

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

May 7, 2025

2:43 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Chair
Senator Kelly Merrick, Vice Chair
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Forrest Dunbar
Senator Robert Yundt

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Ky Holland

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 170

"An Act relating to gaming; relating to bingo; relating to pull-tabs and electronic pull-tab systems; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 158

"An Act relating to administrative areas for regulation of certain commercial set net entry permits; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 149

"An Act relating to generation of electricity from renewable energy resources; relating to a renewable portfolio standard; relating to power cost equalization; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 35

"An Act relating to transportation network and delivery network companies."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 170

SHORT TITLE: GAMING; ELECTRONIC PULL-TABS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) BJORKMAN

04/11/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/11/25	(S)	L&C, FIN
04/16/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/16/25	(S)	Heard & Held
04/16/25	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
04/28/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/28/25	(S)	Heard & Held
04/28/25	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
05/02/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
05/02/25	(S)	Heard & Held
05/02/25	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
05/07/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 158

SHORT TITLE: COOK INLET: NEW ADMIN AREA

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) BJORKMAN

04/07/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/07/25	(S)	L&C, RES
05/07/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 149

SHORT TITLE: UTILITIES: RENEWABLE PORTFOLIO STANDARD

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) WIELECHOWSKI

03/28/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/28/25	(S)	L&C, RES
05/07/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 35

SHORT TITLE: DELIVERY NETWORK COMPANIES

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) BJORKMAN

01/22/25	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(S)	STA, L&C

03/18/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 03/18/25 (S) Heard & Held
 03/18/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)
 04/22/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 04/22/25 (S) Moved SB 35 Out of Committee
 04/22/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)
 04/23/25 (S) STA RPT 1AM 1DP 3NR
 04/23/25 (S) AM: KAWASAKI
 04/23/25 (S) DP: BJORKMAN
 04/23/25 (S) NR: WIELECHOWSKI, GRAY-JACKSON, YUNDT
 04/30/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 04/30/25 (S) Heard & Held
 04/30/25 (S) MINUTE(L&C)
 05/07/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

CHRISTA FOLI, Department Commander
 American Veterans (AMVET)
 Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with concerns on SB 170.

MICHELLE SAS, Member
 American Legion Veterans of Foreign Wars (ALVFW)
 Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with concerns on SB 170.

CHARLES BORING, Member
 American Veterans (AMVET)
 Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with concerns on SB 170.

KAYLA HANSON, Gaming Manager
 Soldotna Chamber of Commerce
 Soldotna, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 170.

CODY OATMAN, Business Representative
 Alaska District Council of Labors
 Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 170.

KONRAD JACKSON, Staff
 Senator Jesse Bjorkman
 Alaska State Legislature
 Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a summary of SB 158.

GLENN HAIGHT, Commissioner
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 158.

LISA GABRIEL, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 158.

GARY HOLLIER, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 158.

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, District K
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 149.

HUNTER LOTTSFELDT, Staff
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the sectional analysis for SB 149.

ERIN MCKITTRICK, representing self
Seldovia, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 149.

MATTHEW PERKINS, CEO
Alaska Renewables
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 149.

KONRAD JACKSON, Staff
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a brief summary for SB 35.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[2:43:46 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 2:43 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Merrick, Gray-Jackson, Dunbar, Yundt and Chair Bjorkman.

SB 170-GAMING; ELECTRONIC PULL-TABS

[2:44:46 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 170 "An Act relating to gaming; relating to bingo; relating to pull-tabs and electronic pull-tab systems; and providing for an effective date."

[2:45:28 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN stated that SB 170 aims to modernize charitable gaming laws to increase revenue for charities and nonprofits. SB 170 also seeks to preserve the social and cultural nature of charitable gaming, keeping it fun, community-oriented, and distinct from gambling.

[2:46:20 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on SB 170.

[2:46:45 PM](#)

CHRISTA FOLI, Department Commander, American Veterans (AMVET) Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, testified with concerns on SB 170 and expressed concern that the bill favors operators over small veteran service organizations (VSOs), which rely on volunteers to raise funds for charities. She urged giving these organizations more flexibility in choosing gaming methods, noting that current limitations on access and devices restrict their fundraising potential, and request that regulatory details be determined later rather than burdening small nonprofits upfront.

[2:49:54 PM](#)

MICHELLE SAS, Member, American Legion Veterans of Foreign Wars (ALVFW), Anchorage, Alaska, testified with concerns on SB 170. She stated that she supports modernizing charitable gaming through SB 170 but warns that its current structure overreaches, placing burdens on small nonprofits and veteran organizations. She advocated for more flexibility in gaming devices, higher payroll limits, and consideration of models beyond Wisconsin's, emphasizing the need to protect small organizations while still modernizing the system.

