

Representative Ethan Berkowitz

Alaska State Capitol, Room 404, Juneau, Alaska 99801 • Telephone (888) 465-4919 • Fax (907) 465-2137

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • May 4, 1999

CONTACT: Patrick Flynn • (907) 465-3163

RENTERS' REBATE RESTORATION CLEARS COMMITTEE

JUNEAU – Less than a week after introduction House Bill 215, restoring funding for the Renter's Equivalency Rebate Program, passed from the House Committee on Community & Regional Affairs today. Sponsored by House Minority Leader Ethan Berkowitz (D-Anchorage), eight other legislators signed on as co-sponsors. The bill now moves to the House Finance Committee for consideration

The Renter's Equivalency Rebate Program, usually referred to as "Renter's Rebate", was established in 1976 to aid low-income seniors with housing costs. In 1985, disabled veterans were added to the program. Renter's Rebate typically provides a small housing stipend averaging \$277 a year to individuals who are elderly and/or disabled with incomes in the neighborhood of \$1,000 per month.

"Some have suggested that all Alaskans should share the pain of budget cuts," Berkowitz explained. "Failure to pass this legislation means that seniors and disabled veterans – people who have served our country and communities – will assume all the pain of budget cuts."

Since 1991, funding for the program dropped from roughly \$820,000 to \$300,000; this year's budget zeroes it out completely. Adjusting for inflation and population growth, fully funding the Renter's Rebate program would require \$1,133,000 in Fiscal Year 2000. House Bill 215 appropriates a modest level of support for the Renter's Rebate program – just \$300,000.

A copy of the sponsor statement is available on the Internet:

<http://www.akdemocrats.org/bios/berk.htm>

###