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Senator John Torgerson Kasilof

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Anchorage Subsistence Meeting Canceled

(ANCHORAGE)-A Thursday meeting organized by Sen. John Torgerson (R-Kasilof) to further explore possible solutions to the subsistence issue in Alaska, was cancelled when word from the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) came late Wednesday that they would decline the invitation.

Realizing that the subsistence issue is hopelessly deadlocked with current "rural preference" language, Torgerson wanted to concentrate this first meeting, which would have been composed of a bi-partisan group of legislators and small delegations from three critical groups, on the issue of "rural vs. local" preferences.

"It is quite obvious, and has been obvious for a long time that there are just not enough votes in the Senate to adopt a rural preference subsistence amendment," said Torgerson. "When you have a foundation that just can not be built on, you must at least consider laying a new foundation, that is what this meeting was supposed to do."

Torgerson said he was not discouraged by AFN's decision not to participate in Thursday's meeting. He said that there was only about a week's worth of notice given for the meeting and that they may not have had enough time for them to prepare and meet on this issue.

"For 13 years AFN has pushed for a rural preference subsistence solution," said Torgerson. "I understand that a week is not a lot of time to prepare to discuss alternatives to that position."

In a letter to Torgerson Julie Kitka, AFN President expressed her appreciation for Torgerson's efforts to move forward with subsistence negotiations.

"The Alaska Federation of Natives values your commitment to engage in negotiations that might lead to a successful resolution of the subsistence dilemma," Kitka wrote.

Torgerson said he and Senate President Rick Halford (R-Chugiak) have been invited to attend an AFN leadership meeting this August in King Salmon. Torgerson said he is going to make every effort to attend that meeting, and will continue to try and host meetings before then to move the subsistence issue closer to resolution.

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