



Fairbanks North Star Borough

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February 9, 2009

The Honorable Cathy Munoz, Co-Chair
House Community & Regional Affairs Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Representative Munoz:

The Fairbanks North Star Borough appreciates Representative Coghill and Representative Kawasaki's efforts to address a very serious issue facing our community by introducing HB 121. This letter is being offered in support of the change to Alaska Statutes, Title 29 proposed by HB 121, "An Act relating to a municipal property tax credit for an improvement that aids in improving air quality." This bill, if enacted by the legislature, will provide tools to local municipalities that can be used to create incentives for individuals to take actions that will improve local air quality and reduce fuel consumption. Local taxation policy and discretion is governed by Title 29 of the Alaska Statutes. Tax exemptions and tax credits are only permitted within the authority of this section of state law.

The proposed legislation expands the discretion of local municipalities in a manner that allows, by ordinance, creation of programs that will offer tax credits for actions that the local governing body determines will improve air quality. The language proposed requires that eligibility, conditions, and other criteria for the tax credits be established by ordinance.

Example of how this proposed legislation might be used by a municipality include:

- Incentives to residents to exchange old-style wood stoves for EPA certified wood stoves. Data show that EPA certified wood stoves reduce fine particulate emissions by approximately 67% over non-EPA stoves. It is clearly in the interest of any community with air quality nonattainment issues to have citizens who choose to heat with wood do so in the most environmentally friendly way possible.
- Incentives to residences or commercial businesses to improve the energy efficiency of their property. Reduced fuel consumption would lead to reduced emissions from area heating or electric generation. Incentives could be based on calculated BTU savings, MW reductions, etc.
- Incentives to convert from carbon based energy consumption to alternative energy generation. This could involve tax credits for construction and use of a solar array or wind turbine to power/heat residential or commercial facilities.

As the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the State of Alaska look to find solutions that will help the borough and the state come into compliance with the clean air act, there exists a clear lack of ability to provide incentives at the local level. Compliance efforts will ask individuals to take and pay for actions to benefit the air quality of the entire community. Enactment of this bill will allow local municipalities the ability to lessen the individual cost of action through creation of a tax credit program not presently allowed by state law.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly passed a resolution including this item as an FNSB legislative priority for 2009 on December 11, 2008. We support this bill and urge its passage as drafted and introduced on February 4, 2009.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jim Whitaker', with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Jim Whitaker, Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Winters', with a long, horizontal, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Nadine Winters, Presiding Officer

JW:csm