

Agenda Item #17
S. 2554, the Alaska Native Landless Equity Act

Senator Murkowski's S. 2554 corrects a longstanding omission in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) by authorizing the creation of Alaska Native "Urban" Corporations for five Southeast Alaska Native communities and providing standard land entitlements for them. The companion for this common-sense corrective legislation has passed the House Natural Resources Committee and the full House of Representatives with no recorded opposition.

Background: In 1971, ANCSA settled Alaska Native aboriginal land claims by creating regional and village corporations and authorizing the conveyance of more than 44 million acres of land throughout Alaska to them. Congress intended for these corporations to provide long-term economic, cultural, and social benefits for their Alaska Native shareholders.

ANCSA listed ten eligible communities in Southeast Alaska but—unlike for every other region in the state—did not provide a mechanism for omitted communities to appeal their exclusion. As a result, the Alaska Native communities that predated today's municipalities of Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell have been denied the opportunity to establish ANCs and receive land under ANCSA, despite nearly 3,500 Alaska Native individuals being enrolled to those communities and meeting ANCSA's eligibility standards.

In 1991, Congress directed the Department of the Interior to examine the historical record surrounding the exclusion of these communities. The resulting 1994 study found no documented explanation for why these five eligible communities were omitted from ANCSA.

Summary: S. 2554 extends equal treatment to five Southeast Alaska Native communities that were excluded from the original settlement by establishing "urban" corporations for them. The bill conveys one township (23,040 acres) of land to each, consistent with the original land entitlements provided to recognized Southeast Alaska Native communities, while preserving permanent public access for recreation and subsistence. Lands that are to be conveyed are clearly defined, referenced on maps referenced in the bill, and have been thoroughly vetted. Developed over decades through collaboration with Alaska Native organizations, local governments, and conservation stakeholders, including The Wilderness Society and The Nature Conservancy, S. 2554 represents a balanced and broadly supported solution to a decades-long injustice.

ENR Action: The Committee held a legislative hearing that included S. 2554 on February 12, 2026, marking the seventh hearing on Landless legislation since 2013. In the last Congress, ENR favorably reported this bill (S. 1889) in September 2024.

House Action: Rep. Nick Begich of Alaska has introduced H.R. 41, a companion measure to S. 2554. The House Natural Resources Committee ordered H.R. 41 favorably reported by voice vote in April 2026. The full House of Representatives passed the bill on suspension by voice vote—with no recorded opposition—in June 2026.