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March 12, 2012

The Honorable Neil Foster, Co-Chair
House Energy Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 434
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Lance Pruitt, Co-Chair
House Energy Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 421
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HB 336 (Thompson)—Support

Dear Co-Chairs Foster and Pruitt:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the House Energy Committee to support HB 336, authored by Representative Steve Thompson and co-sponsored by your Committee colleague Representative Pete Peterson and Representatives Guttenberg, Herron, Edgmon, Miller, Gruenberg, Joule, Kerttula and you, Co-Chair Foster.

In Representative Thompson's sponsor statement he indicates this bill will provide **immediate energy relief** and create a program to help residents deal with high energy costs during the **transition to more-affordable energy supplies**.

A recent study report by Commonwealth North found that electricity, heating fuel and diesel fuel represent a very significant component of rural Alaskans' cash outlay, with the figure approaching or exceeding 40% of the household budget. When we talk to AARP members from the Interior, the first words we hear are about heating costs and whether they can remain in their Alaskan homes.

Older Alaskans are particularly vulnerable to increases in energy costs. Although they consume approximately the same amount of energy as younger people do, older Alaskans spend a greater proportion of their limited retirement income on home heating costs. Too often low-income and even moderate-income older Alaskans risk their health or comfort by choosing between cutting back on energy expenditures and reducing spending for other necessities.

Is HB 336 the answer to Alaska's high energy costs? No.

Will it help Alaskans pay their utility bills? Yes.

One of the most important recommendations of SB 203 is to have the Executive Branch evaluate options and make recommendations for an energy assistance plan for 2013 and after.

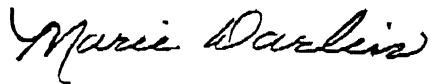
As the new Commonwealth North study report notes:
"Alaska needs a clear direction set by a state energy plan."

AARP recommends an "AYE" vote on HB 336.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie Darlin".

Marie Darlin, Coordinator
AARP Capital City Task Force
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586-3637 (voice)
463-3580 (fax)

CC: Representative Bob Lynn
Representative Kurt Olson
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Pete Peterson
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Steve Thompson