of the high cost of living the money Natives living in rural Alaska do have is worth less. Figure 14 indicates that the average Native family of four living in Bethel, Kotzebue or Nome spends 62 percent more per week on food, 165 percent more on electricity and 46 percent more on a barrel of heating oil than does a family of four living in Anchorage.

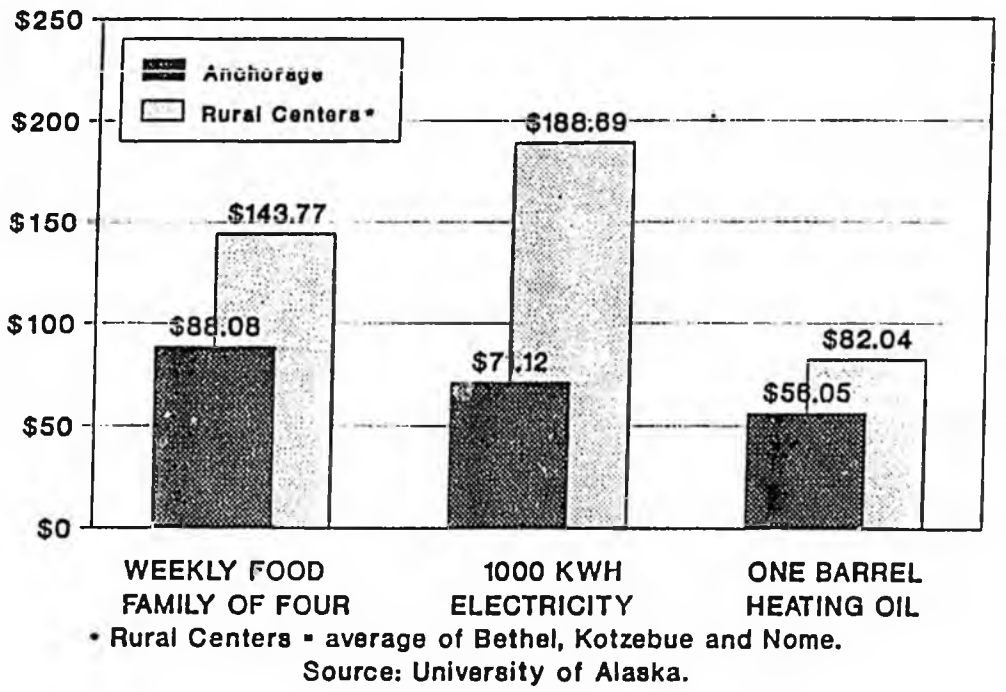

Figure 14. Cost of Select Items, March 1988, Anchorage vs. Three Rural Centers

VILLAGE ALASKA: THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR ECONOMY

Even if the subsistence economy is protected, Natives living in rural villages are dependent, and each year more dependent, on the cash economy. Heating oil, electricity, cotton, wool and fiber-filled clothing, coffee, sugar, televisions and other accoutrements of the American mass culture are omnipresent, non-negotiable elements of contemporary village life. As a result of consumer demand generated through education, television and other media, Native aspirations for access to the non-Native material culture can be expected to increase.

But satisfying consumer demand costs money. In most Native villages money can be acquired in only two ways: it can be earned or it can be given. Most villages do not have a viable cash economies. There are few jobs, and little money can be earned. Consequently, too many Natives living in rural villages meet their material needs through government transfer payments. But government largess is not without cost. Economic dependence engenders low self-esteem that contributes to the cycle of depression, alcohol abuse, violence and death.

Since 1970 Native villages have become increasingly dependent upon non-local public money to support per capita income, wage employment, maintenance of community infrastructure and basic services. Fortuitously blessed with massive oil revenues, in the mid-1970s the Alaska Legislature began spending large amounts of public money in rural Alaska. State spending purchased capital improvements and community services and raised

the level of per capita income in Native villages closer to that of urban residents. But the recent reduction in revenues occasioned by the decline in world oil prices has two potentially controversial implications for the State's effort to manufacture a rural economy.

First, the cost of maintaining and operating the infrastructure built with federal and state money (e.g., water and sewer systems, electrical generating systems, schools, community buildings and roads) is beyond the means of most villages and the Native families who live in them. Eventually, the cost also may be beyond the means of State government - or the Legislature's willingness to continue spending large portions of shrinking revenues in villages that contain a diminishing percentage of the electorate.

Second, while geographic mobility is an historic alternative to death or poverty, the effort to improve the village standard of living through State spending has discouraged out-migration - one of the ways in which non-Native communities have traditionally adjusted when the local economy can no longer sustain the population.

