

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SESSION:
State Capitol, Rm. 418
Juneau, AK 99801

INTERIM:
1500 W. Benson Blvd
Anchorage, AK 99503



House Energy Committee,
Co-Chair

Community and Regional
Affairs Committee

State Affairs Committee

Joined Armed Services
Committee

REPRESENTATIVE KY HOLLAND

HB 252 Version A Sponsor Statement (34-LS0802\H)

House Bill 252 establishes a clear framework for electric utility wildfire prevention and vegetation management, while clarifying civil liability standards governing utility maintenance operations. The bill is designed to reduce wildfire risk, keep ratepayer costs down, improve utility coordination with fire response agencies and adjacent property owners, and support reliable electric service—particularly in high-risk wildland-urban interface areas. Wildfire danger is increasing across Alaska and development patterns are placing homes and communities closer to forested lands. Electric utilities play a critical role in reducing this risk through vegetation management, right-of-way maintenance, and operational planning.

This legislation addresses utility liability exposure, encouraging mitigation investments by establishing guidelines for utility Wildland Fire Mitigation plans. These plans require utilities to assess wildfire risk, share hazard information with adjacent property owners, maintain and upgrade facilities, manage vegetation within utility corridors and (where allowed by optional agreements) adjacent lands, and coordinate planning with fire response agencies. The Department of Natural Resources must approve these plans.

HB 252 also clarifies civil liability standards related to vegetation contact with utility facilities. Utilities that adopt and comply with their approved Wildland Fire Mitigation plan are afforded liability protections, except in cases involving gross negligence or actions outside authorized areas. This approach protects ratepayers from cost increases due to litigation against utilities, as well as supporting utilities to continue proactive safety measures.

Importantly, the bill aligns Alaskan utility responsibility with other western states, supporting the early detection and location of fires, and requiring that operational plans during periods of high wildfire danger balance the risk-reduction benefits of de-energizing lines against the need to maintain power to critical infrastructure.

By pairing clear planning and vegetation management requirements with measured liability standards, HB 252 promotes proactive wildfire risk reduction, public safety, utility reliability, and responsible infrastructure investment. This legislation reflects a practical, preventative approach to wildfire resilience, strengthening Alaska's ability to protect its communities, economy, and critical infrastructure for the long term.