



College of Rural and Community Development
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May 29, 2009

House Special Committee on Energy:
Honorable Co-Chair Bryce Edgemon
Honorable Co-Chair Charisse Millet
Honorable Nancy Dalstrom
Honorable Kyle Johansen
Honorable Jay Ramran
Honorable Pete Petersen
Honorable Chris Tuck

Welcome to Bethel and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. I thank you for providing us this opportunity to testify on energy. I am the director of the Kuskokwim Campus – University of Alaska Fairbanks, which is the institution of higher education for this region of approximately 25,000 people. KuC primarily offers certificates and associate degrees, with a select few bachelors degrees, including one exclusive to our campus—the BA in Yup'ik Language and Culture. We are the only rural campus in western Alaska with a dormitory and multiple buildings that cost money to maintain and operate.

In FY 05, KuC total utility bill for the year was \$243,607. Estimating the bill for the final month of this fiscal year, it will cost \$439,704—an increase of nearly \$197,000 or 80 percent this fiscal year. This increase equates to nearly three jobs at KuC. I have had to cut positions or find grant funds to cover them. It means any growth in academic programs does not happen or has to be supported by soft money. It leaves me apprehensive about equipment or utility failure, such as vehicles and the heating or water and sewage system. It means I now routinely request a longer holiday closure to save on utility and personnel costs and I reduce the duration of staff contracts. I know at some point, valued and dedicated staff will look elsewhere for 12-month jobs; they have families to feed and bills to pay.

This is just an illustration to support what you hear from organizations and people in this region that energy cost relief is desperately needed. As a college campus, I am willing to partner with other groups to pilot alternative energy projects. One suggestion I have for possible assistance is to extend Power Cost Equalization to state and federal customers, or at least educational institutions.

I thank you for your time and am willing to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Pete
Director