

Alaska State Legislature
REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON
House District 37

SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR HB294

This legislation simply proposes returning elements of the Power Cost Equalization (PCE) program to its 1998 levels.

The bill proposes raising the kilowatt-hours ceiling from 500 to 700 per month, and also adds all other customers that are not state or federal offices, or state or federal facilities, to the pool of customers eligible for PCE. Businesses and schools are currently not eligible for PCE and haven't been since changes to the program in 1999.

We are experiencing one of the coldest Alaska winters in the last 25 years. While folks in the Bush have become used to conserving power to fall under the 500 kilowatt-hour ceiling, it is a struggle to do so in winter months. This year's weather is not helping that struggle.

While the State has done an excellent job in creating and supporting energy programs that will make a difference over the long haul, nothing has been done to help our residents with their short-term needs.

I believe the time is right to consider this legislation, and I hope it spurs on other ideas to help our rural people deal with their immediate needs with energy costs. I also believe it is time for the legislature to acknowledge that we need to assist small rural business owners, which in turn will drive down the excessive costs for goods and services to the consumers in our remote communities.

There will be strong supporters and strong detractors of this idea. Running HB294 through the legislative process will allow us to identify the agency and programmatic costs associated with expanding PCE. It will also enable the public to weigh in as to why PCE should or should not be expanded, and to discover what the program has meant to its eligible customers.

I would appreciate your support for this bill.

State Capitol Building

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