

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senate Bill 83 (Version U) - Sponsor Statement

"An Act relating to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska; relating to the public utility regulatory cost charge; relating to the regulation of telecommunications; relating to exemptions, charges, and rates applicable to telecommunications utilities; relating to regulation of telephone services; relating to exempt employees; and relating to alternate operator services."

Senate Bill 83 seeks to encourage investment and innovation in the telecommunication industry by updating the telecommunication statutes. Rapid changes in technology and in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations, render portions of the existing statutes obsolete and/or inefficient in the modern telecommunications world.

All of Alaska's telecommunications providers worked together through the Alaska Telecom Association to offer the suggested changes made in Senate Bill 83. The goal of was to maintain important consumer protections, appropriate Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) jurisdiction, and consistency with FCC regulations while at the same time allowing for greater flexibility to more rapidly take advantage of new technology.

Some existing RCA regulations are over 25 years old and focused on landline and traditional long-distance service. As customers continue to prefer broadband and mobile services and the demand for landline decreases, the outdated regulations are largely obsolete. Carrier of last resort regulations needlessly duplicate existing statutory requirements and alternative operator services are no longer used. SB83 places service providers on a more level playing field and will encourage deployment of advanced technologies and more efficient network design.

SB 83 creates new protections in statute for rural areas by requiring landline and long-distance rates, terms and conditions be the same as in larger towns.

SB 83 requires that the Regulatory Cost Charge (RCC) be assessed and submitted to the RCA by all telecommunication utilities. Currently the RCC is not being paid by utilities that are municipally owned or are cooperatives. All members of the Alaska Telecom Association support this change.

SB 83 provides the authority to the RCA to hire utilities analyst masters by adding these professional positions to the list of exempt services under AS 39.25.110.

I would appreciate your support for SB 83.