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SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 384: REGULATORY COMM OF AK; BROADBAND INTERNET

House Bill 384, Regulatory Commission of Alaska; Broadband Internet, clearly defines broadband internet as a public utility that is regulated by AS 42.05, the Alaska Public Utilities Regulatory Act.

Current statute defines a corporation furnishing telecommunications to the public as a public utility (AS 42.05.990(6)(B)). Telecommunications are defined as “the transmission and reception of messages, impressions, pictures, and signals by means of electricity, electromagnetic waves, and any other kind of energy, force, variations, and impulses whether conveyed by cable, wire, radiated through space, or transmitted through other media within a designated area or between designated points” (AS 42.05.990(13)). Statute clearly defines telecommunications as a public utility and gives the Regulatory Commission of Alaska the responsibility to regulate providers to “maintain and further efficiency, availability and affordability” of telecommunications services (AS 42.05.145(a)).

While statute establishes that the RCA has the responsibility to regulate telecommunications providers as public utilities, the rapidly changing nature of technology has created uncertainty about what services are included in their purview. HB384 clarifies the RCA’s responsibilities by specifically including ‘broadband internet access’ under the definition of telecommunications.