

Dear Representative Gaddis,

I am writing to ask you to oppose HJR1. I believe that we have an excellent constitution and do not support changing it at this time. I served four terms on the Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board and supported the development of 4 public charter schools and one magnet school. I recognize the importance of private schools to many families, but do not believe that public funds should be used for private schools, which set their own curricula, standards, and salaries for teachers, with no public process or review.

I support public school choice, despite the fact that often only children whose parents are able to provide transportation are able to attend those schools. The same is true for most private schools. The Alaska Constitution states that "all government.....is instituted solely for the good of the people as a whole", and Article 7 clearly defines appropriate use of public funds for public education. I do not support a change that would potentially siphon funds needed for public education to educational "businesses" or religious institutions. I also do not support a public vote on the complicated issue of school funding.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you.

Jennifer Schmidt

PO Box 10624

Fairbanks, Alaska, 99710

907-322-0387

From: Alison Arians

Sometimes when I've listened to the debate over this constitutional amendment over the past few days, I've wondered whether it's really worth arguing about.

"So what?" I think. If people want to risk sending their kids to unaccredited schools that might spring up to take advantage of their state-sourced funds, well, that's not my problem. Lots of people have had bad experiences in the Lower 48, with unscrupulous school owners taking off with their money, or just not educating their children properly.

But MY child will be safe in our public school system, with the many choices available in charter schools and alternative schools. Why should I bother weighing in?

The reason is that I have listened to what teachers have to say about this bill. I am not a teacher. I am not now, nor never have been a member of the National Education Association. But I have great respect for the teachers in our schools, who are doing a wonderful job educating our children.

Some legislators seem to think that teachers' and former teachers' testimony on this bill is worthless. Perhaps they think that teachers are just worried about losing their jobs, or losing money. But teachers

are the very people we SHOULD be asking about this bill. How will it affect our children? How will it affect ? The teachers in the classrooms know.

Let me remind you that for the last 30 years, teachers' salaries have remained somewhat the same. Yes, their health care costs have risen (though their current negotiated health care plan is quite modest), just as everyone else's has. But they are NOT in this job for the big bucks.

Instead, let's acknowledge their expertise, and be respectful of what teachers say. If we were instituting a change in oil policy, of course we would ask the oil companies their opinions.

When I listen to what the teachers are saying, I hear a resounding NO on this bill. Will have a negative impact on the kids with plenty of parental involvement and economic resources? That's not clear. What IS clear is the negative impact on the kids without it. Lots of kids don't have the option of having mom or dad driving them around town to a school other than their neighborhood school. And if resources are bled from those very neighborhood schools educating our poorest students, they are shortchanged even more.

Please be responsive to what our teachers have to say.

Thank you.

Dear Representatives Gattis and Drummond:

I am a working mother, married to a public school teacher, super voter, educated in the Anchorage School District, and a concerned citizen. I make my home in Spenard (Anchorage) and have one son attending kindergarten at Aquarian Charter School (my daughter is 2 and attends pre-school at Puffin Heights Montessori School.)

While I have a child attending a charter school program, I would like to express my support for funding ALL public schools in our State. I am concerned by proposals being put forward that would possibly reallocate funding to charter schools and away from neighborhood schools. I think all schools need a bigger "piece of the pie" and not just charter schools (I also think we need a bigger pie). I am very happy with Aquarian Charter School, but feel that we should look for solutions that benefit the entirety of our educational system. Much of the data shows, that specialty schools draw a population of families that are more affluent, have the luxury to be more engaged in their children's educational experience, and whose children will have better educational outcomes because of this. I worry that charter schools and other specialty schools become reservoirs of privilege. In fact, if we really support school choice we

would offer transportation to students to go to whichever school they want within their school district. I see this as a major barrier to some families who would perhaps like their children to attend a charter school or specialty school (but this is another issue for another time.)

An issue you could tackle with HR 278 is to, at a minimum, raise the BSA to keep up with inflation. If you are interested in being truly visionary and investing in our future leaders, workforce, Alaskans - I would suggest you raise the BSA beyond inflation proofing and really make an investment in Alaska's kids.

I strongly believe that every child in Alaska deserves the opportunity to attend a great, well-funded public school. You can make certain this is a reality by inflation-proofing the BSA!

