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## Senator Lisa Murkowski on Tribal Health

### *Summary*

As a member of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on Health Education Labor and Pensions, Lisa Murkowski is a proven champion of Alaska Native health issues. She is the first member of the delegation to be recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Indian Health Board for her work on the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. She was recognized with the Congressional Leadership Award by the National Congress of American Indians. Lisa Murkowski believes in achieving the mission of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium-- that Alaska Natives will be the healthiest people in the world. And her record proves it.

### *Funding for Water and Sanitation Facilities*

Lisa Murkowski fights to bring safe drinking water and sanitation facilities to our rural communities. She protected \$65 million in Village Safe Water funds that other Senators were trying to take from Alaska. This critical funding benefits more than 20 villages, including Chignik, Kwigillingok, Pitka's Point, Gulkana, Emmonak, Hughes, Old Harbor, Kasigluk, Chenega, Ouzinkie, Fort Yukon, Kotzebue, Saint Mary's, Saxman, Stebbins, Togiak, Ambler, Golovin, Toksook Bay, Koliganek, Kake, Lower Kalskag, and Nikolai.

To protect this program from any future attacks, Lisa Murkowski **worked with five agencies to streamline the grant application process to receive funds faster to meet summer barge schedules**. She fought to protect and **restore funding for the Village Safe Water program** from proposed budget cuts.

**Bringing safe water and sewer systems to our rural communities remains a top priority.** Nearly one in four Alaska Native rural homes do not have running water. As a result, according to the Centers for Disease Control, babies in some Alaska villages are 11 more times likely to be hospitalized for respiratory infections and five times more likely to be hospitalized for skin infections. That is simply unacceptable, and Lisa Murkowski will continue to fight for this critical program.



### ***Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 2009***

As a senior member and immediate past vice chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Lisa Murkowski advocated for **passage of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 2009**. The bill permanently **reauthorizes Indian health programs and greatly enhances the ability of tribal health providers to improve the health care provided in rural Alaska, including:**

- Expanded behavioral health services to address the pressing needs in rural Alaska;
- Long-term care so elders can receive the care they need in their communities;
- Ensuring that our Alaska Native Veterans receive the care they are entitled to;
- Enhancement of the sanitation facilities construction process to help address the huge unmet sanitation needs in villages throughout Alaska;
- Permanent authorization for the Community Health Aide and Dental Health Aide Therapy programs to allow invaluable health and dental services to continue to be provided to rural residents who would otherwise go without these services.

### ***Fighting to Improve Oral Health Disparities***

Knowing Alaska Native children suffer rates of oral health disease at 2.5 times the national average was unacceptable to Lisa Murkowski. She worked with Alaska Native health leaders to secure more funding. After visiting the Dental Health Aide Therapy (DHAT) Training Program, Lisa Murkowski made sure that the **Indian Health Care Improvement Act authority for this program continued and was able to get a \$2 million appropriation to support the DHAT training program**. In addition, Lisa Murkowski supported a dental increase in the Indian Health Service budget.

## **Lisa Murkowski Delivers for Tribal Health Initiatives**

- Increased the Medicare reimbursement rate for Alaska by 35 percent – Passed 2008.
- Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Consortium, Bethel -- \$1 million for facilities and equipment (2009)
- Co-sponsored and worked to improve the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to provide assistance to Native Alaskans
- Denali Commission Health Facilities - \$10 million (2009)
- Secured an amendment to the Tribal Law and Order Act to direct Congress's research agency to evaluate the resources of rural health clinics to collect forensic evidence.
- Authored and won passage Amchitka Nuclear Workers Compensation Aid and pushed for final regulations to expand and improve provisions of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Act for Alaskans affected by nuclear tests at Amchitka Island (2004).
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- Secured an exemption from U.S. Department of Transportation rules to allow medical oxygen to be shipped to locations in the bush without being packed in enormous, blowtorch-proof boxes, which are impractical for transportation in rural Alaska.
- Won inclusion of amendments to the Indian Health Care Improvement Reauthorization and Extension Act to:
  1. Enhance construction of sanitation facilities;
  2. Authorize repayment of travel costs for family members who escort elders and young children to larger medical centers for emergency care;
  3. Permanently authorize the Community Health Aide program to ensure basic medical care is available in remote villages;
  4. Provide more comprehensive behavioral health services; and
  5. Authorize expansion of long-term care by HIS and tribally-operated hospitals including hospice care, assisted living, community based care, and elder home care.

