

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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U.S. Attorney  
907-271-5071 / Fax: 271-2345

Contact: Deborah Smith  
First Assistant

## ALASKA RURAL JUSTICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION HEARINGS

Anchorage, Alaska - The Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission will conduct its first community hearing next week, on October 27, 2004, at the Egan Convention Center, to take advantage of the thousands of Alaska Native people who are coming into Anchorage to attend the Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention. The Commission will hear invited testimony from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. During this time, the Commission will take invited testimony on a variety of issues, including tribal justice initiatives that address domestic violence, child protection, alcohol interdiction, and juvenile justice, as well as law enforcement concerns. The Commission will then meet from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The Commission has invited two witnesses from each of the 12 regions in Alaska to address some or all of these issues. With assistance from the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and the Alaska Native Justice Center, the Commission has identified one witness from each region who will offer information from a regional perspective, and one witness who will offer information based on experiences at the local village level. All witnesses have been asked to provide information about what systems or initiatives are working well in their community or region, and what suggestions they offer for improving the delivery of vital law enforcement and justice services in their community, particularly as these services relate to child protection, domestic violence, juvenile justice, law enforcement, and alcohol interdiction. The Commission encourages the public to attend the hearing next week to hear the invited testimony and the Commission's meeting following the invited testimony.

This is only the first of many hearings that the Commission will conduct throughout rural Alaska over the next six months. The next full hearing will occur in conjunction with the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council Annual Convention, on December 10th. Because practical limitations will make it difficult for the Commission to take oral testimony from everyone who wants to testify, the Commission invites and encourages everyone who would like to offer written testimony to do so at any time over the next six months. Written testimony can be submitted to the Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission in care of the Alaska Native Justice Center, 121 West Fireweed Lane, Anchorage, Alaska 99503. The Commission's goal is to provide a written report to Congress and the Alaska State Legislature by the end of June 2005.

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The United States Congress created the Commission this year and directed it to review federal, state, local and tribal jurisdiction over civil and criminal matters in rural Alaska. The Commission will then submit recommendations to the 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 outside the Municipality of Anchorage, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the City and Borough of Juneau, the Sitka Borough and the Ketchikan Gateway Borough.

The Commission is specifically responsible for providing recommendations concerning areas that include:

- 1) 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;
- 2) 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;
- 3) Addressing the need 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;
- 4) Addressing the problems of domestic violence and child abuse, including treatment options and restorative justice.