

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE TED J. EISCHEID

Sponsor Statement House Bill 257 – Plug in solar 34-LS1203\A

“An Act relating to the regulation of residential solar energy generation and portable solar energy generation devices.”

Energy costs are a major burden for many Alaskan households. Alaska's per capita energy expenditure is the highest in the United States. This bill would clear the way for households and small businesses to utilize solar energy in a way never available before in Alaska. Given their recent introduction in some US markets including Utah, portable solar energy generation systems, not to exceed 1200-watt output, are an easy fit for Alaskan homes and businesses. These small portable solar systems are accessible, with a low entry price. Similar systems have been shown to pay for themselves within 5 years.

This bill is a practical, simple effort to remove or prohibit unnecessary regulatory barriers for small scale home and business use of solar energy in Alaska. The bill clarifies that small, portable solar energy generation systems should not be regulated in the same way larger grid connected home or utility scale projects are and eliminates permits, fees and administrative overhead without interfering with guidelines ensuring safety.

HB 257 provides a step forward in energy resilience. Alaska's overall electricity infrastructure is fragmented into more than 100 individual utilities, varying drastically in size, method of generation and age of grid. While offsetting cost for customers, these systems will help to improve reliability without requiring large scale investment into new infrastructure or subsidies.

This bill does not provide mandates nor establish incentives. The bill removes unnecessary administrative hurdles, encouraging development and innovation in industry which will further reduce the cost of entry for Alaskans. It is respectful of the autonomy of our diverse communities, assisting local authorities and utilities to work toward solutions that are tailored to their unique geographies, cultures and energy needs.