

STATE OF ALASKA

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FEDERAL AREAS

SEAN PARNELL, Governor

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June 18, 2010

Senator Lisa Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas is requesting your assistance in salvaging the ANILCA Section 1308 Local Hire Program. For nearly 30 years this program has provided hundreds of seasonal and permanent jobs to Alaskans. As a result of amendments you sponsored as part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, many individuals who started work as temporary or seasonal hires are now career federal employees. However, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) decisions in 2008 have seriously impaired the ability of federal agencies to continue to recruit and hire Alaska residents under the Local Hire Program, as they had done since passage of the act. A program which has worked well for years has essentially ceased to function.

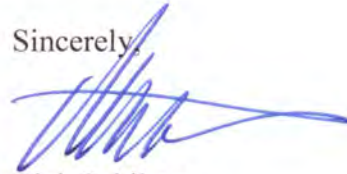
The Commission previously contacted your office about our concerns regarding the OPM decisions and the resulting recruitment problems. At that time, we thought that the OPM and the other federal agencies would resolve their differing viewpoints on managing the recruitment process. In spite of lengthy discussions, that has not happened. Your letter dated December 17, 2008 stated that if an administrative solution could not be found that you would be prepared to pursue legislation to ensure that the original intent of Congress in passing ANILCA Section 1308 was protected.

At our February 2010 meeting, the Commission decided to ask you to pursue legislation to resolve the problems facing the Local Hire Program if another solution could not be found. At that time we were still hopeful that OPM and the Department of the Interior would find a workable solution. However, no agreement has been reached that would allow the federal agencies to resume recruiting and hiring Alaskans into the excepted service under the 1308 program. There are alternative programs that allow some agencies to fill local, seasonal jobs. According to the agencies these alternatives are cumbersome and can only be used in specific circumstances. For the most part, the agencies must now follow the competitive hiring process.

Alaskans are put at a significant disadvantage under the competitive process. This was the reason the program was originally created by ANILCA. Congress recognized that by relaxing the normal rules both the federal land management agencies and local residents would benefit. The agencies would benefit from the special knowledge and expertise found throughout the state and local residents would benefit from jobs that would not otherwise be available. The current hiring process, which is managed by OPM and which all federal job applicants must follow, is so outdated and burdensome that President Obama recently directed all executive departments and agencies to overhaul the way they recruit and hire the government workforce.

We respectfully request that you pursue a permanent legislative solution which will allow the ANILCA 1308 Local Hire Program to continue providing important and much needed jobs to Alaskans.

Sincerely,



Rick Schikora
Chairman

cc: Governor Sean Parnell
Secretary Ken Salazar – DOI
Secretary Tom Vilsack – DOA
Sue Masica- NPS
Geoff Haskett- USFWS
Beth Pendleton - USFS