

Bush emergency energy bill is signed into law

JUNEAU. Gov. Jay Hammond signed into law Jan. 25 the first bill enacted by the legislature this session making a special appropriation for an emergency fuel supply assistance program for Alaska villages.

The bill makes available immediately \$1.5 million through the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc., which will operate under contract to the Department of Commerce and

Economic Development to get funds to villages, some which are already out of fuel and others anticipating a shortage before winter's end.

The governor had included the bulk fuel purchase loan program in his Energy package to reduce the likelihood of critical fuel shortages in the future. However, he agreed to lift out a portion of his energy program and support efforts

led by Rep. Nels Anderson, D-Dillingham to get an emergency appropriation.

The funds will be used to provide loans to the villages for the purchase of fuel oil and will provide grants for the difference in air and barge transportation costs to have the fuel flown into the villages.

The governor noted there has been much discussion about the use of oil surplus monies and

"there is a great need about to assure that some of this money is used to help Alaskans meet high energy costs on a continuing basis." Hammond said his proposed Permanent Fund Dividend bill, introduced earlier this week as a major part of his Energy Package, is designed to do that by providing income tax credits or cash payments to Alaskans to help meet energy costs.

The Energy package will also provide both grants to determine the feasibility of establishing bulk storage facilities and grant and loan funds to purchase storage tanks.

The bill signed into law also appropriates \$250,000 to the Office of the Governor, contingency fund, to be used as a last resort for energy emergency relief.