

AVCP

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Comments for the record
26th Alaska State Legislature
House Transportation / Finance Committee

by

Myron P. Naneng, Sr., President
Regarding HB 114

February 9, 2009

BILL: HB 114

BILL VERSION:

CURRENT STATUS: (H) TRA

THEN FIN

**SHORT TITLE: USE STATE TRANS FACILITY
 FOR DISASTER AID**

STATUS DATE: 02/04/09

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) RAMRAS, Dahlstrom, Millett, Johansen, Edgmon, Petersen, Holmes, Foster, Johnson, Tuck, Gruenberg, Salmon, Coghill, Thomas, Joule, Munoz

TITLE: "An Act relating to availability of state transportation facilities and state-owned or state-operated transportation modes for delivering compassionate aid during a disaster emergency."

We at the Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. (AVCP) are grateful for Representative Ramras and the co-sponsors of HB 114 in an effort to make use of State transportation resources to ship out compassionate aid to remote, rural Alaska communities in our Yukon Kuskokwim region.

My name is Myron Naneng, I am President of our regional non-profit corporation made up of 56 federally recognized Tribes in the YK Delta. While energy and food relief has been pouring into our communities suffering from food shortages and crippling fuel prices, the efforts have until this point remained primarily by private citizens and groups. We would also like to recognize and thank the redirect of donated Energy Rebates under the United Way.

In the last several weeks, Representative Jay Ramras, has focused on directing some of his food drive activities for relief to our communities. We appreciate his efforts, and are sorry that he, along with other private donors, has been burdened with the shipping expense of getting this compassionate aid out to our remote villages. Our calls to the Governor's office to address our energy crisis have largely gone ignored, and this bill, along with SB 88 and SB 91 finally has State efforts come into play.

Last week, we testified in favor of extending the PCE program and instituting a fuel cap on costs beyond \$3 a gallon. Since early last summer, tribal leaders as well as myself were justifiably concerned about our coming winter since we were forced to prepay our winter fuel purchases for our tank farms at the highest costs of oil on record.

Because we are roadless, all of our villages have to import fuel by barge or by air in emergencies. In most cases, we have no choice but to sign no-fault contracts with fuel vendors if weather or acts of god prevent a scheduled delivery. Some of our villages, with human resources turnover or other constraints, are unable to make their fuel orders in concordance to State programs such as the bulk fuel loan in time to lock in at more agreeable rates. Factors such as these aggravate the already challenging nature of providing light and heat to our communities with little or no energy infrastructure.

With continued and full funding by the Legislature of the Renewable Energy Fund coupled with possible federal stimulus infrastructure funds, we may be looking at a reality where accessible energy sources come to fruition in a matter of years, rather than a matter of decades. With affordable energy at the village level, a failed fishing season would not break us as badly as this hard winter has shown.

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 Atmautluak
 Bethel
 Bill Moore's Sl.
 Cheforak
 Chevak
 Chuathbaluk
 Chulonaawick
 Crooked Creek
 Eek
 Emmonak
 Georgetown
 Goodnews Bay
 Hamilton
 Hooper Bay
 Lower Kalslag
 Upper Kalslag
 Kastgluk
 Kipnuk
 Kongiganak
 Kotlik
 Kwethluk
 Kwigillingok
 Lime Village
 Marshall
 Mekoryuk
 Mtn. Village
 Napalmute
 Napakiak
 Napaskiak
 Newtok
 Nightmute
 Nunakuyak
 Nunam Iqa
 Nunapiichuk
 Obogamut
 Oscarville
 Paumotu
 Pilot Station
 Pitka's Point
 Platinum
 Quimbagak
 Red Devil
 Russian Mission
 Seamen Bay
 Sleethmute
 St. Mary's
 Stony River
 Tulukak
 Tuntutullak
 Tenuak
 Umkamut

Though Governor Palin herself has not directly acknowledged the fishery or fuel crisis in our region, in her response to the U.S. Army's reduced retirement payments to 26 Alaska Native Elders who had served in the Territorial Guard during WWII, she argued:

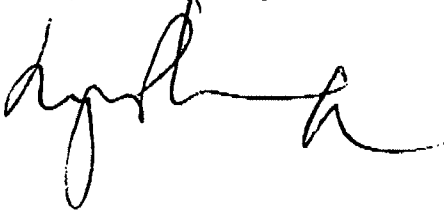
"Rural Alaskans face the highest food and energy costs in the nation, and these veterans need their retirement checks now more than ever," Governor Palin said. "Using the emergency fund to provide monetary protection for these 26 veterans is the right thing to do."

AVCP provides direct assistance to many families in our member villages that include a Housing Improvement Program, TANF and LIHEAP to name a few. Last year we assisted 1,846 households with energy assistance, and we anticipate the same number if not more appeals for the remainder of this season.

We tried to address this crisis proactively, in public statements and resolutions. We warned that the \$1,200 rebate would not adequately address the remote / rural fuel needs - and with the taxes due from as little as \$90 to over \$300 per person, we will continue to see pain in affected households this year. If we had access to affordable energy sources, all the factors we laid out for you would not have hurt us so badly this winter.

With families not having to worry about donated foods delivered from the state, it will go a long way to keeping our homes heated, and save our families from deciding between going cold or going hungry.

Quyana, thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Palin", written in a cursive style.