

Kivalina IRA Council

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NOTES:

Rural Justice Commission
Hearing Testimony

To: Karen Bitzer

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Part of our hearing. Thank!

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Rural Justice Commission Testimony

I have questions regarding the Rural Justice Commission:

Are there guidelines that the rural law enforcement commission is to follow to implement the work that you were assigned to do? What about quality assurances on the research that you need to do? What about qualifications of the people who have been appointed to the commission? Or are you free to do as you please based on each one's personal judgment? I hope that there is a process somewhere that will show that the work they do is of a respectable and unprejudiced nature. How can we be assured that our rural voices are heard?

Who are their target groups? Or is it merely a "public process" where they hear from individuals.

We need to make congress realize that the target groups are Tribal Governments and that it should be specifically stated somewhere in the process because it seems to be like this is an attack on Tribal Sovereignty. What IS the target area/group/audience from whom the commission expects to hear? It wouldn't make sense if they just held public hearings. There should be a Tribal Consultation or the federal government is in breach of their trust responsibility to Tribes. Or is it even possible since this seems to be a partnership between the State of Alaska and the Federal Government. Who's in charge? Just think of why the ARJC is in existence at all, because someone had doubts as to the existence of Tribes in Alaska. One of your major target groups IS RIGHTFULLY the Tribes of Alaska and there should be consultations between the ARJC and the Tribes.

This is an issue for Kivalina because the Alaska Rural Justice Commission has more powers given to it when you have been in existence for only a very short time. Our Tribes have been in existence for hundreds of years and the ARJC has powers to make determinations about us over and above our own hundreds of years of self-governance? Our existence did not begin when the Federal Government finally notice we were here. We have existed for thousands of years and we have had our own ways of self-governance for the same period of time.

Our rights as Tribes are being violated as we speak regarding the ARJC and the work you do. Although this hearing is good for the community members who are speaking and providing their testimony, there should be a separate consultation for Tribal Governments.