

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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## Senator Joe Thomas Press Release

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### **Alaska Senators Propose Energy Relief Plan**

*Bipartisan Effort Utilizes Portion of State Surplus to Help Alaska Families Cope with High Energy Prices*

JUNEAU- Today, a bipartisan group of state senators from across Alaska introduced legislation to utilize a small portion of the state's \$3.7 billion surplus to provide Alaskans with relief from high energy costs.

Senate Bill 203 provides Alaskans with immediate energy relief through fuel vouchers, and develops a program to help residents deal with high heating costs during the transition to more affordable energy supplies.

The bill's sponsors include Senators Joe Thomas and Joe Paskvan of Fairbanks, Senator Lyman Hoffman (Bethel), Senator Tom Wagoner (Kenai), Senator Johnny Ellis (Anchorage) and Senator Donny Olson (Golovin).

SB 203 directs the Alaska Department of Revenue to send a voucher to every adult Permanent Fund Dividend recipient in the fall of 2012, which can be redeemed at the fuel distributor of their choice for either 250 gallons of heating oil, an equivalent amount of natural gas, or 1,500 KWH of electricity.

The bill then calls for the state to evaluate several options for on-going energy relief and recommend a program that can be put into effect for 2013 and beyond. The analysis and recommendation are due back to the legislature by October 1, 2012. The program designed by the state must provide energy relief to Alaskans based on the local cost of home heating, taking into consideration the price of fuel and average temperature of the community.

Senator Joe Thomas, the prime sponsor of SB 203, explained, "High energy prices fill the state's treasury, but hit Alaska's working families hard. We intend to use a portion of the State of Alaska's \$3.7 billion surplus - about 9 cents of every surplus dollar - to deliver real energy relief to Alaskans this year."

Senator Lyman Hoffman added, "Our intention is to craft a program that helps all Alaskans and treats equitably those hit hardest by the high cost of energy. This year's record cold winter and rising fuel prices have created a hardship for many Alaskans. This proposal will provide relief this year, and develop a program to help families in the future."

Senator Joe Paskvan said, "In the past few years, many Alaskans' discretionary income has evaporated, consumer debt has risen sharply, and - as we have all heard from our constituents - the rising cost of heating oil is beyond the ability of many Alaskans to pay. I'm glad we've come together to craft a plan that will help Alaskans cope with high prices, which allows us to concentrate on our #1 priority - renewable and sustainable energy solutions for the State of Alaska."

Senate Bill 203 was referred to the Senate Finance Committee where it is scheduled to have its first hearing on Thursday, February 23.

For more information, contact Senator Joe Thomas' aide, Catherine Reardon at 465-2327 or at [catherine.reardon@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:catherine.reardon@legis.state.ak.us).

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