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NEWS RELEASE



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**Alaska Admitted to National Association of State Consumer
Utility Advocates (NASUCA)**

(Juneau, AK) – Alaska joined the National Association of State Consumer Utility Advocates (NASUCA) last week. The organization is another tool for Attorney General Gregg Renkes’ office to use in protecting the consumer rights of Alaskans.

NASUCA members testify before Congress and regulatory agencies as representatives of utility consumers. Members also argue before state and federal courts on issues concerning utility rates. The group speaks for consumers in other ways, too, including offering lawmakers and regulators policy choices and raising the public awareness of utility issues.

“Joining NASUCA is a great thing for the people of Alaska,” Attorney General Gregg Renkes said. “My public advocacy staff will have access to the benefits of a national information clearinghouse and an established network of professionals in the field to improve the way I can serve Alaskan citizens in this area.”

Alaska applied to become a member of the group in the past, but failed to meet its criteria. NASUCA requires full members to operate independently of the state’s regulatory commission. At that time, the staff section within the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) handled public advocacy for utility matters in Alaska.

However, that status changed during the last legislative session when Governor Frank Murkowski asked Attorney General Renkes to assume the duties of determining the public’s interest in utility issues and advocating it before the state utility regulator, the RCA. The change went into affect July 1, 2003, which qualified Alaska for membership.

Previously, the RCA had a public advocacy section in it that represented the public’s interest in issues that came before the commission. The changes removed the potentially conflicted responsibility from the commission and transferred it to the Attorney General.

“My office works daily to protect consumers across this state and I am committed to giving ratepayers the same attention,” Attorney General Renkes added. “I will give them the aggressive

representation they deserve. Our membership in NASUCA will only serve to enhance that ability.”

Sixteen consumer advocate agencies organized NASUCA in 1979. States formed these agencies in the 1970s in response to the rapidly rising utility costs and the need for consumer protection. The idea in forming NASUCA was to give states a place to exchange ideas, encourage more participation by consumers in the regulatory process, and improve consumer representation at the federal and state levels. The group now has 44 full members in 42 states and the District of Columbia. It also has a number of associate and affiliate members.

Daniel Patrick O’Tierney, Senior Assistant Attorney General for Regulatory Affairs, will represent Alaska in NASUCA. He plans to become a member of the telecommunications committee at the group’s annual meeting in November.

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