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THE WHITE HOUSE

United States Senate MAR 22 12 03 PM '55

COMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

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March 19, 1955
MAR 22 1955

CARDED

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The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

I have read with great interest the verbatim transcript of the record of your press conference of March 16 in which in reply to a question you once again affirmed your acceptance of the principle of statehood for Alaska. However, you were quoted as saying that the national security considerations force you to oppose it. XOF 101-6

I am sure you are aware that no Members of this Committee nor any Member of the Senate would consciously support any action that would in any way adversely affect our national security. However, the records of the Committee are replete with uncontroverted evidence that statehood would strengthen the security of Alaska, or at worst, have no effect upon it. For more than two years now, this Committee has been endeavoring to obtain a statement of fact from the Department of Defense as to the considerations upon which is based the complete reversal of its policy with respect to Alaskan statehood. Unfortunately, so far we have had mere reiteration of the conclusion that the Defense Department was against statehood on "security" grounds without any facts to support such a conclusion.

Therefore, as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Territories which has initial responsibility for statehood legislation, I am appealing to you as the Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces to give the Members of the Senate an explanation of why continuation of the 80-year-old inferior political status of the Territory is desirable for security reasons.

It has been reported to me on several occasions that you would be willing to accept statehood if the area north and west of the Yukon, and the Aleutian chain, were excluded from the new state and thus left open for military withdrawal of all or part of that area. If the basic issue is

The President

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March 19, 1955

how many millions of acres of Alaska the military needs to maintain the security of the area, I am certain the Members of the Senate will give every consideration to military needs if you will but make them known.

You will recall that your predecessor as Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces expressed his views on statehood directly to the Committee. For convenient reference, a copy of President Truman's letter of May 5, 1950, is attached.

Therefore, in view of your reiterated support of the principle of statehood for Alaska, on behalf of the Subcommittee of which I am Chairman, I appeal to you for a clear statement as to the type of statehood legislation that would be acceptable to your Administration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Henry M. Jackson", written in a cursive style.

Henry M. Jackson, Chairman
Subcommittee on Territories and Insular Affairs

HMJ/frd

Enclosure

O.F.

147-E-1

RECEIVED
APR - 5 1955
CENTRAL FILES

March 31, 1955

L JACK MARTIN

Dear Senator Jackson:

As indicated by your March nineteenth letter, the admission of the Territory of Alaska to statehood, the principle of which I have in the past publicly supported, has a number of troublesome aspects. Among these is the problem to which your letter principally refers -- that of providing adequately for our national defense needs.

INDEXED

KOF133

You are aware, of course, of the tremendous strategic importance of this region to our nation's defense. Our military programs and plans oriented to this region and to the threat facing us there are premised upon full freedom of Federal action both for defense and for peacetime policing action.

Conversion of the Territory to a State cannot but raise difficult questions respecting the relationship of the military to the newly constituted State authority. Neither the nation nor Alaska could afford any impairment of the freedom of movement and of action by our forces in large areas of this critical region. In the present state of world affairs, I believe that it would be imprudent to effect so fundamental a readjustment unless a formula can be devised and approved by the Congress which will adequately meet these defense needs.

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XOF99

I am in doubt that any form of legislation can wholly remove my apprehensions about granting statehood immediately. However, a proposal seeking to accommodate the many complex considerations entering into the statehood question has been made by

CROSS CARD FOR STAFF SECRETARY

Interior McKay, and should legislation of this type ^{x OF 4}
be approved by the Congress, I assure your subcom-
mittee that I shall give it earnest consideration.

A letter similar to yours has come to me from Repre-
sentative Miller and I have made the same reply to him. <sup>filed
OF 1472-1</sup>

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. DILLON ^{id}

^x
The Honorable Henry M. Jackson
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

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