



CITY OF NORTH POLE

"Where the Spirit of Christmas Lives Year Round"

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February 20, 2012

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Representative Tammie Wilson
Alaska State Legislature, Room 415
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Wilson:

I am writing in support of HB 323, "An Act relating to the Alaska energy efficient home grant fund; and creating a grant program for converting homes in regions designated as particulate matter nonattainment areas to efficient home heating systems."

Right now, it's a balmy 14°F and the Fairbanks North Star Borough's Near Real Time Air Quality website rates the air in North Pole as "Good." As you know, this is not always the case. For example, on February 12, 2012, area resident *Lynn Grover of 2405 Eire Street* wrote:

For the last week, it's been nice out. I wish I would have been able to take my kids out to play in my own yards on my own property, but I couldn't and still can't today, as the coal and wood smoke is just too bad.

Because of the smoke, this is the third year in a row that I cannot be outside on my own property and play with my kids. Also because of the smoke, we have to have air cleaners in every room of the house; if we didn't have them, we would all taste smoke in the indoor air on many winter days.

When will I be able to play with my kids in my own yard on my own property without damaging our lungs and health in general?

Sincerely disgusted with the lack of action on this issue, which is keeping my family members and me prisoners in our own home on beautiful and warm winter days,

What is the solution to this woman's, and many other residents', dilemma? Obviously, it would be to help the neighbors burn more efficiently. And the neighbors would—if they could afford to.

Many Interior Alaska middle-class residents have spent their disposable income on the skyrocketing and crushing expense of paying over \$1,500.00 each month just to heat their homes, keep a light on in the house, and be able to drive to work. They have reached their credit card limits and are not eligible for more loans. They are juggling their mortgage and other bill payments in order to put food on their tables and so survive for another month.

For this testimony, middle class is defined as those people who cannot make use of existing programs, often because they can't front the money required to make energy improvements.

Added to the crushing expenses for energy, is the EPA demand that the Fairbanks North Star Borough, of which one third of the population is the North Pole area, must meet more stringent air quality standards within the next couple years. Further stressing our population is the uncertainty of whether or not many of our residents will have a job in a year due to the announced transfer of 1,600 military and civilian direct jobs to Anchorage—add to that number the many secondary and tertiary employment dependencies on Eielson. A sober person is left in shock and with few options.

Readily available wood or inexpensive coal becomes a necessity, and that hurts our air quality.

But our community will survive; many people will remain; and thus air quality standards must be attained. Even with the promise of natural gas at some uncertain, hopefully soon, date, provisions must be made to enable more efficient heating systems, especially that can be easily converted to natural gas. Without those provisions, this area will not meet the strict PM2.5 air quality standards, especially on those cold days when air inversions trap stale, smoke-laden air close to the chimney tops.

HB 232 provides the necessary provisions and protections by allowing for a qualified applicant to receive up to \$10,000 in the form of a grant to purchase and install a new boiler or wood stove. The program would be administered by the AHFC, and would require a certified energy auditor to inspect their current boiler or wood stove before the grant is awarded.

This program will only apply for nonattainment areas, and once a region reaches attainment status, the program will no longer be available.

There are also stipulations in the bill which state if a person has already received equivalent improvements through the AHFC Energy Rebate program they cannot take advantage of this grant program. Also, I would encourage modifying the language of the bill on line if a person can qualify for a boiler or wood stove conversion through interior weatherization, they cannot utilize this grant. Finally, if a person accepts this grant, they cannot partake in either the Energy Rebate or income based weatherization programs.

Recognizing the need of the residents in my community, I commend this bill to you and your colleagues' for passage.

Sincerely,



Douglas W. Isaacson
Mayor