

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA
REPRESENTATIVE BILL THOMAS

Sponsor Statement HB 148 – Energy Efficiency Plan and Grant Fund

As we enter an era of high fuel prices, Alaska should have an energy savings plan. House Bill 148 is a bi-partisan effort to create a plan for upgrading the energy efficiency of public facilities. The legislation also creates a grant program for non-state public facilities, such as school and University of Alaska buildings. The effort is aimed at cutting long term energy expenses, and reducing the demand for energy in Alaska.

HB148 commits Alaska government to lead by example with a plan to reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency in buildings. The Department of Transportation and Courts are both tasked to construct International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) certified buildings—a standard of efficiency quickly becoming universal around the rest of the United States for state building efficiency codes and federal efficiency legislation.

HB148 encourages the use of performance contracting—a fancy way of saying “we pay, you save.” This is good for the third party businesses contracted to do the efficiency improvements, creating jobs and fueling a growing energy efficiency industry. This is also good for the state agencies who quickly realize cost savings without ever having to put a lot on the line in overhead expenses.

HB148 holds DOT accountable for the energy audits they are already mandated to do but don't. With the cost of energy so fresh on everyone's mind the legislature should know exactly how much of a limited budget is going to wasted energy. Likewise, we should also know that implementing efficiency measures is saving us resources.

HB148 creates a funding mechanism that allows school districts and municipalities or small communities to undertake energy efficiency improvements as well. Particularly in rural Alaska, better insulated windows or a new boiler can mean more money to put toward resources with a much greater return, like school books or sports equipment.

Energy efficiency makes CENTS. Often called the “low hanging fruit” of smart growth, making the choice to be more energy efficient saves money and resources. In tough economic times, it's practical to cut back on spending by making what energy we do use spread further. The time is right for the State to lead by example toward a future in which balancing the budget and helping Alaskans are not mutually exclusive. I hope you'll join me in supporting this bill. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call my office.

Thank you.