

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Sponsor Statement

HB 173 – Climate Change Response Commission

The purpose of HB 173 is to create a commission within the Governor's office to improve the state's response to the impacts of climate change. It is widely agreed that Alaska, and the Arctic generally, is experiencing the effects of climate change at a rate and degree greater than other parts of the world and it may be the most impacted of all of the U.S. states.

The Climate Change Response Commission has several features. First, it will be made up of five state agency commissioners and the community and regional affairs director and nine elected municipal officials from around the state. The involvement of the latter group will help ensure that the needs of all regions of the state are considered.

Second, one of the primary duties of the Commission is to seek out grants, aid, and other forms of financing and to assist rural communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in securing funding. The federal government has spent about \$38 billion on climate change, directly and through aid, since 2003. Globally, public and private entities spend about \$392 billion per year on climate change financing. Alaska is missing out on these opportunities due to a lack of a dedicated office, an assistance program, or governmental spending on the upfront costs of securing climate change aid.

Beyond grant writing, the Commission will monitor climate change, consult with experts, publish reports, coordinate with the University of Alaska, advance green technology, reach out to non-profits and rural communities, and seek out ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the public and private sectors. It will develop a program to distribute money from a climate change response fund, discussed below, based on these duties.

The Commission will be funded by a mechanism paralleling that of the Spill Prevention and Response Fund: a one cent surcharge on every barrel of oil. The SPAR Fund has received on average about \$2 million per year in the past four years from the surcharge and the Commission will be funded with an identical one cent per barrel. Similar to the SPAR Fund, the Climate Change Response Fund will have a limit of \$50 million after which the surcharge will not be collected.

I invite you to discuss this bill and urge your support. Please contact my staff, Megan Holland at 465-4967, with any questions.