



Department of Justice

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ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN ASHCROFT APPOINTS THE ALASKA RURAL JUSTICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Attorney General John Ashcroft today announced the appointment of nine Alaskans to the Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission. The Commission, created by Congress earlier this year, was established to review the federal, state, and local jurisdiction over civil and criminal matters in Alaska.

U.S. Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) proposed the Commission, which was directed to submit recommendations to Congress and the Alaska State Legislature regarding ways to improve the quality of justice in rural Alaska. Rural Alaska is defined in the legislation as those areas of Alaska outside the Municipality of Anchorage, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, the Juneau Borough and City, the Sitka Borough and the Ketchikan Borough.

The Commission will be co-chaired by U.S. Attorney for the District of Alaska Timothy M. Burgess and the Alaska Attorney General Gregg Renkes. Additional commission members will include: Alaska's Commissioner of Public Safety Bill Tandeske; Juneau Mayor Bruce Botelho, representing the Alaska Municipal League; Northwest Arctic Borough Mayor Roswell "Ross" Schaeffer, Sr., representing organized boroughs throughout rural Alaska; Tanana Chiefs Conference President Harold "Buddy" Brown, Esq., representing the Alaska Federation of Natives; tribal representative Wilson Justin; Kawerak, Inc. President Loretta Bullard, representing non-profit Native organizations operating Village Public Safety Officer programs; and Bering Straits Native Corporation Vice-President Gail Schubert, representing the Alaska Native Justice Center. Additionally, Robert Bundy will serve as a non-voting representative to provide technical support to the Commission.

"This is a great opportunity to thoroughly examine the criminal justice needs of rural Alaskans and, through the Commission's recommendations, help ensure justice for all," said U.S. Attorney for the District of Alaska Timothy M. Burgess.

"The Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission provides the federal government, the State of Alaska, and rural communities the chance to improve law enforcement and justice in rural Alaska. The problems caused in our communities by alcohol and domestic violence are ever growing and require aggressive enforcement and prosecution. It is my hope that the Commission can work to solve some of these problems," said U.S. Senator Ted Stevens.

Specifically, the Commission will be responsible for four primary duties that include:

- Creating a unified law enforcement system, court system, and system of local laws or ordinances for Alaska Native villages and communities of varying sizes, including the possibility of first, second, and third class villages with different powers;
- Meeting the law enforcement and judicial personnel needs in rural Alaska, including the possible use of cross deputization in a way that maximizes the existing resources of federal, state, local, and tribal governments;
- Addressing the needs to regulate alcoholic beverages, including the prohibition of the sale, importation, use, or possession of alcoholic beverages, and to provide restorative justice for persons who violate such laws including treatment; and
- Addressing the problem of domestic violence and child abuse, including treatment options and restorative justice.

The Commission is required to make its recommendations to Congress and the Alaska State Legislature no later than January 1, 2005.

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