

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARTY SHURAVLOFF
CHAIRMAN
NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HOUSING COUNCIL
REGARDING THE “NATIVE AMERICAN HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND SELF
DETERMINATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION” (S. _____)
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

July 19, 2007

INTRODUCTION

Good Morning, Chairman Dorgan, Acting Vice Chairwoman Murkowski and Members of the Committee. My name is Marty Shuravloff and I am the Executive Director of the Kodiak Island Housing Authority in Kodiak, Alaska. I am also a member of the Lesnoi Village, Kodiak Island, Alaska. Today I am here as the Chairman of the National American Indian Housing Council.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today to present our views on the discussion draft for the *Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Reauthorization Act of 2007*, (“NAHASDA”).

Indian country needs NAHASDA reauthorized because it directly affects our health and welfare. We appreciate your adamant support, Mr. Chairman, and this Committee, to focus on what this law means to Native people — providing desperately needed tools to our communities so we can continue to improve the housing conditions that our people face every day.

NAHASDA meets these housing needs by increasing tribal decision-making to design and run their own programs and by making federal housing assistance available directly to the Indian tribes or tribally designated housing entities. Prior to NAHASDA, an estimated 2000 units a year were being built. In NAHASDA’s first year alone, over 6000 units were built. We

believe it is the spirit of Indian self-determination that has made NAHASDA a success and hope this is emphasized during the coming deliberations on its reauthorization.

On behalf of our membership, we have been working with your able and diligent Committee staff on proposed amendments to the law to achieve the objectives of the act and make the law work better for us.

We appreciate the clarification of the definition of program income so that our project start up costs are not counted against us. We look forward to the expansion of our ability to establish reserve funds so we can prepare for short construction seasons. We appreciate Congress' recognition of our authority to make and follow our own laws for employment and contract preferences for our own tribal members. Our ability to carry over funds will reduce the costs of operation and provide much-needed streamlining so we can focus more on service delivery.

We applaud and thank the Committee for its efforts to enhance and further Indian self-determination in NAHASDA. Under the proposed Subtitle B, we can see how a tribe or tribally designated housing entity might set aside a portion of its IHBG to devote to housing activities with long-term planning and decreased HUD reporting and oversight during the upcoming five year period.

We especially appreciate that infrastructure is included in eligible activities. Infrastructure goes hand in hand with housing development and its inclusion will enhance tribal flexibility to use their funds for all stages of development. Our members have urged the Council to work with our sister organizations, the National Indian Health Board and the National Congress of American Indians, to ensure that tribes have access to adequate resources for development of infrastructure especially water and wastewater facilities. This collaboration is underway.

CONCLUSION

As an Alaska Native, I am all-too-aware of the significant effects on tribal communities from inadequate and unsafe housing. Dilapidated houses lead to weak performance in school, poor health, and contribute to a hopelessness that few Americans witness as part of their daily lives.

We ask you to amend, extend, and reauthorize NAHASDA to address the daunting housing challenges facing Indian tribes and people.

I want to thank the Committee for its interest in pursuing the reauthorization of NAHASDA and its support for American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian people.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.