



August 20, 2014

The Honorable Don Young, Chair
United States House of Representatives
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Washington, DC 205
Via E-mail: Alex Ortiz: alex.ortiz@mail.house.gov

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
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Washington, DC 20510-0203
Via E-mail: Megan Alvanna-Stimpfle: Megan_Alvanna-Stimpfle@murkowski.senate.gov

The Honorable Mark Begich
United States Senate
144 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0204
Via E-mail: Andrea Sanders: Andrea_Sanders@begich.senate.gov

Dear Congressman Young, Senator Murkowski and Senator Begich,

On behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), I am writing to express our support of H.R. 4668, a bill pending before the Natural Resources Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives which was introduced recently by Congressman Don Young and Congressman Duncan Hunter. The bill provides for the equitable allocation and expeditious conveyance of land at Point Spencer, located in the Bering Strait region, to the Bering Straits Native Corporation (BSNC) in partial fulfillment of its 1976 land selection under Section 14(h)(8) of ANCSA, and to the State of Alaska as a part of its land entitlement under the Statehood Act. The bill also provides for the retention of land by the U.S. Coast Guard for its purposes.

Point Spencer was used since the 1960s as a LORAN site until 2010 when U.S. Coast Guard contracted to have the facilities permanently secured, a communications tower disassembled, and subsequently the U.S. Coast Guard abandoned the site. At that time, BSNC recognized the potential of Port Clarence for a number of productive uses in the Arctic region, including: air and sea search and rescue, shipping safety, oil spill prevention and response, material and supplies storage, economic development, marine research and other related uses.

The lands encompassed by BSNC's section 14(h)(8) selection have been used for centuries by the indigenous Inupiat and Yup'ik people of the Bering Strait, as a key location for hunting sea mammals and fishing. There are archaeological artifacts from ancient Inupiat villages located on the site. In recent years, many items of antiquity relevant to the lives and lifestyles of the ancient Bering Strait Inupiat people have been removed from the site while the land has been

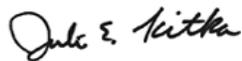
under government management and control. This is a painful and tragic loss of cultural and historical information of importance to the Inupiat people of the Bering Strait. The bill H.R. 4668 will assist in stopping and preventing the looting of these items.

Current trends in the climate of the Arctic have resulted in longer ice-free periods along the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage. As a result, there has been increasing commercial and recreational traffic through the Bering Strait. This is expected to continue and will cause additional pressure on fish and marine mammals on which the Alaska Natives in the region depend upon for subsistence and other purposes.

To the degree that there may be national security interests for the use of land at Point Spencer, those can be fully accommodated through the provisions of H.R. 4668. In addition, Alaska Natives and their respective ANCSA village and regional corporations have for decades been involved in providing goods and services directly related to national security to the United States through work contracted with federal agencies such as the Department of Defense. BSNC has performed such work and is well-equipped through its experience to handle its potential role at Point Spencer.

We believe that this legislation will result in important jobs creation in rural Alaska, and can thereby improve the quality of life of both Alaska Natives and non-Natives living in the region. It will also support economic growth in the region and the state, help save lives, prevent pollution in the Arctic, and provide a port of refuge for the increased shipping traffic through the Bering Strait, the Northwest Passage and the Northern Route. We urge that our Congressional Delegation work together to achieve the passage and enactment of this bill during this Congress, and we offer to provide any assistance to you that you believe is helpful or necessary in furtherance of that goal.

Sincerely,



Julie Kitka
President