

February 7, 2020

The Honorable Click Bishop
Chair, Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
State Capitol, Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: SB81 Telephone Cooperatives; Telecommunications

Dear Senator Bishop:

Alaska Telecom Association is the statewide association of telecommunications companies in Alaska. We were founded in 1949 and our members connect Alaskans with landline, wireless, and broadband services.

Thank you for hearing Senate Bill 81, which provides updates to Alaska's cooperative statutes to allow Alaska's telecom co-ops to operate more efficiently and focus resources on modern services. Alaska's cooperatives have a distinguished history of building networks and connecting Alaskans throughout the state. Today, they are the backbones of their communities, providing essential landline, wireless, and broadband services to their members. SB 81 provides updates to the statutes governing cooperatives which will allow them to offer modern services and communicate more effectively with their members. It is an important bill which will allow our cooperatives to continue to meet the needs of their communities.

Sincerely,



Christine O'Connor
Executive Director



April 2, 2019

The Honorable Shelley Hughes
Alaska Senator
Alaska State Capitol, Room 30
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Hughes,

Matanuska Telephone Association, Inc. (MTA), a telephone cooperative organized in 1953, supports Senate Bill 81 (SB 81). This bill provides necessary updates that will allow cooperative members throughout Alaska to more fully engage their electric and telecommunication cooperatives.

SB 81 benefits members of telephone and electric cooperatives. MTA supports allowing cooperatives to utilize technology to keep its members informed of when the cooperative is conducting meetings. Currently, cooperatives are limited to archaic means, personal invitation or mail, for providing notice to members about scheduled meetings. In addition to personal invitation and mail, SB 81 will allow members to receive notice of cooperative meetings by way of electronic mail or text message.

MTA supports ensuring all of its members are afforded the ability to be meaningful participants of the cooperatives' annual meetings. SB 81 affords members the ability to attend annual meetings by teleconference and when participating by teleconference, to be counted as part of the quorum.

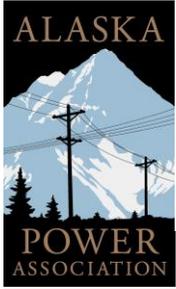
In addition to improving member involvement, the bill provides a number of necessary housekeeping updates. For example, statutes require that cooperatives have "cooperative" in their business name. Many cooperatives throughout Alaska were named prior to this statutory requirement and have "association" in their name instead of "cooperative". SB 81 allows cooperatives to have "association" or "cooperative" as part of their name, thus alleviating any confusion as to why a cooperative may appear to deviate from statutory requirements.

MTA supports both SB 81 and swift action by the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee in order for this bill to move from committee onto the Senate floor and into the House.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael C. Burke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael C. Burke, CEO



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February 7, 2020

The Honorable Shelley Hughes
Alaska Senator
Alaska State Capitol, Room 30
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Hughes,

Alaska Power Association (APA) supports Senate Bill 81, which would modify statutes governing electric and telephone cooperatives to accommodate technological advances in communications. It is important that the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee move this bill so it can be voted on by the full Senate and considered by the House before the end of session.

APA is the statewide trade association for electric utilities in Alaska. Our members provide power to more than a half-million Alaskans from Utqiagvik to Unalaska, through the Interior and Southcentral, and down the Inside Passage.

SB 81 would amend multiple statutes, including AS 10.25, which governs electric and telephone cooperatives, by adding the term “telecommunications” or “telecom” to reflect changes to many cooperatives’ operations. The bill also makes a series of changes relating to co-op annual meetings and board meetings. These changes recognize new methods of keeping co-op members informed of important activities at their cooperative.

The bill also adds two circumstances under which a cooperative board may discuss items under executive session, bringing the total executive session subjects to five. These new subjects are personnel matters and matters that would have an adverse effect on the ability of the cooperative to compete in the market served by the cooperative.

If you need any additional information or a perspective on SB 81 from the electric utility industry, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Crystal Enkvist
Executive Director