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Yesterday the bipartisan Indian Law and Order Commission (ILOC) released its final report and recommendations to the President and Congress of the United States. While the ILOC's mandate spread nationwide, Alaska is the only state to have an entire chapter devoted to it. It is easy to see why. The report finds that Alaska's law enforcement and justice systems "do not serve local and Native communities adequately, if at all." And, the report reaffirms what many other commissions have concluded and what NARF and TCC have argued for many years: rural justice in Alaska is broken and the best and most cost-effective way to fix it is to work directly with Alaska's tribes. As the report states, "the status quo in Alaska tends to marginalize and frequently ignores the potential of tribally based justice systems, intertribal institutions, and organizations to provide more cost-effective and responsible alternatives to prevent crime and keep all Alaskans safer."

"Every Alaskan needs to read this report," says NARF attorney Natalie Landreth. The report lists some truly shocking statistics: there are only 1 to 1.4 law enforcement officers per million acres; at least 75 Native communities lack any law enforcement; Alaska Native women are overrepresented in the domestic violence population by 250 percent; Alaska Native youth are four times more likely to be referred to juvenile court and three times more likely to be sentenced to confinement than non-Native youth, and the list goes on. While other reports have noted these statistics, this report is perhaps the first to link these problems directly to the State of Alaska's law enforcement and justice systems. The report concludes that "the serious and ongoing crime and disorder problems in rural and Native regions of the State are evidence that the system is deeply flawed and that it has failed."

One of the primary flaws in the state system is that it asserts the exclusive right to prosecute all crime statewide yet it refuses to either provide the necessary services or allow the tribes to do so themselves. The report does not limit itself to flaws in the state system—it also points out that Congress has exacerbated and perpetuated the horrific problems in rural Alaska by treating Alaska differently or excluding it altogether from federal legislation. The most recent of these damaging Alaska exclusions is Section 910 of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which purports to prevent Alaska tribal courts from issuing and enforcing domestic violence protective orders. The report joins in a request made by NARF and TCC earlier this year: repeal Section 910 of VAWA.

The Commissioners will formally present their report and recommendations at the BIA Providers Conference on Wednesday, December 4 at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage. The report can be downloaded for free at <https://www.indianlawandordercommission.com/report/>.