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STATEMENT BY U. S. SENATOR TED STEVENS
BEFORE THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Mr. Speaker, President Rader, Members of the State Legislature, and fellow Alaskans.

As always it is a great pleasure and privilege to appear before you to discuss issues of importance. Today's discussion is particularly important because it deals with a single issue which can greatly affect the social and economic structure of Alaska for generations to come. I am referring, of course, to the d-2 lands issue which is being considered by this session of Congress. The Congressional decision concerns the final disposition of the approximately 80 million acres of Federal lands withdrawn for study as potential additions to the National Park, Forest, Wildlife Refuge, and Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems.

Briefly, let me describe the legislative situation in Congress at this point. Four days of hearings were held by the Subcommittee on General Oversight and Alaska Lands of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Those hearings kicked off the Congressional proceedings and will be followed by a series of hearings to be held by the House throughout the South 48 and in Alaska in the upcoming months. In the Senate, action will proceed more slowly with no specific hearings yet having been set. Nevertheless, it is clear that the 95th Congress will take some action on the d-2 lands question.

With this in mind, Governor Hammond and the Congressional Delegation have been working over the past months to develop a consensus position which we hope that the vast majority of Alaskan

citizens could support. Our meetings have involved discussions among the four of us and informal meetings with various Alaskan groups who have shown an interest in the d-2 lands issue. We made every effort to meet with all interested parties, and, to my knowledge, we met with every group who asked to speak with us. As you will recall, representatives from the State Legislature, in the persons of Representatives Al Osterback and Clark Gruening, sat in on the discussions we had with the various interest groups.

Following that, Governor Hammond, Congressman Young, and I announced a tentative position on d-2 lands which we have since been working on finalizing. This position proposes that 25 million acres be identified as core areas to become units of the National Park, Forest, Refuge, and Rivers Systems. Adjacent to and surrounding these areas would be other Federal d-2 lands which we refer to as buffer zones. On these lands, a more flexible management system is proposed to allow greater utilization of the lands' resources while still providing for adequate protection of natural and scenic values. From the start, our proposal has indicated our desire to achieve a balanced approach to the complicated issue of d-2 lands. Without this balance, decisions will be made which will drastically affect the future of Alaska and the Nation in the years to come.

The process of revision of our proposal is quickly becoming final. In the process of evaluating comments from Alaskans on our tentative proposal, talking with Alaskans about it, and discussing the tentative position with specific individuals such as the Secretary of the Interior, certain necessary revisions have become apparent. Most particularly, the original idea that the 25 million acres of core areas not be dedicated to the four management systems until the year 2000 has been eliminated. Additionally, our proposal that the rest of the d-2 lands be placed into an alternative system has been modified to emphasize the need for cooperative management between State, Federal, and private landowners. Rather than create a fifth system of management, we agree with Secretary Andrus that the traditional four systems coupled with a well-defined plan for cooperative planning and management can accomplish the dual goals of protecting Alaska's lands and providing for appropriate development of the many resources contained within these lands.

This approach will have a specific effect on the State's lands and will require the participation of the State Legislature in the implementation of our proposal. Consequently, I am here today to outline the specifics for you.

The proposal envisions a broad system of cooperation between Federal and State authorities concerning the management of land managed by each of these governments. Upon the dedication of lands by the Federal Government through d-2 legislation and by the State government through legislation which the State Legislature would pass, a Federal-State Land Classification Commission would be created. This commission would serve as a planning and zoning board for uses on these lands. Diversified uses, including recreation, mineral development, timber harvest, and agricultural development, would be allowed and the lands would be open to such uses subject to the classification of specific lands for specific purposes by the commission. The Federal and State governments would retain a veto on actions of the commission on their respective lands, but the commission would be given the authority to make the decisions on an ongoing basis that would otherwise be preemptively and possibly incorrectly made in one piece of d-2 legislation.

The role of the State Legislature in this process is of great importance. Already, legislation is pending before you which would create a steering council and appropriate funds for specific State effort to influence the course of d-2 legislation. Legislation creating an Alaska Land Commission which would embody many of the functions vested in the commission we propose has also been introduced in this session. It appears that we are thinking along the same lines and there is much we can do to help one another in achieving a common goal, the securing of a balanced approach to d-2 lands which will not foreclose options for future generations.

The proposal which Governor Hammond, Congressman Young, and I will present to Congress will soon be drafted. Its success to a large degree will depend upon the understanding and willingness of the Alaska State Legislature to pass accompanying legislation to implement State participation on the commission. Therefore, I am here today to answer your questions regarding this proposal. To my knowledge, this is the first time that a Senator from our State has appeared before the Legislature to discuss a specific issue. This is appropriate because in many ways the congressional decision on d-2 lands will have as great or greater an impact on the State of Alaska as statehood itself.

Let me emphasize that the timetable for d-2 lands and many of the factors which will affect the decision remain uncertain. The Secretary of Interior has yet to make specific recommendations concerning d-2 lands. He is cognizant of the great complexity of the issue and to that end is moving slowly in formulating a position. No specifics from the Department of the Interior are expected before this fall, but Secretary Andrus has been meeting with members of the congressional delegation and the Governor to discuss these important aspects of the issue. My discussions with Secretary Andrus indicate to me that he is open to the development of a balanced solution to the problem and is willing to work with Alaskans in this regard.

The position which we advocate does represent an Alaskan consensus. In my discussions with Alaskans, through constituent mail, and through visits to the State, I have consistently seen the desire from the vast majority of Alaskans that d-2 lands be available for uses which are essential to the protection of the national interests and that of the State. Our proposal is designed to allow these uses as they become appropriate and necessary. Alaskans have always been conscious of the need to protect the lands in our State.

The establishment of existing units of the four systems in Alaska, including the Arctic National Wildlife Range, the Clarence Rhode Wildlife Refuge, and the Izembek Wildlife Refuge, found their beginnings in the thoughts and ideas of Alaskans. At the same time, Alaskans realize that we live in changing times which require flexibility in management. Based on these assumptions, our proposal achieves both ends by preserving those lands which are under real pressure and establishing a system to allow decisions better left to the future to be made when needed.

In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on this important issue. I am available to answer your questions regarding the specifics of the proposal or other questions relating to d-2 lands.