Thank you in advance for your hard work on this issue. I appreciate your consideration of my views. I would like this e-mail recorded as testimony on HR278.

Kind Regards,
Tanya Iden
2303 McRae Rd. Unit #1
Anchorage, AK 99517
907-382-8555

Feb. 7, 2014

Dear Representative Gattis:

I am submitting this written testimony to the House Education Committee in opposition to HJR 1. The Alaskans who wrote our state Constitution and the Alaskans who voted for it got it right: public funds should be devoted to public schools. Changing the Alaska Constitution now to allow public money to be spent on private and religious schools is a radical idea being pushed by Outside interests. If this Legislature makes the mistake of passing these resolutions, Outside money will pour into the state to persuade Alaskans to vote against their proud heritage of public education. The campaign will be huge and divisive and we will all regret it. Why would we put our state through this when there is as yet no plan for how a voucher program would be developed or implemented? It makes no sense, and this Committee should reject this path and reject HJR 1.

Proponents of this resolution who tout the need for "school choice" are misleading Alaskans. We already have school choice within our high quality public schools. Alaska has one of the best public charter school statutes in the nation, and at least in the major towns there are right now rich and diverse school choices available to families within the public schools. I have an 8-year-old son in one of the Anchorage School District's public charter schools. He loves going to school every day, and my family is happy with his school.

HJR 1 would actually take us down a path in which the school choices we have now are diminished. If a voucher system were established, public money would be siphoned away from the public school districts to private and religious schools. With less money, it seems unlikely the school districts would be able to maintain the variety of schools that are available now, and so our public school choices would likely be reduced.

Private charter schools are not accountable to the public in the same way that public charter schools are, and there is something fundamentally wrong about giving away public money to schools that do not have to answer to the public through the public schools districts. Conversely, if a voucher system were established that imposed some controls on private schools receiving public money, then this would require another bureaucracy in addition to the existing public school system, requiring more money that would be siphoned out of the public schools.

The public schools are already hurting for funds. The solution to this is not to bleed away more money by opening the door for public money to flow to private schools. The solution, instead, is to preserve the existing diversity of school choice within the public schools by raising the base student allocation by a meaningful amount and inflation-proofing it so that school budgets are not constantly falling behind inflation.

Please say no to HJR 1.

Thank you for considering my views,

Rebecca Bernard

1210 N St.
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-244-3988

From: Katherine Hicks [<mailto:akhix49@gmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, February 07, 2014 10:02 AM
To: Rep. Lynn Gattis
Subject: HJR 1

Thank you for supporting HJR 1 and giving parents a choice in their children's future.

Katherine Hicks

Dear Representative,

Hello, I am a parent of a public school student. I follow issues that are near and dear to my family as well as to other families I know. This bill is one of those issues that I think is worth a discussion. It used to be part of American culture to be involved in "political" issues. I am grateful and excited to know it is still a part of Alaska's tradition to be involved in discussions with such importance as this! Don't just keep this discussion to the "political" leaders, let all Alaskans have a discussion and decide on the issues. All of Alaska's children are going to be affected by this, so every Alaskan should have the opportunity to vote on it.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Moore

Dear Representative Gaddis,

I do think there is a fiscal impact of this resolution in that it will decrease funding from current as well as optional types of schools which currently exist in the public schools. I have 2 grandchildren in kindergarten in Anchorage but live in Fairbanks. Both areas have received many new residents as a result of high energy costs especially in the bush. There are huge impacts, financial and cultural, for both urban and rural areas. In addition, please consider the following :

Please do not put SJR9 on the ballot for the following reasons:

1. The voters have already rejected holding another constitutional convention.
2. The constitution already upholds the separation of church and state and to privatize delivery of the educational mission will disrupt a currently existing public school system that focuses on the unique nature of the Alaskan culture in each region of far-flung Alaska. Students will be relegated to commercial curriculums which ignore the culture in which students most readily learn. Distance delivery does not allow for face to face interaction. Cognitive and affective objectives are hard to reach with such a system.
3. There are very complicated consequences to rural schools K-12 as well as 9-12 that would endanger the lower grade levels. By law the schools have to close without minimum numbers.
4. Residential schools would end up being set up in urban locations so that students would be able to attend colleges and other accredited post secondary facilities instead of being located along a more regional location which would provide easier access to student's families. Many families would move to accompany their students leading to the disappearance of villages.
5. Access to vouchers would decrease the amount of money for teaching materials, maintenance for current schools both urban and rural.
6. Transportation costs will add to the total cost of the program and from previous experience with the statewide boarding home program many will not be able to return to their families in their

villages during the winter and spring breaks. Many students were unhappy with this aspect of their experience.

