

Bill would reduce electricity costs

In response to numerous complaints from constituents, Sens. John Sackett and Frank Ferguson have introduced legislation that will help reduce the cost of electricity to rural consumers who reside in communities that are not participating in the power cost assistance program.

"Basically, our bill seeks to clarify existing state law to allow the consumers themselves to petition the Alaska Power Authority (APA) for utility cost assistance," Sackett said today. "Under current law, only the owner of a utility may petition APA for such assistance. Through this legislation, Sen. Ferguson and I hope to create a mechanism which puts the petition process and program on a more equal footing," Sackett explained.

Under Senate Bill 376, the APA must consider a petition for service from the consumer if at least 25 percent of a utility company's customers sign the petition and if the utility in question is regulated by the Alaska Public Utilities Commission.

"Once the power authority

determines a petition to be valid and that the customers are entitled to receive power cost assistance, it will pass this financial assistance on to the utility which, in turn, must pass the savings along to its customer," Sackett explained.

"On the whole, Senator Ferguson and I believe that this bill will go a long way toward easing the burden of high utility costs to rural residents and bring the rates closer to the lower rates that exist in other parts of Alaska."