The construction and operation of village high schools has encouraged young Native adults to remain in their home villages. But since jobs are scarce, when they graduate, they are frequently frustrated by the inability to put their education and skills to productive use. Consequently, as the pool of young Native labor has expanded over the last 20 years, the pressure on

the State and federal governments to provide village employment opportunities has intensified.

Having had the money to do so, government attempted to respond. As a result, since 1970 the public sector has dominated the village job market. However, it has not done so by creating proportionately more jobs in rural Alaska than it has in urban areas. Rather, the public sector dominates the rural economy because the private sector is underdeveloped.

To compound the problem, Alaska's version of the federal Davis-Bacon Act requires contractors to pay employees working in rural villages the same wages they pay employees working in the cities, a policy that discourages the use of semi- and unskilled local labor.

Information on the public sector economy of rural Alaska is presented in six categories: federal spending, transfer payments, government payrolls, grants, contracts and in-kind income, ANCSA corporations and impediments to economic development.

FEDERAL SPENDING

In rural Alaska, federal spending reflects the United States government's historic fiduciary commitment to protect the social and economic interests of Alaska Natives. Figure 15 indicates that in 1986 federal expenditures in western Alaska were $ 3,915 per capita, 46 percent higher than the national average of $2,502.

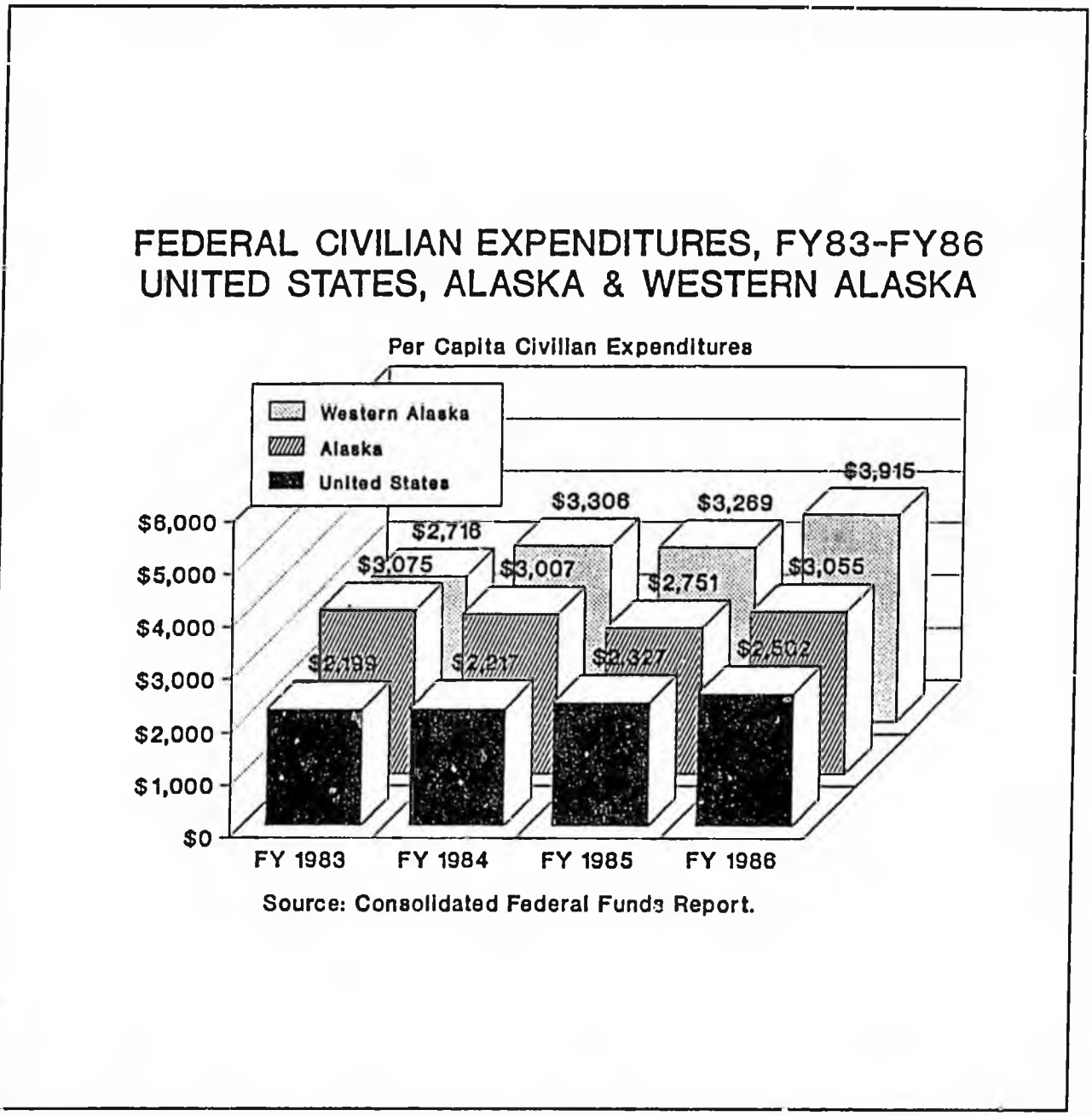

Figure 15. Federal Civilian Expenditures, FY83-FY86, U.S., Alaska, and Western Alaska

Nationally, direct payments to individuals (e.g., retirement and disability payments and income assistance) comprise the bulk of federal civilian expenditures, followed by grants, contracts and employee salaries. In western Alaska, the pattern is reversed. As Figure 16 depicts, in western Alaska between 1983 and 1986, the federal government distributed more than twice as much money through grants and contracts as it did through direct payments and salaries combined. As Figure 17 documents, the State of Alaska has taken the same approach.

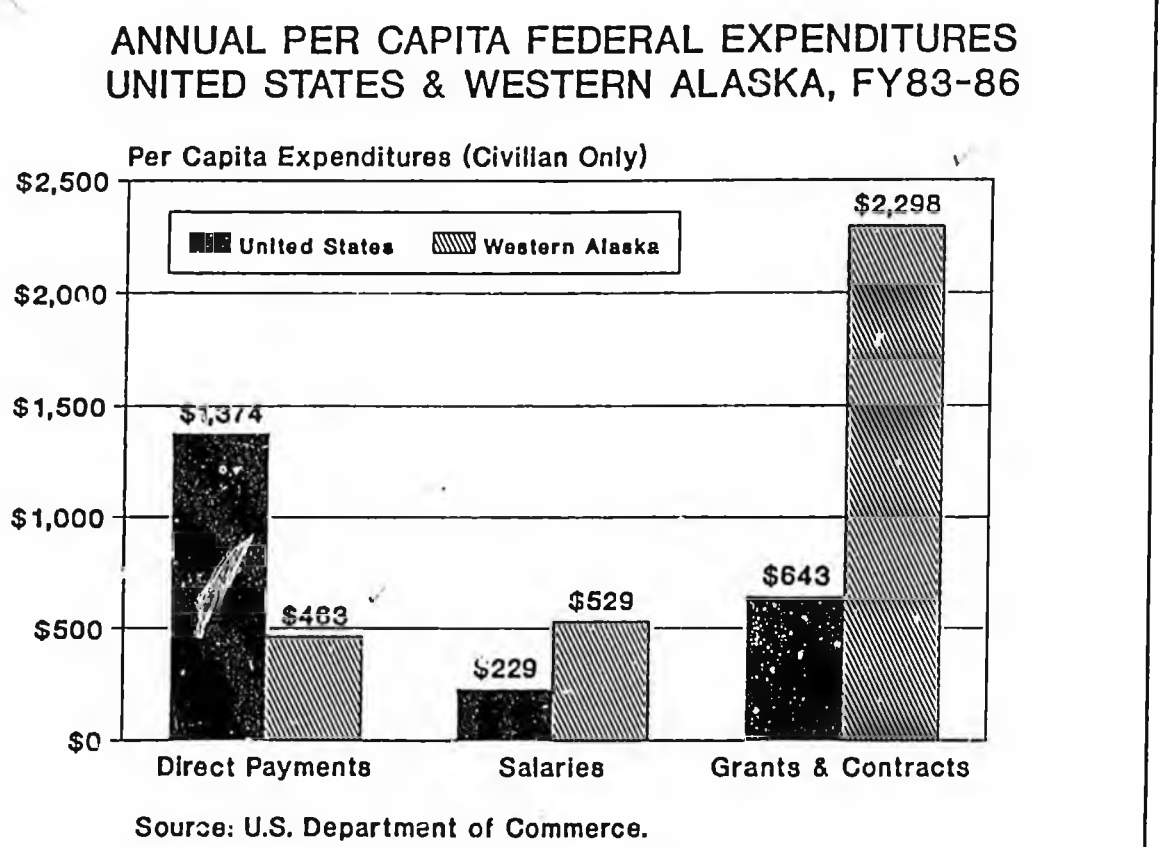

Figure 16. Annual Per Capita Federal Expenditures, U.S. and Western Alaska, FY83-86