

**OPPOSE the DeLauro-Grijalva Tongass Letter**  
**From: The Honorable Don Young**

**Bill: H.R. 2099**

**Date: 7/16/2010**

July 16, 2010

Dear Colleague:

Recently, you may have received an invitation to sign onto a letter that would oppose a bill sponsored by myself as well as the other two members of Alaska's congressional delegation, Senators Lisa Murkowski and Mark Begich. The letter, co-written by Congressman Raúl Grijalva and Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro, surprised me, and I hope that you will consider the implications of opposition to this legislation to the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people of Alaska.

Sealaska Corporation is one of 12 regional Alaska Native Corporations in Alaska. The Corporations were created by Congress in 1971 by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) as a means by which to settle the claims of the Alaska Native people to all of Alaska. Sealaska, on behalf of 20,000 Alaska Native Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian tribal member shareholders, is seeking to resolve its outstanding Native land entitlement, for which it has now been waiting patiently for 40 years.

H.R. 2099, as you may know, permits Sealaska Corporation, the regional Alaska Native Corporation for southeastern Alaska, to select its remaining Native entitlement lands from a designated pool of lands in that region, in lieu of sensitive lands within the original ANCSA withdrawal areas.

Today, Sealaska has an unfettered legal right to select its remaining entitlement lands from within the Tongass National Forest. This bill is not creating a new right or additional entitlement. All of the lands that Sealaska could select under current law are roadless, and are covered with old growth timber.

The letter you recently received mistakenly suggests that H.R. 2099 would cause an increased loss of old growth trees in the Tongass National Forest. I must correct that statement. It is a fact that the legislation would preserve as much as 40,000 acres of roadless old growth timber in the Tongass that could otherwise be harvested by Sealaska. The bill also results in fewer roads being constructed in the Tongass.

Under H.R. 2099, a bipartisan bill co-sponsored by all members of the Alaska delegation, as well as Senators Inouye and Akaka and Congressmen Shuler, Faleomavaega, Abercrombie, Boren, and Kennedy, the corporation would give up its existing selection right to select 100% roadless old growth timber in exchange for selection rights to mostly roaded lands that include a nearly 50/50 mix of second growth and old growth. Under H.R. 2099, Sealaska would not receive one single acre more than it is due under existing law.

Why would Sealaska give up its right to select roadless old growth forestland? First, it makes economic sense. Roadless land is expensive to develop. Second, much of the lands available to Sealaska are within the watersheds or viewsheds of communities, or have significant customary subsistence and recreational use value. Third, much of the withdrawn land encompasses important fish streams. Fourth, by selecting lands other than those currently available to it, Sealaska can take ownership of sacred and cultural sites and lands for development as cultural and ecotourism sites in

lieu of taking lands for timber harvesting.

Moreover, to address local and conservation concerns, the Alaska delegation has been working on significant changes that would (1) move Sealaska off of almost half of the economic lands identified in the original bill; and (2) designate more than 150,000 acres of new conservation in the Tongass. I continue to support this bill, not because it moves Sealaska out of old growth and into second growth or because it designates new conservation areas in the Tongass, but because **it resolves the outstanding entitlement of the Native people of Southeast Alaska.**

It has been a source of great frustration to me that, in the context of this bill, the conservation community has held the Alaska Native community hostage to their own agenda, which remains the creation of millions of acres of new conservation in the Tongass National Forest. That being said, the revised bill will include conservation lands, but proportional and proximate to the timber lands that Sealaska would receive in this legislation. This bill will achieve a balance that all groups should support.

This is a Native entitlement bill that supports sustainable economic development in Alaska Native villages; not a conservation bill or a timber bill. The letter that you have been asked to sign embodies the act of holding Native people and their Native land entitlement hostage to the agenda of national conservation groups.

Contrary to what the letter proponents have told you, this bill is good for the environment, it is good for the Native community in Alaska, and it is good public policy. Please give your support to H.R. 2099. It is the right thing to do for Alaska's Native people.

Sincerely,

DON YOUNG

Congressman for All Alaska