

## APA Legislative Fly-In Summary Report

Sharon Scheidt, CVEA Director of Communications



Sharon Scheidt, CVEA Director of Communications, joined electric industry professionals from all corners of the state, in Juneau, for the annual Alaska Power Association (APA) Legislative Fly-In January 31 through February 1. Throughout the event, the co-op participated in legislative briefings, presentations, panel discussions, and one-on-one meetings with legislators and staff members. The goal of the visit was to learn about the current legislative session and discuss CVEA issues and priorities.

Legislative panel discussions are a cornerstone of the event, where utility leadership are given an opportunity to hear from, and ask questions of, legislative representatives from the House and Senate. There were two excellent panel discussions this year, both similar in that all participants clearly outlined energy as a top priority for this session. They also expressed sentiments that the time to act is now and that we all need to work together to find solutions.

We heard there are two top priorities this session: education and energy. The majority referenced education being the top priority, but there is consensus this issue will be solved quickly and then focus will be given to finding energy solutions. The importance of reliable, affordable energy ‘for all’ was top of mind for every legislator who addressed the group.

The first panel was made up of Senator Bill Wielechowski, Representative Zack Fields, Representative Mike Cronk, Representative Calvin Schrage, and Senator Scott Kawasaki. Each outlined their commitment to finding energy solutions and thoughts on various APA policy positions. Major topics of discussion were securing gas in Cook Inlet, securing match (\$206.5M) for the GRIP funding to complete the first phase of the Alaska Intertie, long-term renewable project funding through the Renewable Energy Fund, and an opportunity for added regulatory certainty for local utilities.

The second legislative panel was Representative Cathy Tilton, Senator Gary Stevens, Representative George Rauscher, Representative Thomas Baker, and Senator Jesse Bjorkman.

Again, the message was clear – education and energy are the priorities and each recognized that it will take all of them, working together, across the House and Senate, along with local utility leadership to accomplish the

energy goals of the state. Specific priorities mentioned were gas for Cook Inlet, GRIP funding match, renewable projects and developing a plan for affordable energy.

The panel also addressed HB227, the Electric Utility Liability bill. Representative Rauscher, the bill's sponsor, said the bill is doing very well and he believes it will pass the House and be taken up by the Senate. There was majority support on the panel for this bill.

They also briefly discussed oral fluid testing (SB196) and the Renewable Portfolio Standard (HB121). In general, representatives supported oral fluid testing as it protects utilities and did not support forcing renewable targets on utilities as it works against the current priority of making energy more affordable for all. Their discussion leaned more towards supporting bills and policy that help utilities accomplish the task in front of us.

Governor Dunleavy spoke to the group Thursday morning. The Governor stated without hesitation that energy is a top priority. He believes that everyone must work together for the good of the entire state, that we have an opportunity to set an energy framework that can sustain us for decades to come, and if we want a sustainable economy and great place for families to continue to live, we must have reliable, affordable energy 'for all'. He believes we can no longer be 'picky' about our generation, stating we will need a mix of energy resources (nuclear, gas, coal, renewables, etc.). He ended by saying, "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good."

The group also heard from Curtis Thayer, Executive Director of the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) regarding AEA programs and initial findings of the Governor's Energy Task Force, Dan Smith, the State Energy Coordinator from USDA, and Trevor Fulton, Carbon Offset Program Manager, who outlined what carbon offsets are and how renewable energy credits work.

In addition to planned programming, Larry Markley, CVEA lobbyist, and I had meetings with Anne Rittgers, from Senator Click Bishop's office and Representative George Rauscher. In both meetings we covered several topics, to include:

- Support for statewide priorities like Cook Inlet Gas and the Alaska Intertie
- A reminder that CVEA is unique and while on the road system, is still an isolated grid with high energy costs
- A reminder to not forget about CVEA as the state focuses on large, looming statewide priorities
- High cost of fuel is CVEA's number one concern and finding a low-cost winter energy solution is the co-op's highest priority
- Aging infrastructure is a top priority and the cause of increasing budgets and a rate increase; a need for ongoing project funding
- Update on the CVEA/Alyeska Intertie Project; potential to save on fuel costs
- Potential opportunity to restudy raising the Solomon Gulch dam and looking for future support if it proves to be a viable winter energy solution

Additionally, Representative Rauscher mentioned the potential for a tour of the Solomon Gulch Hydroelectric Project. CVEA will work with his office to accommodate this opportunity.

CVEA thanks the Alaska Power Association, legislators, and state agency representatives for their coordination and support of this important event. If there are questions regarding this summary report, please contact Sharon Scheidt at [sscheidt@cvea.org](mailto:sscheidt@cvea.org).