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House Bill 280

“The Cook Inlet Recovery Act”

Sponsor Statement

Residents of South Central Alaska are at risk that in the near future there will not be enough natural gas produced in Cook Inlet to heat and light their homes and businesses. Legislative action now can help address this challenge before it becomes a crisis.

A critical and universally recognized part of the solution is large-scale gas storage, allowing utilities to purchase gas during lower demand periods; hold the gas in storage; then withdraw it when needed. Establishing gas storage is crucial, and the state needs to promote the rapid development of storage facilities. House Bill 280, the Cook Inlet Recovery Act (CIRA), provides tax incentives and regulatory assurances to attract the private investment necessary to develop storage facilities and help reduce the cost of storage to consumers.

Specifically, CIRA provides a 10-year exemption from state land lease fees and rents to owners of new gas storage facilities. Since storage is needed urgently, these financial incentives will be available only for facilities put into operation before December 31, 2015. CIRA sets standards, such as minimum size and access requirements, for qualifying projects. Consumers will benefit from increased energy security and lower energy costs, as any financial incentives are required to pass through the supply chain to utilities and, in turn, to their customers.

In addition to storage, South Central also needs new gas discoveries. CIRA increases the incentives for exploration in Cook Inlet and allows explorers and producers to take their full benefit in one year rather than over two years.

CIRA also provides statutory guidance to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska in its consideration of utility gas supply contracts to help ensure adequate supplies of reasonably priced gas in the years ahead.

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