[2:52:45 PM](#)

CHARLES BORING, Member, American Veterans (AMVET), Anchorage, Alaska, testified with concerns on SB 170. He stated his belief that the bill focuses too much on operators and imposes strict limits on small nonprofit and veteran organizations, which rely

heavily on gaming and pull tabs for survival. He advocated for greater flexibility in funding limits and device choices to ensure these organizations can continue operating and maximizing their fundraising.

[2:55:14 PM](#)

KAYLA HANSON, Gaming Manager, Soldotna Chamber of Commerce, Soldotna, Alaska, testified in support of SB 170. She emphasized that small committee run organizations, especially in areas with internet challenges, should be allowed to choose the devices that work best for them. She urged legislators to ensure a level playing field between small groups and larger operators.

[2:56:46 PM](#)

CODY OATMAN, Business Representative, Alaska District Council of Labors, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 170. He said the labor organization represents about 5,000 Alaskans. It supports electronic pull tabs to modernize charitable gaming and increase revenue for scholarships and community charities. He noted that tablets are affordable, social, and efficient, offering lower maintenance costs and greater benefits to nonprofits compared to pull tab cabinets.

[2:58:46 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN kept public testimony open.

[2:59:02 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN explained that SB 170 prohibits cabinet or tabletop gaming devices to prevent charitable gaming from resembling casino gambling and maintaining its social, community-based nature. He added that the proposed limits are designed to allow more nonprofits to participate and raise funds, rather than concentrating revenue among a few organizations.

[CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 170 in committee.]

[3:01:34 PM](#)

At ease.

SB 158-COOK INLET: NEW ADMIN AREA

[3:02:18 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 158 "An Act relating to administrative areas for regulation of certain commercial set net entry permits; and providing for an effective date."

[3:02:39 PM](#)

KONRAD JACKSON, Staff, Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided a summary for SB 158. He stated that the technical bill would create a new administrative area for East Side Set Net permit holders in Cook Inlet, recognizing the region's long history of set net fishing that has supported local families, businesses, and communities for over a century. SB 158 responds to challenges faced by these fishers, who have endured reduced opportunities and restrictive management practices despite primarily targeting red salmon. While it does not alter fish allocations or fishing regulations, SB 158 directs the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) to establish a distinct boundary for this unique fishery to improve permit management and allow greater self-determination for East Side set-netters.

[3:06:31 PM](#)

MR. JACKSON read the sectional analysis for SB 158:

[Original punctuation provided.]

"An Act relating to administrative areas for regulation of certain commercial set net entry permits; and providing for an effective date."

Sectional Summary - Ver. \I

This is a summary only. Note that this summary should not be considered an authoritative interpretation of the bill and the bill itself is the best statement of its contents.

Section 1: Amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska by adding a new section which establishes that creating this administrative area is in the public interest.

Section 2: Amends AS 16.43.200 by adding 2 new subsections:

- (c) Establishes an area of the Upper Subdistrict of the Cook Inlet Central District as a distinct administrative area separate from the Cook Inlet Central District on December 31, 2024. This area is made up of the statistical areas identified on January 1, 2024 as 244-21, 244-22, 244-31, 244-32, 244-41 and 244-42.

- (d) Provides that an individual who has a set net permit for the Cook Inlet Central District on December 31, 2024 is not entitled to set net in the administrative area created under this section unless the permit has been reassigned to that new administrative area.

[3:08:44 PM](#)

MR. JACKSON continued with the sectional analysis for SB 158:

Section 3: Amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska by adding a new section which provides how the commission will determine whether an individual who holds a set net entry permit in the Cook Inlet Central District on January 1, 2026 is reassigned an entry permit for the administrative area established under AS 16.43.200(c) (added by sec. 2 of the bill) or the portion of the Cook Inlet Central District that was not assigned into the administrative area established under AS 16.43.200(c).

Section 4: Amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska by adding a new section which defines the appeals process in the new administrative area. This section provides that a provisional license will be issued, pending resolution of an appeal.

Section 14: Effective Date Clause Provides the bill takes effect January 1, 2026.

[3:09:55 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN announced invited testimony on SB 158.

[3:10:14 PM](#)

GLENN HAIGHT, Commissioner, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), Juneau, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 158. He said from the CFEC's perspective, the bill is straight forward, it formally establishes the new area and outlines criteria for inclusion that differ from the commission's usual standards based on economic dependence and past participation. SB 158 also sends appeals to Superior Court, reducing CFEC's administrative role, and would mainly require processing applications, verifying existing data, and updating licensing systems.

