

Alaska Power Association Summary of Bill that Passed Relating to COVID-19

Senate Bill 241: COVID-19 bill (passed) – This bill began as a vehicle to extend the public health disaster emergency declared by Gov. Mike Dunleavy. It grew into a 25-page bill addressing numerous moratoriums meant to decrease the burden on Alaskans suffering financially due to the COVID-19 virus. APA was deeply involved to ensure the final language of the bill protects consumers and the overall operations of electric utilities alike. Three sections pertain to electric utilities:

- Tolls all statutory deadlines for action by the RCA during the public health disaster emergency and states that failure of the RCA to act on a filing does not constitute an approval or dismissal. The section does not apply to statutory or regulatory deadlines extended by the RCA before March 11, 2020.
- Places a moratorium on residential utility disconnects during the public health disaster emergency for nonpayment from those experiencing a financial hardship related to COVID-19. A person seeking protection under this section of the bill must, before the emergency declaration expires:
 - Provide the utility a signed statement, sworn under penalty of perjury, that they are experiencing a financial hardship related to COVID-19.
 - Negotiate and agree to a deferred payment agreement with the utility.
 - The section also states that a public utility customer is not relieved of the obligation to pay for utility service nor is a public utility restricted from the ability to recover an amount due.
 - This section expires on November 15, 2020 or the declared end of the health disaster whichever comes first.
- Requires a utility to offer a deferred payment option to a customer claiming financial hardship due to COVID-19 allowing repayment over a period of time not shorter than the period of the public health disaster emergency and a utility may not impose interest or late fees on a person who fulfills the terms of a deferred payment agreement.
- States the Regulatory Commission of Alaska and the Alaska Energy Authority may not deny Power Cost Equalization (PCE) payments to a utility otherwise eligible to receive PCE payments on behalf of a utility customer who defers payment per the provisions set out in the amendment.
- Allows a utility to record regulatory assets, to be recovered through future rates, for uncollected residential utility bills and extraordinary expenses that result from the COVID-19 emergency declaration. The RCA must approve whether the extraordinary expense resulted from the COVID-19 health disaster before recovery can happen through future rates.