



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 7, 2012

2012-088

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## **Begich Introduces Rural Teacher Housing Bill**

***Alaska housing advocates praise legislation that supports educators, medical providers and public safety officers***

With the high cost and shortage of housing in rural Alaska along with the impact it has on recruiting and retaining professionals in several critical fields, U.S. Sen. Mark Begich has introduced the *Rural Educator and American Community Housing Act*. The bill authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to distribute \$50 million in loan guarantees and grants for housing support for educators, public safety officers, and medical providers in rural communities.

“Knowing the remoteness and isolation of some of our rural communities, it can be very difficult to keep professionals on the job for the long-term in these key fields,” Begich said. “This bill allows for some financial support for new housing construction, or renovation and repair of housing units. We need quality educators, public safety professionals and medical folks in our communities. Having stable housing can make the difference for someone deciding whether to accept or stay in a job.”

According to the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation’s 2009 Alaska Housing Assessment, there are approximately 9,000 housing units needed in rural Alaska alone to support these occupations. Funding in the legislation will pay for loan guarantees and grants for housing construction, modernization, renovation and repairs in rural communities. The dollars can be used for:

- Interest payments on housing loans;
- Repayment of loans made to build or improve housing;
- Purchasing or leasing property on which housing will be built, modernized or repaired;
- Other activities involving construction, modernization and renovation of housing units.

The bill is being praised by housing advocates in Alaska.

“TCC applauds Senator Begich’s efforts to support three of rural Alaska’s priorities: public safety, education and health care, by providing grants and loan guarantees for housing for the vital and hard-working individuals working in these fields in our villages,” said **Jerry Isaac, Tanana Chiefs Conference President**. “I am particularly excited to see our health-aides and VPSO’s, those who are dedicated to the health and safety of our communities, will be eligible for the benefits of this bill. This bill would supplement the shortage of funding that is directed towards such programs to recruit and retain vital positions in our villages. Those qualified for

the grants and loan guarantees stated within this bill serve countless hours for the benefit of our communities yet their minimal pay does not match their skill, dedication, and value to our communities. “

“AVCP Housing is in full support of creating more funding opportunities to provide housing in rural Alaska. Housing is badly needed for public safety officers, educators and medical providers in our region and in all of rural Alaska. Thank you, Senator Begich, for working to improve the living conditions in rural Alaska,” said **Ron Hoffman, CEO, Association of Village Council Presidents, Regional Housing Authority.**

Begich’s bill gives priority in applying for projects to state and local education agencies, educational service agencies, state and local housing authorities, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, tribally-designated housing entities, local governments, and any consortium of these organizations.

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