

Local Government Committee HB 130	Speaker's former office	9:00 a.m. February 17, 1971 and
HJR 21, SJR 7		
Resources Committee HB 104	Conference room	3:30 p.m. February 16, 1971
Labor and Management Committee HB 129, HB 159	Room 1	9:00 a.m. February 17, 1971
Finance Committee Department of Military Affairs' Budget HB 58	Room 425	2:00 p.m. February 16, 1971 and 9:00 a.m. February 17, 1971
Bush Legislators luncheon	Nugget Room	Noon February 16, 1971

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. E. Miller moved and asked unanimous consent that the House adjourn until 10:00 a.m., February 17, 1971. There being no objection, the House adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Constance H. Paddock  
Chief Clerk

February 1971

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SENATE AND HOUSE - SUPPLEMENT NO. 2 February 16, 1971

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CONGRESSMAN NICK BEGICH  
ADDRESS TO JOINT SESSION OF  
ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

FEBRUARY 16, 1971

It is with the greatest pleasure that I return today to the Alaska Legislature.

I have already discovered in my first days in Congress that my years as a member of the Alaska legislature are of immeasurable value. I believe that one of the greatest assets I have with me in Washington is the friendship and assistance of the many competent men and women who serve in this Legislature. I feel very fortunate to have been accorded the opportunity of gaining a new perspective as Alaska's Congressman, and I would like to share with you today some aspects of that new perspective.

What I would like to do is to ask this body to seriously consider some matters of legislation which are critical to Alaska's future, and which offer unparalleled opportunities for cooperation between Alaska's elected state officials and its Congressional delegation.

The task of choosing these crucial Federal-state issues for my remarks here was really not complicated. With regard to the needs of our state, I am relying on a formula which I believe is shared with many of you in this room. Simply stated, it includes two predominate and sometimes conflicting objectives for Alaska. The first is the establishment of an Alaskan economy in which all the people of Alaska can prosper and live meaningful lives. The second is the protection and enhancement of the unique and magnificent Alaskan environment.

Proceeding from the commitment to successfully balance these goals, I would like to direct my comments to the two key issues for Alaska during the next year; the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and the settlement of the Alaska Native Land Claims.

It has become increasingly clear that these two issues are intimately related to one another, and to the great issues of economy and environment that I mentioned earlier. Interest in both matters is very high in Congress, and I believe the actions of the legislative and executive branches of the State of Alaska will be crucial in any national decisions on these issues.

With the release of the Environmental Impact Statement on the pipeline by the Interior Department, the project took an important leap forward. This statement stands out as the sort of probing inquiry that intelligent leaders are going to demand before approving a project of such economic magnitude and environmental implications.

The numerous stipulations contained in the Impact Statement provide working drafts of construction and environmental standards for the pipeline project. These requirements will not be finalized until after hearings are held both in Washington and Alaska. The Alaska hearings are scheduled in Anchorage on February 25th and 26th, and I would urge those of you who are able to participate to do so.

I am personally convinced that we are entering the final stages of working out the problems of this project. One of the important steps in reaching this stage was the recognition that there really were problems involved in the project. Another important step is the full evaluation of alternatives and the selection of the best proposal. With present information it is difficult to conclude but that a Trans-Alaska Pipeline is the best alternative available, if done with proper safeguards.

I know that you are aware that the pipeline project has been subjected to Congressional criticism. The project has provided an excellent sounding board for members of Congress who give their considerations to environmental concerns to the exclusion of economic problems.

In both the Senate and the House, bills have been introduced to subject the project to Congressional approval. I will strongly oppose these measures, and believe that such proposals can be defeated. I am firmly convinced that the pipeline project should be subjected to rigorous inquiry, but just as firmly feel that the political aspects of Congressional approval will not be a useful part of such inquiry.

I will suggest, however, that the State of Alaska take advantage of the new direction in environmental philosophy which comes with the administration of Governor William A. Egan. Knowledgeable people in Washington will take full notice of the assumption of responsibility by the State of Alaska regarding the pipeline. Your objective inquiry into the project will tell them, in blunt terms, that Alaska is not selling out to anyone for the sake of economic gain. Once this recognition is gained, it will be very difficult for additional Federal hurdles to be erected.

I am not suggesting that Alaska add unnecessarily to the burdens of those seeking to construct the pipeline. I am suggesting that, with regard to the economic and environmental impact of the pipeline, it credits Alaska to develop expertise based on its own inquiries. The knowledge that Alaska is asking probing and pertinent questions will be crucial in Washington, and will, in the long run, be the wisest and shortest route to the beginning of construction.

