STATEMENT BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) RECORDED FOR HIS WEEKLY RADIO BROADCAST, JUNE 27, 1958

MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS:

I am making a determined fight against the Alaskan Statehood Bill. One of the reasons why I am so concerned about this bill is that the admission of a State to the Union is one kind of Act of Congress which cannot be revoked.

Generally, when Congress enacts a poor piece of legislation, it is able to remedy matters -- to some extent, at least -- by repealing the measure or amending it. Statehood is an entirely different matter. We live in an indestructible Union composed of indestructible States. A State, once formed, cannot be dissolved by Act of Congress.

I have done my best to persuade the Senate that the Alaskan Statehood Bill should be debated fully on the floor of the Senate. Every Senator bears a responsibility of the gravest kind to study with the utmost care the qualifications of a Territory which applies for admission to the Union. The admission of Alaska would be unwise at this time.

We have never admitted a non-contiguous territory to the Union. We have always believed that our country should consist of a sound and compact area, bounded by Canada, Mexico, and the two oceans. We cannot make an exception to the rule in the case of Alaska without opening the door for the admission of other non-contiguous areas. Certainly we must expect that the admission of Alaska will greatly increase the chances of Hawaii being granted Statehood.

The natives of the Hawaiian Islands, and the people of
Oriental descent who live there in large numbers, have customs and traditions which are quite different from those of the people who settled the United States. Quite apart from the immediate threat to the United States posed by the fact that Communist influences in Hawaii are strong and influential, the admission of Hawaii would bring into the Union a State with interests and philosophies quite different from our own.

Once the precedent for admitting non-contiguous territory is set, there is no stopping point. Congress will be asked to admit Guam, Puerto Rico, Samoa, and the Virgin Islands. Once we are started down this dangerous path, what is to prevent the admission of some Southeast Asian nation as a State in the American Union? I can conceive of a situation in which some bankrupt nation, threatened by Communist imperialism, might apply for American Statehood.

Even in the case of Alaska, non-contiguity is a major handicap. Alaska has problems which are foreign to the problems of the 48 American States, because of Alaska's markedly different geographical situation.

According to the Encyclopedia Americana, racial segregation is illegal in Alaska. Alaskans may regulate relations between the races in any way they see fit, but I do not look forward to seeing two more integrationist Senators and another integrationist Representative in Congress. I do not believe that it is fair and right to send two additional Senators and a Representative to Congress to represent an area with only 150,000 people.
Alaska can have the self-government its people want by obtaining Commonwealth status, as Puerto Rico has done. All that it would gain by Statehood is voting representation in Congress, and this, at the present time, is not in the best interest of the country.

I believe in a greater degree of self-government for Alaska. The unique problems of the Territory can best be solved within the Territory, by the people who are most familiar with the problems. Statehood for Alaska is not the answer to the Territory's problems, and Alaskan Statehood is not in the interest of the people of the United States.

I wish to thank this station for granting me this time each week, and thank you for listening.

This is Strom Thurmond in Washington.

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