



April 8, 2011

Alaska State Legislature

REF: HB49 & SB120

Parents as Teachers Act

Raising kids as a service member is never easy. Moving constantly, and with overseas deployments every other year if you are lucky- keeping a family together and training your kids to be good citizens is tough.

We have looked closely at these bills as we did once before and continue to find that they can help our military families in so many ways. As veterans, we have lots of experience with these problems over the past 40 + years, and frankly we agree with the following points:

Military deployments take a toll on families especially those with young children. Behavior is a key communicator for very young children, so being prepared for potential behavioral changes, and having places to turn to and ideas to try with the youngest members of military families is crucial to 'dealing' with separation that's part of many terms of service for our military families.

Families parenting singly because of deployment often struggle with regimented, school-based programs because of financial and scheduling constraints. Providing parents with resources to create a learning environment in any situation helps their children gain the fundamentals needed to enter school at par with their peers.

The Parents as Teachers social evenings offer isolated parents an excellent opportunity to form connections with other families. Social time also helps parents develop support networks necessary for dealing with deployment, frequent moves and other stresses unique to military families.

Parents as Teachers helps reduce barriers facing children of military personnel as they transition from one school system to another. The average military family student will move from six to nine times from kindergarten to 12th grade. When parents are equipped to engage in their children's education, they can better stabilize their families through the moves and help their children transition through difficult changes.

While the armed services has done much to ease the transition for children of military personnel, there is much that can be done at the state and local levels to ensure that these children are afforded the same opportunities for educational success as other children.

Parents as Teachers has been operating on Fort Wainwright for years, but is now gone. Staff say that the Parents as Teachers system is essential for helping Guard members and their families cope with the stress and confusion of deployment and the absence of a loved one

On behalf of the 80,000 veterans and their families who make Alaska home we are delighted to support these bills as they will help our military families.

Thanks for your support of Parents as Teachers.

Ric Davidge
Chairman