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STATEMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ON ALASKAN STATEHOOD AT HIS NEWS CONFERENCE, JULY 1, 1958

First, a few words about the action of the Senate last night to admit Alaska as the forty-ninth State of the Union.

This is not merely a victory for the 220,000 inhabitants of Alaska alone. It is rather a victory for all 173 million American people, for Alaska now will be in a better position than ever before to contribute to the economic and social progress of the entire United States.

Above all, this is a victory for the cause of representative government. It should be hailed by all who believe in government of the people, by the people, and for the people, not only within our own borders but throughout the world.

The road to June 30th, 1958 began on March 30th, 1916--the day when Judge James Wickersham, Delegate for Alaska, introduced H.R. 13978, Alaska's first statehood bill. It has been a long and often hard road.

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The statehood fight is not yet over. In the current session of Congress, we should attain statehood for Alaska's sister territory of Hawaii.

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I am hopeful we can achieve it. Hawaiian statehood legislation has bipartisan support, written into the platforms of both political parties in both 1952 and 1956. Twice in the tenure of the current Congress the President has requested the legislation's passage.

Every argument for Alaskan statehood buttressed the case for Hawaii. Now, with the Senate action last night, that case is stronger than ever. The time for action on Hawaii is now.

All of us today, I am sure, can give thanks that that hope for Alaska has become a reality. And I believe most of us can join in the same hope for Hawaii. For more than a half century the citizens of Hawaii have had less than their full and rightful inheritance as Americans. That state of affairs must come to an end, and the sooner the better.

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