

# Alaska Charter School Law

- Alaska
- Year Charter Law Enacted: 1995

**Background:** The Alaska Legislature passed the Charter School Act in 1995. Governor Knowles signed the bill into law. House Bill 101 amended the existing Alaska statute for charter schools and was signed into law July 1, 2001. The major changes of the amendment are: length of charter was changed to a maximum of ten (10) years, total number of allowable charter schools to operate within the state set at 60, and the geographical restrictions on number of total schools per region or district was dropped.

Both the local school board and the State Board of Education must approve a charter school application before the school can begin operation. If a local school board denies an application, there is no appeal to a higher authority.

- **Amendment(s):** SB 57, the bill established a more equitable state funding of public charter and alternative schools. SB 57 states that charter schools with fewer than 150 students will have their student count adjusted by the same per-student rate as neighborhood schools with 400 students. SB 57 also contains a one-year, hold-harmless provision for charter schools and alternative schools that unexpectedly fall below the enrollment threshold, and are either in their first year of operation or were above the threshold the previous year. For a full-text version of the most recent amendment, see the [Alaska State Legislature](#).

**Authorizers:** local school boards, with final approval from the State Board of Education

**Length of charter:** maximum 10 years

**Caps on number of schools:** October 2002 Amendment increased the cap from 30 to 60 total schools in operation

**Funding:** Operational funding is equivalent to "the amount generated by the students enrolled minus a portion for administrative costs." The local school board is responsible for setting the charter school's budget based on student enrollment.

## President Obama

*October 1, 2009*

- President Obama has called upon Congress to increase funding for the charter school programs by \$52 million dollars this year, bringing total funding for the charter school programs to \$268 million. As Congress works to finish its appropriations bills, it is critical that charter advocates voice their support for increased funding, helping the President's request become law.
- The federal public charter schools programs provide support at key points in the development of charter schools: helping cover the extraordinary costs of launching successful charters; disseminating their successful innovations to other public schools; and providing financial incentives to state governments and private lenders that help enable schools to build and renovate facilities.

# “Significant Education Reforms”

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*November 9, 2009*

The passage of the historic American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 enabled two competitive grant programs aimed at drastically improving public education in America.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Education released draft priorities and guidelines for the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) grant competition. On behalf of over 4,900 public charter schools across the country educating over 1.5 million children, the Alliance strongly supports **the U.S. Department of Education's efforts to use the i3 fund to scale significant education reforms** and find the next generation of notable educational innovations..

## Reform – Lift caps

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In a speech earlier this year to the US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, President Obama explicitly called on states to “... reform their charter rules, and lift caps on the number of allowable charter schools, wherever such caps are in place.”

## Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

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For all the money at his disposal, Duncan is not making it easy to get. To qualify for the cash, states are being encouraged to remove laws limiting the expansion of public charter schools

Read more:

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1920299,00.html#ixzz0XdXGDuN5>

# **Race to the Top funding Criteria**

See folder



## State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant Program

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- Started in 2001, this program awards matching funds to states that offer per-pupil financial assistance to public charter schools to obtain facilities. The program is intended to encourage states to develop and expand per-pupil facilities aid programs and to share the costs associated with charter schools facilities funding.

## Eligibility for Facilities Incentive Grants

- To be eligible to receive a grant, a state must establish or enhance, and administer, a per-pupil facilities aid program for charter schools in the state. This per-pupil facilities aid program **must be specified in state law** and must provide annual per-pupil financing for charter school facilities.



# Federal Start Up Grants for Charters

(In recent years, State Applications for Federal Start up grants have been denied)



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# Concurrent Bill in House and Senate

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1. Remove Cap of 60
2. Add language to provide annual per- pupil financing for charter school facilities

(Center for Education Reform ranks Alaska's law 8th weakest of the nation's 41 charter laws, with an overall grade of D.)

# Some examples...Three State's Charter Facilities Language

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## California

*Facilities Assistance* Charter schools may lease space from public or private nonprofit, nonsectarian organizations with approval of Department of Education. Law provides lesser of up to \$1,200 dollars per pupil or 90% of actual lease cost.

## Utah

Utah State Legislature created and funded a program, *Local Replacement Revenue for Charter Schools*. This program's funds replace some of the local property tax revenues that are not available to charter schools. Ten percent of the funds this program provides to a charter school are dedicated to facility costs only.

# 3rd example

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## *District of Columbia*

- Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public School and Public Charter Schools Act, which serves as the basis for current funding procedures. Each of the District's public charter schools is entitled to a per-pupil facilities allowance in addition to funds the Uniform Per-Pupil Funding Formula provides.
- The Credit Enhancement Fund helps provide access to financing to District of Columbia public charter schools to acquire, renovate and construct school facilities by pledging collateral. The Fund also guarantees leases.

# **AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY**

**AMENDING MSB 19.08.020, LOCATION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS; AND MSB 19.080.23,  
SITE APPROVAL PROCESS FOR LEASE OR CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITIES.**

## **(F) Charter School Site Selection Process:**

- (1) A new or proposed Charter School shall follow the site approval process according to 19.08.023**
- (2) An existing Charter School that has been in existence for five years or more may request the borough and or the school district acquire permanent facilities for the Charter School. Permanent school facilities include providing for land and buildings as follows, but not limited to: a design build long term lease or lease purchase, use of an existing borough or school district facility, public financing and construction of a new facility or by private and or public grant funds for a new facility or upgrade of an existing facility.**