

Background on the ANCSA Improvement Act

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Improvement Act of 2016 provides for updates and improvements to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA) that would assist a variety of communities across Alaska. ANCSA was always intended to be a work in progress to help Alaska Natives advance economically since it was passed 45 years ago. This bill would amend the 1971 Act to address issues both new and old.

The ANCSA Improvement act will:

- Allow the Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corp (UIC) to obtain gravel to be used in construction in Barrow from underneath its other surface estate.
- Grants Shishmaref a 300 foot easement to allow a road to be built between Shishmaref and Ear Mountain, Alaska; furthers U.S. Forest Service reacquisition of specified land from Shee Atika; and an equitable way for land at Cube Cove in Southeast to be sold back to the U.S. Forest Service and placed in the Admiralty Island National Monument.
- Helps Cook Inlet have options from which to select the outstanding land owed to it under ANCSA; allows Kaktovik to select its remaining lands on Barter Island, Canyon Village to select lands at its original northeast location, and Nagamut's Southwest Natives to select lands closer to their traditional hunting sites.
- Provide urban corporations for the five towns and more than 3,400 shareholders in Southeast that were unjustly left out of being represented by the terms of the original act: Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Tenakee and Haines.
- Allows Alaska Native corporations, as corporations to benefit from some existing grant programs for historic, tribal and grave preservation so they can better maintain the historical and cultural sites they selected under ANCSA.
- Clarifies the lands Natives who served in the Vietnam War are eligible to select to help make good on a 1998 commitment by the government to provide 160 acres of land allotments to those who served their country in war. So far, because of the complexities of the 1998 act, only 432 Natives received land, just 13 percent of those who served during the war.
- Provide Shishmaref on the northwest coast an expedited means for it to gain rock to shore up its village from coastal erosion, or to relocate to a more stable site.
- Provides for the Secretary of Interior to convene a meeting of the shareholders of the 13th Regional Corporation for the purpose of the election of a board of directors thereby providing a process for Natives who had given up their aboriginal land claims and moved to the Lower 48 to reconstitute the 13th Regional Corporation which was dissolved under state law when it lapsed into insolvency.