[3:11:21 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN asked why SB 158 is needed.

[3:11:33 PM](#)

MR. HAIGHT replied that previous buyback efforts for this group were complex and unsuccessful, but SB 158 simplifies the process by creating a new area and allowing the formation of a regional fisheries association to manage any future buyback independently. He said CFEC's role would be minimal, limited to providing guidance and processing permit closures after the association completes its buyback.

[3:12:42 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN explained that the new administrative area ensures that long-time East Side Cook Inlet fishers retain control over their permits and future decisions. He said this would prevent outsiders from exploiting opportunities meant for those with historical ties to the fishery.

[3:13:30 PM](#)

LISA GABRIEL, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 158. She said she has been a set netter for 39 years and supports creating a new administrative area in Upper Cook Inlet to allow the East Side Set Net fishery to be managed independently from other regions. She stated that this change reflects the fishery's unique conditions, would enable local self-determination for permit holders and family businesses, and is needed to reverse years of decline and repeated federal disaster declarations.

[3:15:28 PM](#)

GARY HOLLIER, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 158. He said as a veteran set-net fisherman with over 50 years of experience he supports SB 158. This bill would establish a new administrative area for the East Side Set Net fishery in Cook Inlet. He explained that this fishery is uniquely managed and has faced repeated federal disaster declarations, arguing that a separate area would allow for fairer management, local self-determination, and better support for a long-standing, predominantly Alaskan fishery.

[3:17:58 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 158 in committee.

[3:18:04 PM](#)

At ease.

SB 149-UTILITIES: RENEWABLE PORTFOLIO STANDARD

[3:20:03 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 149 "An Act relating to generation of electricity from renewable energy resources; relating to a renewable portfolio standard; relating to power cost equalization; and providing for an effective date."

[3:20:28 PM](#)

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, District K, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 149 he said the bill establishes a renewable portfolio standard to address the ongoing energy challenges in Cook Inlet. Despite significant incentives over the past 15 years—including royalty relief and other measures aimed at developing local gas resources—the state has only achieved 12-15 percent of energy from renewable sources, far below the nonbinding 50 percent goal set in 2010 under House Bill 306. SB 149 seeks to diversify Alaska's energy portfolio, promote affordable and reliable power, and provide incentives for independent power producers and utilities to invest in renewable energy. He said by doing so, it aims to reduce dependence on gas, ensure stable energy supplies for residents and businesses, and strengthen the overall resilience and sustainability of the state's energy system, particularly in the Railbelt region.

[3:24:09 PM](#)

HUNTER LOTTSFELDT, Staff, Senator Bill Wielechowski, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided the sectional analysis for SB 149:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Sectional Analysis - Version N

Section 1 - Amends Section 42.05.780:

Requires integrated resource plans to include options by which each load-serving entity may satisfy the renewable portfolio standard.

Section 2 - Amends Section 42.05.785(a):

Adds a new subsection (4) clarifying the regulatory commissions pre-approval process for large energy facilities and that project approval must not be detrimental to a load-serving entities ability to comply with a renewable portfolio standard.

[3:25:14 PM](#)

MR. LOTTSELDT continued with the sectional analysis for SB 149:

Section 3 - Amends Section 42.05.785(c):
Exempts pre-approval for renewable energy projects that help a load-serving entity meet the renewable portfolio standard.

Note that section 7 repeals this exception on December 31, 2030.

Section 4 - Adjusts the numbering of section 42.05.785(e) and adds the definition for "renewable energy resource" within the pre-approval for large energy facilities section.

Section 5 - Creates new article under Sec. 42.05 entitled Article 11A. Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS).

AS 42.05.900 requires load-serving entities subject to the standards of an electric reliability organization (ERO) to comply with the renewable portfolio standard; diversifying their current generation portfolio by increasing the proportion of megawatt hours (MWh) of renewable electricity generated.

AS 42.05.905 incentivizes the development of projects to meet the goals of a renewable portfolio standard.

AS 42.05.910 - Governs the use of renewable energy credits and qualifies which uses may count towards meeting the target goals.

Sec. 42.05.915 - Establishes a noncompliance fine for a load-serving entity that fails to meet the RPS. Qualifies what conditions merit a waiver for The Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) for failure to meet the target goals.

Sec. 42.05.920 - Establishes an exemption for individual load serving entities if the aggregate generation of renewable electricity of all load-serving entities in an interconnected electric transmission network meets the goal required by the standard.

Sec. 42.05.925 - Provides for definitions.

