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SPONSOR STATEMENT

House Bill 278 – Home Energy Voucher

The existing home energy rebate program is successfully helping some Alaskan families improve their homes and save money on energy bills. Many homeowners, however, are stuck between earning too much to qualify for free weatherization and not having cash available to pay for energy efficiency work up front.

HB 278 will make it easier for more Alaskans to participate in the state's energy efficiency rebate program.

Right now, homeowners spend their own funds up front to pay for energy efficiency work. Up to \$10,000 may be reimbursed by the state, as certified by the final energy rating for payment. HB 278 would simply allow the homeowner to get a voucher which says the state is good for that same amount of money. The homeowner can use that voucher to work with contractors and supply shops who want to accept the voucher, to get energy efficiency work done without needing cash in hand.

HB278:

- Adds a voucher option to the current program which will assure that state payment is approved as soon as efficiency improvement requirements are met.
- Does not change the amount of payments, or the state's level of participation in the home energy efficiency program.
- Grants Alaska Housing and Finance Corporation discretion to administer the home energy voucher, just as it does with the current energy rebate program.

Many families have less discretionary cash on hand because of the tough economy, so HB 278 is designed to put energy efficiency opportunities at their fingertips. The payback is huge for Alaskans who can reduce their energy costs and live in more comfortable homes. HB 278 will also help stretch energy subsidies, by ensuring that heating dollars don't literally go out the window.

The home energy rebate program is also keeping Alaska's energy efficiency trades jobs growing. For example, orders for doors, windows and insulation are filling construction supply shops. Alaskan plumbers, electricians, heating suppliers, drywallers, and other contractors are keeping busy year-round with the work coming from residential home energy improvements.

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