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March 9, 2012

The Honorable Bill Wielechowski, Chair
Senate State Affairs Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 101
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: SB 208 (Paskvan)—Support

Dear Chair Wielechowski:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the Senate State Affairs Committee to support SB 208, authored by your Committee Vice-Chair Senator Joe Paskvan.

SB 208 is based on model legislation recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA). SB 208 would provide a comprehensive statewide mutual aid system that would enable all political subdivisions to receive and render aid to other subdivisions in case of disasters and emergencies. Some mutual aid agreements already exist but SB 208 would provide a blueprint that would be consistent throughout Alaska.

AARP believes that SB 208 would benefit our members as well as the general public.

Surveys of the older population (over 50) indicate that of those who self-identify that they will need help evacuating their homes in a natural disaster, half indicate that they will require help from someone outside their household. Older people, who face special health and other risks, will likely be more vulnerable during disasters than the general adult population. Recent disasters have highlighted how devastating to older adults such events are. Physical capacity and resiliency place frail older adults at special risk. For example, a study conducted by AARP after Hurricane Katrina found that many older adults lost their lives when they were abandoned in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Older adults may lack the ability to get to emergency food and water distribution centers. Older adults rely disproportionately on informal networks for support. When disaster strikes, these networks may be destroyed, leaving older adults at high risk.

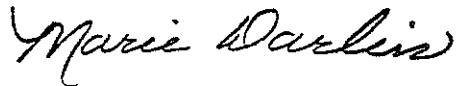
We understand that SB 208 is about governmental entities working together. We also understand that our members and the general public will benefit when government emergency planning takes place at all levels.

AARP urges an "AYE" vote on SB 208.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie Darlin".

Marie Darlin, Coordinator
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463-3580 (fax)

CC: Vice-Chair Joe Paskvan
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Albert Kookesh
Senator Kevin Meyer