

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER DISTRICT 14

SPONSOR STATEMENT

HJR 16

“Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to state aid for education.”

For 50 years the State of Alaska has grown from a vast frontier into an important player in the nation and the world. While this is a fair assessment of ourselves, it does not address a growing need for quality higher education in the state. We have and continue to do everything possible for our university system, but that has, to a point, been at the expense of other private institutions of higher learning.

HJR 16 opens some of these doors for both public and private education by allowing the release of funds to more than just public schools. This Constitutional Amendment allows those students seeking to excel in secondary and post secondary education to attend a school that meets their needs.

This resolution is on the table with HB 145, but the language in this resolution goes far beyond this bill. It takes into account state sponsored scholarships for all students regardless of financial position. It says we support higher education for our youth at the best possible college, university or vocational program. Alaska has a wealth of educational opportunities that need our support. We do not need another Sheldon Jackson disaster.

HJR 16 is language that needs to be placed in front of the Alaska voters so they may decide on the future of higher education in the state.