



Petersburg Indian Association
PO Box 1418
Petersburg, AK 99833
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Petersburg Borough Assembly
P.O. Box 329
Petersburg, AK 99833

RE: Borough Letter Regarding the Landless Bills

November 17, 2020

Dear Assembly,

I write today on behalf of Petersburg Indian Association, the governing body of the Petersburg Tribe. It has been brought to the Council's attention that the Borough Assembly is considering drafting a letter to halt momentum of "The Landless" Bills that have been brought forward in the U.S. Legislature by the Alaska Delegation. We would urge that you refrain from moving forward with a letter requesting further delay.

The landless issue has a long and storied history. In 1971, the US Congress enacted the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) to recognize and settle the claims of Alaska Natives by authorizing the establishment of Alaska Native Corporations to receive and manage lands and funds awarded in the settlement of the claims for Alaska Natives. The purpose of ANCSA was to settle the land claims of the Alaska Natives and to provide them with the means to pursue economic development for the benefit of Alaska's Native people. Many of these corporations have gone on to become very successful and provide economic, social, and cultural support for their shareholders. However, at the time of ANCSA, the Alaska Native communities of Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell (known as the "landless" communities) were not listed as being eligible to form a Native village or urban corporation. Decades of litigation and research later, a Congressional report found that these five communities do not differ significantly from the other SE Alaska communities that were allowed ANCSA eligibility. To date, the five landless communities have not been afforded the same benefit of Native land ownership as others received under ANCSA and continue to advocate for the correction of this inequality.

The Alaska Natives Without Land campaign has been working in the region over the last few years to educate regional stakeholders about the landless issue. Representatives from the campaign have come to town on multiple occasions to hold public meetings, speak with Tribal Citizens, and have approached the Borough Assembly to discuss the issue. The landless issue is not something that has been "fast tracked" by any means.



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Respectfully, we feel that the landless legislation should not be a topic for the Borough Assembly to be weighing in on. The Tribe operates on a government to government relationship with the Federal Government. This is a conversation that should remain between the Tribes and the U.S. Government. This legislation is a chance to rectify an inequality that has lasted for more than 50 years and could mean improved economic opportunity for the region.

We hope that Assembly will reconsider the submission of a letter to the Alaska Delegation which would unduly delay this process further.

Sincerely,

Tracy Welch
Tribal Administrator
Petersburg Indian Association