In some respects it is foolish to initiate my comments with the pipeline issue, for it is now undeniable that the real beginning must be the settlement of the Alaska Native Land Claims. Until this issue is justly settled, most discussions of the pipeline will be premature.

My approach in the 92nd Congress will differ from those taken by our Congressional delegation in previous years. It is my intention to forego the temporary satisfaction and publicity of having introduced numerous personal bills to solve the problem. I reject this approach because it fails to consider the men who are capable of exercising the greatest influence on the final bill. In the House, you know the names well: Mr. Aspinall, Mr. Haley, Mr. Saylor, and others. In the Senate, a similar roster of influential men must be considered. With good reason, these men will react against a bill which is forced on them. It is my belief that they will respond best to a Land Claims bill of which they are a part.

I believe it is wise to remember that we are seeking two things in the Land Claims battle in the 92nd Congress. First, we are seeking a generous bill which treats the claims with justice. Secondly, we want a bill that will receive prompt action by the Committee and the Congress. The 91st Congress should prove to us that the latter consideration is vital.

My approach will be to achieve the best possible understanding of the position of Alaska's Natives, of the State of Alaska, and of all others who have important contributions to the cause.

Having this information, I intend to work through the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the House in order to formulate a bill that will be capable of reaching the floor with strong committee support. This will mean that Native Alaskans, the State of Alaska, and our Congressional delegation must work closely, and differ where necessary, with the Committee leadership and staff in order to frame the final legislation.

I am assured by the leadership that this process will be a productive one, and although I am already on notice that strong differences lay ahead, I believe that this is the soundest approach.

As you know, Representative Wayne Aspinall, the Chairman of the Interior Committee, has already submitted a Land Claims bill. It is a bill to which I have extremely mixed reactions; a bill which will require drastic amendment in some areas in order to deal reasonably with the land claims question.

Let me say that I believe that an amendment or an entirely new bill is possible; that it is my understanding that Chairman Aspinall and others will remain open to reasonable alternatives. I believe that the bill already introduced is regarded only as a first working document, and is not colored with any finality. I will be pleased to elaborate on this later.

My most important task in addressing this body is to discuss the relationship of the Congressional developments and prospects to the actions of the State of Alaska. It is clear to me that the role of the State will be important, and your commitment to State participation could be the key to a speedy and just settlement.

At this time in my comments, I was planning to respectfully request that the Legislature indicate by resolution its willingness to support State participation in the land claims settlement. Your overwhelming resolution of several days ago relieves me of that task. May I emphasize that I believe that this action on your part is a crucial one in gaining passage of a bill. I might cite the example of Governor Egan, who went to Washington to indicate his position even before he took office. The impact of that visit on Congressional leadership was powerful, and I am still experiencing the beneficial effects of that visit.

As a second aspect in the development of a State position on land claims participation, I believe you should proceed from a basic, flexible commitment into a discussion of the specific forms of participation which are possible, and which you may be called upon in the future to support. I believe the debate should take place now, rather than at a later time when immediate action may be necessary.

For my part, I will make every effort to advise this body of all new developments, and to offer all possible assistance in helping you to formulate the position of the State for the final settlement bill.

For now, I feel it unnecessary to advocate one form of participation over another. I will, however, report three alternative forms of participation you may wish to consider:

1. The first involves the sharing of revenues from State-owned lands. This is the approach of the Aspinall bill.
2. A second alternative would be a direct monetary appropriation to supplement whatever Federal appropriation is made.
3. Still another approach would be that of the State contributing certain State-selected lands that have been given tentative approval by the Federal government. These lands might supplement those in the claims bill.

From these and other alternatives, I believe the Alaska Legislature and Administration must begin to reach specific decisions regarding the type and amount of participation which will be supported. As time goes on, and the final bill is developed in Washington, your initial resolution and specific proposal for participation will become increasingly critical to the final settlement.

I am sure that I share with you the feeling that the considerations of the Native Land Claims, and of the Alaska pipeline, are primary parts of a much larger scheme of things to which we must address ourselves. Included in the larger picture may be new directions in land policy, ocean use and foreign relations in the sub-arctic area. I sincerely hope that we establish a close working relationship to realize this network of goals, to balance the economic and environmental objectives which supply our guidance, and to make the just settlement of the Alaska Native Land Claims the very first step.

Thank you.