

Alaska State Legislature
REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON
House District 37

SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR CSHB294 (ENE)

Adak
Akutan
Aleknagik
Atka
Chignik
Chignik Lagoon
Chignik Lake
Clark's Point
Cold Bay
Dillingham
Egegik
Ekwok
False Pass
Ivanof Bay
King Cove
King Salmon
Koliganek
Manokotak
Naknek
Nelson Lagoon
New Stuyahok
Nikolski
Perryville
Pilot Point
Portage Creek
Port Heiden
St. George
St. Paul
Sand Point
South Naknek
Togiak
Twin Hills
Ugashik
Unalaska

This legislation simply proposes returning elements of the Power Cost Equalization (PCE) program to its 1998 levels.

The bill proposes raising the kilowatt-hours ceiling from 500 to 600 per month, and also adds small commercial customers to the pool of entities eligible for PCE. Small commercial customers are defined as using no more than 2,400 kilowatt-hours per month. Businesses are currently ineligible to receive any PCE benefits.

We are experiencing one of the coldest Alaska winters in the last 25 years. While folks in the Bush have become used to conserving power to fall under the 500 kilowatt-hour ceiling, it is a struggle to do so in winter months. This year's weather is not helping that struggle.

While the State has done an excellent job in creating and supporting energy programs that will make a difference over the long haul, nothing has been done to help our residents with their short-term needs. Rural Alaskans need the help with energy costs now and our small businesses can't afford another year of exorbitant power costs.

I believe the time is right to consider this legislation, and I hope it spurs on other ideas to help our rural people deal with their immediate needs with energy costs. I also believe it is time for the legislature to acknowledge that we need to assist small rural business owners, which in turn will drive down the excessive costs for goods and services to the consumers in our remote communities.

I appreciate your support for this bill.