



Sealaska Statement on Comments by Joe Miller, Candidate for U.S. Senate

JUNEAU, Alaska — Joe Miller, who is running for U.S. Senate, recently commented that legislation introduced by Senator Murkowski and intended to resolve Sealaska Corporation's outstanding Native entitlement rights was drafted in a *"nontransparent way, favoring some constituent groups at the expense of others."* Following is a response from Sealaska President and CEO Chris E. McNeil, Jr.:

"Miller's claim is unfair, unfounded and uninformed. In fact, Sealaska has had more than 200 meetings with every community in Southeast Alaska. This is a process started more than seven years ago and continues today.

"Senator Murkowski has consistently sought to fairly finalize Sealaska's land selections under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) by repeatedly reaching out to stakeholders from all over Alaska.

"The senator's staff recently traveled to a dozen remote town meetings and has considered hundreds of comments and suggestions from Alaskans. Miller ignores the fact that the legislation has been through multiple iterations over the course of many years, with each new iteration drafted in response to concerns raised by people throughout Southeast Alaska. Once resolved fairly, the bill will benefit all Alaskans. That is the right thing to do.

"For those like Mr. Miller who are unfamiliar with the legislation, it would be helpful to review the changes recently proposed by Senator Murkowski, none of which were done at the request of or on behalf of Sealaska. For instance, the senator has revised the legislation to:

- Move Sealaska away from almost half of the lands identified in the original bill
- Eliminate more than one-third of the Native futures sites designated for non-timber alternative development
- Eliminate the requirement that the Park Service enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Native community regarding sacred sites in Glacier Bay National Park
- Designate some conservation areas in the Tongass to ensure that Sealaska's land selections on which timber resources could be developed do not have an unbalanced impact on the Tongass National Forest

"This bill is, at its heart, a jobs and conservation bill, which includes significant old growth and wild land benefits and a source of long term, sustainable jobs for the state of Alaska and its residents. It moves Sealaska's selections away from community watersheds and fish habitat to forestland that is predominantly on the roaded system. The alternative lands were identified through a process that fully engaged local communities, conservation groups and the Native people of Southeast Alaska.

"That is the right thing to do.

"The bill directly supports Southeast Alaska's regional economy by preserving critical existing jobs and creating new jobs in sustainable, non-timber industries. Sealaska remains the largest employer in the region. In 2008 alone, approximately 350 businesses and organizations in 16 Southeast communities received spending from Sealaska-related activities. Sealaska and its contractors directly employed approximately 363 full and part-time workers in the region, earning an estimated \$15 million in payroll. Including direct and indirect employment and payroll, Sealaska-related employment totaled nearly 490 workers and approximately \$21 million in payroll in Southeast Alaska. The bill supports the regional economy because that is the right thing to do.

"All Alaska Natives throughout the entire state benefit directly from Sealaska's timber operations. Sealaska has paid \$316.9 million to the ANCSA Section 7(i) fund – dollars that reach nearly every village in Alaska. For some rural Alaskan villages, this money has been vital during hard economic times. Finally, more than 20,000 Sealaska tribal member shareholders will secure finality to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act passed in 1971.

"Sealaska has never asked for any more land than that which has been made available to it under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. So why is it that Joe Miller and some extreme environmentalists have teamed up to oppose Senator Murkowski's very efforts to resolve decades-old Native claims in a fair way, and in a way that supports the economy and reduces impacts to the environment? Joe Miller has leveled uninformed criticism of Senator Murkowski's years-long, bipartisan efforts to achieve consensus.

"It's political expediency, and it's the wrong thing to do."

Brian Brown, Alaska Forest Association President added: "Any Republican candidate in Alaska who opposes putting land to a productive use, should not count on the support of the Alaska Forest Association or Southeast industry. Southeast Alaska is just about dead from the stranglehold it is in due to the complete control of the resources by the federal government. A small portion of it going to any private enterprise should be encouraged with vigor."

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A Growing Tradition

Sealaska has strengthened business with culture since 1972. We are a Native corporation owned by more than 20,000 tribal member shareholders and guided by our traditions of environmental stewardship and positively impacting our communities. Learn more at www.sealaska.com

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