



## NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Crystal Enkvist, Alaska Power Association

Direct: (907) 771-5711

E-mail: [cenkvist@alaskapower.org](mailto:cenkvist@alaskapower.org)

Main: (907) 771-5700

Fax: (907) 561-5547

[www.alaskapower.org](http://www.alaskapower.org)

703 West Tudor Road, Suite 200

Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6650

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## **Alaska electric utility industry honors Rep. Thomas for work on rural electrification issues and renewable energy funding**

Representative William “Bill” Thomas (R-Haines) received the David P. Hutchens Public Service Award from Alaska Power Association (APA) in recognition of his leadership on behalf of Alaska’s electric consumers and their utilities. The trade association announced the award at its 58th annual membership meeting awards banquet in Soldotna, Alaska on August 6.

The electric utility trade association’s David P. Hutchens Public Service Award is presented to individuals outside the utility industry who have provided exceptional public service in the interests of electric consumers in Alaska. Thomas was nominated for the award by Cordova Electric Cooperative and Inside Passage Electric Cooperative.

The award was announced by Brad Reeve, APA Board President, at the association’s awards banquet. Reeve said, “Representative Thomas has been a vocal and consistent advocate for statewide energy issues, particularly those of the electric power industry. His commitment to funding alternative and renewable energy projects crosses regional and demographic boundaries to provide statewide public benefit.”

In the 25th Alaska legislative session, Thomas co-sponsored with former Speaker John Harris House Bill 152 that established a renewable energy grant fund. The Haines legislator worked hard to build solid support for the bill from a variety of stakeholder groups. The bill passed, was signed into law by former Governor Palin, and funded at \$100 million for the first year and \$25 million in year two.

In the 26<sup>th</sup> session, Thomas crafted and successfully pushed for House Joint Resolution 25 that recognizes hydro power as a renewable energy on the federal level. This resolution was necessary for utilities to seek federal funding for hydro power projects which the federal government currently does not recognize as being from renewable energy sources.

“A lifelong Alaskan born and raised in Haines,” Reeve said, “he has been a stalwart advocate for Power Cost Equalization program funding at 100 percent since many rural Alaska villages will never have the low cost power equivalent to the urban areas.”

Since Thomas was not able to accept the award at the APA banquet, it was accepted on his behalf by Harold “Hap” Symmonds, Chair of Cordova Electric Cooperative, and Jodi Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer of Inside Passage Electric Cooperative.

The David P. Hutchens Public Service Award is named after Alaska Power Association’s first executive director who worked with utility leaders and public officials for 18 years to improve the affordability and reliability of electric service for consumers in Alaska.

Alaska Power Association, formerly known as the Alaska Rural Electric Cooperative Association, is the 58-year old statewide trade association for urban and rural electric utilities. It provides advocacy and program services to member utilities. APA members supply power to more than a half-million Alaskans in communities from Barrow to Unalaska and down the Inside Passage.

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