

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Interim:

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**Session:**

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REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER DISTRICT 14

SPONSOR STATEMENT

“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 us, it does not address a growing need for quality higher education in the state. Recent reports show Alaska’s students failing to graduate from secondary schools at an alarming rate. 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 learning institutions.

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 will annul, what is commonly known as the Blaine Amendment which was never passed in the U.S. Constitutional Congress. It did however make its way into several states’ Constitutions, including Alaska. This language hampers a quality education for our students by preventing them to excel at a school that meets their needs.

Moving this Resolution from this body to the voters will expand the opportunity for all students to attend a school that challenges them, regardless of family income. It takes into account state sponsored scholarships for all students. It says we support the best possible education for our youth at the best possible school, be that K-12, college, university or vocational program. Alaska has a wealth of educational opportunities that need our support. We do not need another Sheldon Jackson disaster.

Voting for HJR 16 and passing it along to the voters will show Alaskan’s that we are truly concerned that our children receive the best education opportunity available and we are willing to move forward in a positive educational decision process.

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