

SCOMM

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Alaska State Legislature

UTILITIES RESTRUCTURING COMMITTEE

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John Cowdery Vice Ch.
Brian Porter
Norman Rokeberg
Pete Kott
John Davies
Ethan Berkowitz
Joe Green Alt.

AGENDA

January 26, 2000

8:00 a.m.

House Judiciary Committee Room

1. **Regulatory Commission of Alaska**
Nanette Thompson, Chair
Activity Update, Concerns, Recommendations

2. **Future Business of Committee**
Identify Priorities; future agendas

REGULATORY COMMISSION OF ALASKA



About the RCA...

Utility rates and services affect every Alaskan. Utility customers deserve reasonable utility rates and reliable service. The Commission works to ensure just and reasonable rates and high quality, reliable service.

Reasonable rates and reliable service can enhance economic development and be determining factors in business decisions to start up operation in, or relocate to, Alaska.

Who is the RCA?

The RCA has five commissioners, each appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature for a six year term.

The current commissioners are:

G. Nanette Thompson, Chair

Bernie Smith

Patricia M. Demarco

Will Abbott

James S. Strandberg

The RCA has a staff of 46 who are responsible for providing professional staff support for Commission decisions and for carrying out the Commission's policies.

What does the RCA do?

The RCA (AS 42.04, 42.05, 42.06, and other statutes) regulates public utilities by certifying qualified providers of public utility and pipeline services; and ensuring that they provide safe and adequate services

and facilities at just and reasonable rates, terms, and conditions. This keeps rates as low as possible while allowing the utility to earn a fair return. The commission also determines the eligibility and the per kilowatt-hour support for electric utilities under the Power Cost Equalization program (AS 42.45).

When do we need the RCA?

In most cases, when utilities request changes in either their rates or types of services they provide, the RCA provides notice to the public and allows thirty days for comments. The Commission then acts to approve or disapprove the utility's proposal.

Public notice appears as an ad in the local newspaper or is posted in the local post office.

Who is Regulated by the RCA?

Most companies providing telephone, electric, gas, water, sewer, garbage, or steam services to ten or more customers are required to have a certificate to operate. A public utility or pipeline carrier must obtain a certificate of public convenience and necessity, which describes the authorized service area and scope of operations of the utility. A certificate may be issued only if the commission finds the applicant to be fit, willing, and able to provide the utility service requested.

The rates, services, and practices of many utilities are economically regulated by the Commission. Other utilities are not economically regulated. These include city-owned utilities, very small utilities, cable TV and cellular phone service, and cooperatives whose members have voted to de-regulate.

The Commission also regulates oil pipeline companies that operate within the State.

Where is the RCA?

The RCA is located at 1016 West Sixth Avenue, Suites 300 and 400, Anchorage, Alaska. (907) 276-6222, (907) 276-0160 Fax, (907) 276-4533 TTY, (800) 390-2782 (outside Anchorage)

The RCA holds most public meetings in Anchorage, although the Commission may hold hearings in affected communities throughout the state.

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Last Update: August 3, 1999

Commissioners of the Regulatory Commission of Alaska



Commissioner Thompson began serving on the RCA on July 1, 1999. She was nominated by her colleagues and appointed by Governor Knowles as Chair. Her term expires June 30, 2004. Ms. Thompson served on the Alaska Public Utilities Commission from 1995 to 1996.

Ms. Thompson is admitted to the practice of law in Alaska (since 1983) and Washington (since 1982). She has seventeen years of experience as a lawyer in private practice representing business and individual clients and as an Assistant Attorney General for the state of Alaska. After graduating with honors in International Relations from Stanford in 1978, she earned her law degree from the University of Washington in 1982. Ms. Thompson is active in community activities. She served on the Salvation Army's Booth Home Advisory Board from 1989 to 1994, acting as President in 1994. She has served on the Campfire Boys and Girls Board from 1995 to the present. She enjoys being a soccer mom and Girl Scout leader. She and her husband, Bill Cooke, have five children ranging in ages from ten to twenty four.

On July 1, 1999, Gov. Tony Knowles, appointed Commissioner Bernie Smith to the new Regulatory Commission of Alaska, with a term expiring June 30, 2003.

