

RurAL-CAP ACTION REPORTS

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3908

Telephone 279-2441

Anchorage, Alaska 99501

RurAL CAP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Hundred pieces ready For Legislation

CPC Legislative Conference delegates reviewed and assigned priorities to some 100 pieces of proposed and pending legislation during their three-day meeting in Anchorage.

Delegates divided into 10 committees on issues of high concern to low-income persons in Alaska: Energy, education, rural housing, urban housing, health and social services, bush justice, transportation and communications, fish and game, and local government.

Energy

The energy committee led by Mary Stachelrodt, energy co-ordinator for Rural CAP and member of the state's energy task force, gave its highest priority to the establishing of "an energy needs revolving loan fund." Introduced during the last session of the legislature as Senate Bill 392, this proposed legislation is still tied up in the Senate Finance Committee.

The current language of the legislation was considered too broad in regard to funding loans for alternative energy production. Delegates expressed concern that one project, such as a gas pipeline project could deplete the entire loan fund.

The energy committee also supported the establishment of "energy efficiency" standards for housing projects in Alaska. They also supported a proposed administration bill for statewide winterization offered by the Alaska Energy Office. The committee is in favor of the proposal, if it is geared toward urban winterization projects.

The committee also supported the Alaska Energy Office's effort to upgrade the Alaska State Building Code to implement energy conservation measures in all future construction of state-owned facilities.

Bush Justice

Top priority for the bush justice committee was given to alcoholism and alcohol abuse. Dave Case, staff director for Bush Justice, AFN, noted that 90 to 100% of all crimes in bush Alaska continue to be alcohol-related.

The bush justice committee passed a resolution which was adapted by the CPC conference as a body to amend the state constitution to allow state alcohol taxes to be dedicated to adequately fund both preventative and direct service alcohol programs; that the legislature establish in both houses subcommittees on alcoholism and alcohol abuse; and that an amount equal to the annual taxes collected on the sale and use of alcohol be appropriated to fund alcohol prevention and direct service alcohol programs.

Rather than set up a procedure for discretionary hearings and mandatory elections for alcohol licenses, the bush justice committee concluded that there should be local elections every time there is an application for issuance, renewal or transfer of an alcohol license.

Passes as high priority was a proposal for funding the expansion and continuance of the Alaska Court System's problem board program. The committee also established as a high priority that a statute be enacted that would require notice for all legal matters in bush area, including posting of notices, publication via television, radio and newspapers and oral notice before the local governing body.

The bush justice committee also established a high priority for continuation and expansion of the Alaska Court System's interpreter program to other areas of the state besides Bethel.

Urban Housing

The CPC urban housing committee, headed by group leader Stephanie Scowcroft, reviewed and assigned priorities to nine pieces of legislation.

House Bill 177, relating to limitations on the amount of security deposits and prepaid rent a landlord can demand or receive, was given a high priority by the committee with the amendment that the amount be limited to one month's rent.

An act establishing an emergency rent subsidy program in areas impacted by rapid economic development, House Bill 475, was given a high priority with an amendment that the program not be limited to persons receiving public assistance.

A bill making senior citizens eligible as renters rather than home owners for property tax equivalency payments, HB 272, received a high priority from the urban housing committee. However, the committee suggested the bill be amended to include the blind and disabled as well as senior citizens.

Recommended as high priority legislation was House Bill 449, a bill for the construction of emergency housing by the Alaska State Housing Authority. The bill was approved with amendments that the governor should declare the emergency and ASHA rather than the state act as business agent.

Senate Bill 288, increased funding for the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, received the support of the urban housing committee, as did Senate Bill 201, legislation dealing with the removal of architectural barriers to the handicapped in state buildings and public housing.

Publication of Landlord Tenant Act information, HB 235, was given a high priority by the committee.

The CPC urban housing committee also supported legislation which would increase



Mary Stachelrodt, energy coordinator for RurAL CAP and member of the governor's energy task force, listens intently during discussion of a revolving emergency loan fund, a proposal she has worked hard for.