[3:28:01 PM](#)

MR. LOTTSELDT continued with the sectional analysis for SB 149:

Section 6 - Amends AS 42.45.110(a) excluding revenue from the sale of recovered heat, or revenue from the sale of renewable energy credits, for Power Cost Equalization.

Section 7 - Establishes a sunset for AS 42.05.785(c)(3)

Section 8 - Establishes an effective date of July 1, 2025.

MR. LOTTSELDT stated that the new committee substitute (CS) change would change in AS 42.05.910 [Renewable electricity credits]

[3:28:38 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN announced invited testimony on SB 149.

[3:29:00 PM](#)

ERIN MCKITTRICK, representing self, Seldovia, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 149 and moved to slide 2:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Primary questions

- Are the goals in SB 149 achievable?
- What are the potential savings or costs to customers?

[3:30:03 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK moved to slide 3 and explained that the graph shows past and present Railbelt energy sources, with current renewables, mainly hydro and some wind and solar making up a small portion compared to fossil fuels like gas, coal, and oil. The dashed lines indicate the renewable energy targets proposed in SB 149.

[3:30:40 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK moved to slide 4 and explained the graph. She stated that the Railbelt could meet the first renewable energy target in SB 149 through several planned projects, including the Little Mount Susitna and Chugach Creek wind farms, the Puppy Dog Lake solar project, and the Dixon Diversion hydro expansion at Bradley Lake. Together, these projects would exceed the first

target and come close to meeting the second, with multipliers in SB 149 boosting their credited renewable contribution.

[3:32:42 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK moved to slide 5 and spoke about the details of the projects found on slide 4. She explained that the chart details several renewable projects—chosen because they’ve been thoroughly studied, can be completed by 2038, and integrate smoothly with the existing grid without major new transmission infrastructure. The modeled wind projects alone would meet the 2030 target, while combining all projects would nearly reach the 2035 goal.

[3:34:47 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK moved to slide 6 and explained that if no new renewable projects are developed and the state remains at 15 percent renewable energy, utilities would need to pay about \$30 million in compliance fees each year. She said this could increase rates by roughly 5.5 percent during the first target period and 8.5 percent in the second.

[3:35:51 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK moved to slide 7 and explained that the \$45 per megawatt-hour fees function as a cost cap, essentially setting the upper limit on what utilities could be required to pay under the legislation. However, this scenario represents a theoretical worst case—assuming no renewable projects are developed, no new contracts are signed, and no waivers are granted, which is highly unlikely. She said SB 149 includes multiple provisions allowing waivers for good-faith compliance efforts and permitting fees to be reinvested in renewable energy projects, customer efficiency programs, or distributed generation. Even in that extreme “straw man” situation, the cost impact would be modest—about a 1.2-cent increase per kilowatt-hour, or roughly \$6 per month for an average residential customer, similar to the base rate increases seen over the past year.

[3:38:23 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK moved to slide 8 and explained the bar graph. She compared the potential costs of different energy sources and emphasized that the real issue is not failing to comply, but what happens if renewable targets are met. Current power from natural gas plants costs under eight cents per kilowatt-hour, but future gas prices are expected to rise sharply due to the Cook Inlet supply crisis, potentially reaching \$12–\$16 per unit for imported LNG—making it more expensive than most renewables. She said existing renewable projects like Bradley Lake hydro,

Houston Solar, and Fire Island wind already produce cheaper power, and future wind and solar developments, even without federal tax credits, are projected to remain competitive or lower in cost than imported gas. Overall, transitioning to renewables would likely cost consumers far less than continuing to rely on increasingly expensive fossil fuels.

[3:42:24 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK moved to slide 9 and spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Costs may range from similar to significantly cheaper

- Future gas generation costs are expected to be substantially higher than current costs.
 - New Cook Inlet gas contracts start at \$12.30/Mcf
 - Imported gas cost projections range from \$12-16/Mcf
- Other fossil generation costs are already quite high
- All current renewable energy is cheaper than future gas energy projections
- Future renewable energy projects with tax credits are probably substantially cheaper than imported gas energy.
- If tax credits end, the costs are more similar. There are likely small savings available, depending on project details and exact fuel prices.

[3:43:09 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK moved to slide 10, and spoke about the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

- Current plans will mostly satisfy the standard.
- Diversification may save money, and any potential fees would be modest.