Mr. Smith came to the RCA after serving 16 years with Tesoro Alaska Petroleum Company. While employed with Tesoro he held positions as Manager of Alaska Government Affairs & Special Projects, Senior Engineer, and Project Engineer. In 1973, Mr. Smith graduated from Texas A&M University, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Engineering Technology. He has been active in several community organizations, currently serving as President Elect of Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce. At the time of his appointment he was a member of the Alaska Board of Marine Pilots. He served as President and board member of the Boys and Girls Club of the Kenai Peninsula, and was a board member of Nikiski Fire Service Board.



Mr. Smith and his wife, Jeanne Mercurio, first came to Alaska for a nine month job in 1980. They returned to Alaska in 1983 to raise their family. The Smith's resided in Kenai until 1996 at which time they moved to Eagle River, where they currently reside with their two sons, Dylan (17) and Cory (15).



Patricia DeMarco, Ph.D. was appointed by Governor Tony Knowles to a three-year term on the Regulatory Commission of Alaska beginning on July 1, 1999. Commissioner DeMarco previously occupied the position of President of the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation for four years. She brings to the Commission a strong interest in utility infrastructure as a mechanism to expand the economic potential of Alaska. She has a multi-disciplined approach to solving problems and views the role of regulation as a catalyst

for change.

Dr. DeMarco came to Alaska in 1995 from Connecticut where she had a twenty-year career in various aspects of electric utility regulation, planning and operation. She also started a non-profit corporation to diversify the defense dependent economy, especially the area served by the five utilities in the Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative.

Dr. DeMarco received her formal education in her hometown at the University of Pittsburgh. She holds a Bachelor of Science and a Doctorate degree in biology and spent seven years in biochemical genetics research.

In private life, she is the wife of Joseph Barkowski, owner of Alaska Joe Fishing Charters. They live in Anchorage with their two dogs. Dr. DeMarco serves on the Board of Directors of the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra and is a member of the Anchorage Log Cabin Quilters and Downtown Rotary.

Will Abbott was appointed to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska on July 1, 1999 and his term ends June 30, 2001.

Mr. Abbott previously worked at the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, the Municipality of Anchorage, a local environmental firm and the U. S. Air Force.

Mr. Abbot is married and has two sons.





Appointed in 1999, Jim Strandberg is an engineer with 29 years experience as a professional engineer in Alaska. Born in Anchorage and a life long Alaskan, he attended the University of Alaska Fairbanks and received a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering in 1970, and a Masters of Science in Arctic Engineering in 1983. Strandberg is a registered mechanical and civil engineer in the State of Alaska, and has worked extensively in rural and urban areas of the state in his professional practice, 15 years of which were in Fairbanks.

Early in his career, Strandberg worked on the design team for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, and was stationed in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Houston, Texas. His work centered on field testing and the production of design criteria documents for construction work pads and re-vegetation.

As a Mechanical and Utilities designer, he worked in private practice to design buried steam and hot water district heating systems at a number of locations in Alaska. He has also done systems upgrade design for thermal coal-fired power stations, as well as feasibility and cost of service analyses for co-generation power systems.

Strandberg was program manager for the \$15 million federally funded upgrade of the Poker Flat Research Range, which is owned by the Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Married for 28 years, Jim and his wife Emiko have two grown children, Roy and Erica, each of who are pursuing an Engineering Career.

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Regulatory Commission of Alaska

What if I have a complaint or question about a utility?

First, the Commission recommends that you try to resolve the problem directly with the utility.

If it is unresolved, you may file an informal complaint with the RCA either by letter, phone, or in person. Your complaint should describe the problem you experienced and how the utility has responded.

What will the staff do?

Staff will contact the utility to determine its position. Then Staff will review the complaint, governing statutes, the utility's tariff, and RCA orders, to decide whether the complaint is valid.

If you are not satisfied with Staff's decision, you may file a formal complaint directly with the Commission.

For more information contact

Agnes Pitts

Consumer Protection

(907) 276-6222

(907) 276-0160 Fax

(907) 276-4533 TTY

1-800-390-2782

(within the State)

send E-mail to Consumer Protection

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