ASHA's bonding level, provide emergency housing facilities for families, establish a statewide subdivision ordinance, establish building codes to include insulation standards, and the implementation of rent review regulations that are closer to the legislative intent of the Rent Review Act.

Rural Housing

CPC rural housing committee members, led by Mike Jones, acting director of AVCP Housing Authority, assigned a high priority to House Bill 332, an act making a special appropriation to the Department of Community and Regional Affairs to establish a central office of housing assistance. However, the committee recommended the amendment that the funding level be increased to \$250 thousand and that the funding be passed through the Department of Community and Regional Affairs to the Association of Alaska Housing Authorities for the purpose of establishing a central office of housing technical assistance in Anchorage.

The person assigned to the Anchorage housing technical assistance office would then be available to all regions, with or without a regional housing authority, according to Mike Jones.

House Bill 335, an act making a special appropriation to the Department of Community and Regional Affairs to establish a housing development revolving loan fund, was given a high priority by the committee. A suggested amendment to the bill was that the appropriation be increased to \$1 million and be placed in the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation.

The rural housing committee supported without priority an act providing for housing development assistance to

municipalities.

The rural housing committee also recommended that the legislature authorize a bond sale of \$4 million to fund the Alaska Remote Housing Program which should be administered by the regional housing authorities as well as ASHA; that design and construction standards appropriate to rural Alaska be established to avoid construction of inadequate homes; that the Municipal Bond Bank charter be amended to include regional housing authorities as eligible participants; that legislation providing for the construction of community facilities mandate direct local involvement in all phases of the project including planning, design, and construction; and that a bill be passed which would establish a village emergency housing fund to respond to family crises situations when homes are destroyed by fire, flood, etc.

Education

The education committee was divided into two areas of concern: Elementary, secondary and early childhood education with Gordon Jackson of AFN as group leader; and post secondary, adult and vocational education with Eric Ekvall of the Kellogg project as group leader.

A high priority was assigned to House Bill 229, an act making a special appropriation of pre-higher education by the committee.

The education committee supported with a high priority an amendment to the law governing mandatory school attendance to allow "approval of an excused absence to be made by the principal or administrator after consultation with the teacher."

The school hot lunch program

received a strong endorsement and the education committee recommended the hot lunch program use the unique food resources of the people residing in the area.

With the comment that curriculum decisions should be made by local school boards, the committee gave a "do not pass" recommendation to House Bill 150, an act relating to required curriculum in public schools, (Alaska History classes).

A recommendation by the CPC education committee was that federal guidelines established by HEW for the minimum enrollment necessary to conduct a Head Start program be changed from 15 to 8 to allow participation by communities now excluded by this provision. A renewed state appropriation of \$281 thousand to support the Head Start program in Alaska was also given a strong recommendation.

The education committee voted against Senate Bill 338, stating that special interest groups (in this case military reservations) should not hold a seat on the State Board of Education, and that candidates should be evaluated on their own merit.

In considering post secondary education the committee gave a high priority to House Bill 144, an act revising the Community College Act. The bill would district attorneys to prepare cases.

A special appropriations bill to the Department of Public Safety to fund additional wildlife protection officers was given a strong endorsement by the CPC fish and game committee. Also a strong do pass recommendation was given to Senate Bill 420, a provision which would require violators of the state's wanton waste law to also forfeit their hunting license for five years in addition to the current fine of \$500 and maximum imprisonment for six months.

A no pass recommendation, however, was made for a bill to lift for one year the licenses of those who violate other hunting rules, as was a bill establishing trophy hunting tags.

The fish and game committee recommended that legislation be drafted to include a special provision under guide licensing to permit village residents easier access into guiding service in localities in proximity to their community.

create an over-all plan for post secondary education in Alaska. The committee recommended that the University of Alaska fund regional post secondary outlets which have received recognition by any regional accreditation association.

Senate Bill 239 and companion funding bill SB 240 were given a strong do pass recommendation. These bills would establish an educational outreach program within the University of Alaska into rural areas, including off-campus study and credit and non-credit courses, which may or may not lead to a degree.

(Rest of the explanation of bills in the next CAP issue.)