[3:44:00 PM](#)

MATTHEW PERKINS, CEO, Alaska Renewables, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 149. He stated that Alaska Renewables is a development firm building several power plants

across the Railbelt, with extensive experience in technologies ranging from gas pipelines and coal mines to gas turbines, wind, and solar. The company focuses on delivering fast, cost-effective solutions to Alaska's energy security challenges and recently partnered with a major multi-billion-dollar power operator to fund its first wind projects, leveraging nationwide experience in managing power plants under harsh environmental and grid conditions similar to those in Alaska. He emphasized Alaska Renewables is not advocating for mandates or promoting their projects but are instead providing information to clarify market realities and how a well-crafted Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) could influence them. He noted that such a policy could attract investment capital to Alaska and highlighted the stark difference between Alaska and the rest of the U.S. in the presence of independent power producers (IPPs).

[3:47:03 PM](#)

MR. PERKINS explained that, unlike the Lower 48 where about half of power generation comes from independent power producers (IPPs), Alaska's Railbelt relies on utilities for roughly 99 percent of its energy. He argued that increasing competition through more IPPs would strengthen the market, promote innovation, and benefit utilities and consumers alike. He also stressed the need for long-term regulatory stability to attract investors and support planning for infrastructure projects. Finally, he emphasized that diversifying Alaska's energy sources beyond natural gas would enhance reliability, energy security, and resilience for both communities and military bases.

[3:50:14 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT expressed strong support for renewable energy. He asked for an explanation of how increased wind or solar generation affects the power grid, how energy storage technology is developing, and what renewable solutions work best during Alaska's winter.

[3:51:03 PM](#)

MR. PERKINS replied that intermittent renewables once caused grid issues like voltage flickers and blackouts, but decades of engineering advances have largely solved those problems. He explained that proper programming and configuration ensure stable performance, while storage solutions—such as gas, heat, and batteries—complement renewables. Wind power, particularly in Alaska, is most productive in winter when energy demand peaks, making it a strong seasonal match for the grid's needs.

[3:54:42 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN asked whether the group had evaluated the potential for renewable power and specifically inquired about Ms. McKettrick's graph and how the Susitna-Watana Dam would appear in showing progress toward renewable energy goals.

[3:55:07 PM](#)

MS. MCKITTRICK replied that the Susitna-Watana Dam qualifies as a renewable project and could supply about 59 percent of the Railbelt's total power, meeting both targets. However, it was excluded from the analysis because it could not be completed before the first target date and would require roughly \$1 billion in transmission upgrades.

[3:56:24 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that he looks forward to working with committee members, utilities, and IPPs to determine whether this proposal can work for Alaska and how to ensure it provides affordable, diversified energy.

[3:57:04 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN stated that he does not want to impose fines on utilities, noting that ratepayers ultimately bear those costs. He emphasized the potential of the Susitna-Watana Dam, urging Alaska to invest in its own reliable, long-term energy projects—such as large hydro—rather than relying on outside entities, as part of a broader vision for the state's energy future.

[3:58:54 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 149 in committee.

[3:58:56 PM](#)

At ease.

SB 35-DELIVERY NETWORK COMPANIES

[4:03:09 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 35 "An Act relating to transportation network and delivery network companies."

[4:03:29 PM](#)

KONRAD JACKSON, Staff, Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided a brief summary for SB 35. He stated that the bill amends workers' compensation statutes to classify delivery and transportation network company drivers as independent contractors if the drivers meet statutory criteria. SB 35 clarifies definitions, resolves legal inconsistencies, and

creates a level playing field, allowing drivers—most of whom work less than 10 hours per week—to supplement their income while maintaining flexibility.

[4:05:20 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on SB 35; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[4:06:09 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN explained his intent of SB 35 that drivers for delivery network companies are independent contractors, similar to transportation network company drivers under the 2017 law. He said questions remain about appropriate auto and occupational insurance coverage for these drivers. There is ongoing work with the Division of Insurance to craft policies ensuring drivers have expected protections, both while delivering and for potential injuries, emphasizing careful policy development rather than rushing implementation.

[4:08:24 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT asked for a review of the workers' compensation requirements and for clarification of who is included.

[4:08:42 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN stated that currently, drivers for Uber and Lyft are exempt from workers' compensation under the 2017 Transportation Network Company law. The law is unclear on whether delivery network company drivers are covered, but the intent was to treat them similarly to Uber or Lyft drivers. SB 35 aims to clarify that delivery network company drivers are also exempt from workers' compensation.

[4:10:31 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON opined that independent contractors should have protection in case of injury. She stated that she might propose a potential amendment that may require delivery network companies to provide occupational injury insurance for drivers.

[4:11:10 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 35 in committee.

[4:11:47 PM](#)

At ease.

[4:12:25 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting.

4:12:54 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Bjorkman adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 4:12 p.m.