7. Private corporations and companies are already allowed to facilitate partnerships with existing public schools and can deduct their contributions.
8. HB 278 and SB 139 need to consider the above to evaluate the impact of such a decision.

Thank you,

M. Carolyn Gray

399 Hillside Dr.

Fairbanks, AK 99712

From: Denita Higman [<mailto:DHigman@KPBSD.k12.ak.us>]

Sent: Friday, February 07, 2014 8:45 AM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis

Subject: Public funding for privat schools

I stand in firm opposition to the use of public funds to support private schools. Our public education system needs you undivided support. Thank you. Denita Higman

-----Original Message-----

From: Robert Jim [<mailto:ranmaxon@gci.net>]

Sent: Friday, February 07, 2014 7:31 AM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis

Subject: HJR-1

Please vote Yes on this, thank you

From: Barbara J Struble [<mailto:barbjst@gci.net>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 7:57 AM

To: Barbara J Struble

Subject: House Bill JHR1

Please support House Bill JHR1

If passed, this bill would allow the citizens of Alaska the opportunity to amend the constitution so that the

legislature can consider allowing educational funds for "Parental Choice" in education instead of the monopoly of public education.

Also, get education out of the "public" arena and privatize education in Alaska. Two great benefits to privatizing education:

1. This would stop federal the encroachment of common core into our educational system and
2. No more taxpayer support for obamatax. Teachers' unions could pay for their benefits.

Educational excellence through diversity and free enterprise and financial responsibility is the goal.

Thank you,

Peace,

Barbara J Struble

From: Elly Ray [<mailto:elly@goseward.com>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 6:50 AM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Lora Reinbold

Cc: Rep. Paul Seaton

Subject: tired of the attacks

Greetings,

I am a 2nd grade teacher at Seward Elementary. I joined the profession when I was nearly 50 years old after raising 7 children of my own. I love public school education, and I love my job. I cannot understand the attacks on this profession. Two items really upset me, and I hope you will vote no.

One is the is HJR1. I've no doubt you've seen these same points, but they are my thoughts as well. They are the reasons you should vote no.

- Public funds will be diverted from public schools to private/religious schools
- This will drain money from public schools
- These private/religious schools are not subject to state mandates including teacher certification requirements, special ed requirements
- Private/religious schools get to select who will attend and who they will not serve

The other is the tenure bill. Moving tenure further away from teachers is not necessary. It seems everyone is so focused on fixing the wrong end of broken. What's broken is the families and their children – not the teachers.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ellen Ray

2nd Grade Teacher

I am not in favor of state education funds going to private schools, nor an amendment to the state constitution to allow such.

I am also not in favor of the state spending billions to subsidize building of the gas pipeline. We shouldn't own an equity stake. If there is truly money to be made, the oil companies wouldn't want to share it with us. Taking our tax royalties in gas doesn't seem to be a good idea, either. I doubt there is the market for LNG that is being bantered about. This is another boondoggle that will benefit private enterprise at the expense of the taxpayers.

Jim White

1509 Toyon Way

Kenai, AK 99611

Seward, Alaska

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to testify against SRJ9 Amending the Constitution

I attended a seminar on innovation in schools in Denver. They had a private school presenting on their innovation in education. They made a statement that all of their students graduated from high school and most went on to college. During the question portion of their presentation I asked how they picked the students that attended the school. The answer surprised me, they only accepted students that were already high achievers and they had high standards. They stated that rejected students remained in public school.

A Voucher system could drain public school funding from all ready underfunded districts. We know that districts having students leave or move away are struggling to provide a quality education for the students remaining. I think that we would see that many more districts would suffer this fate as well. Private schools would not be held to the same standards as public ones, or required to take all students and that they would discriminate against students with special needs.

There is only so much money to go around in education funds. The funds need to remain where they can effectively serve the majority of students.

What we do with SRJ9 will dramatically change the balance in education of Alaska students, not for the better but regardless SRJ9 Amending the Constitution could have long term negative devastating for generation to come, with no hope to reverse SRJ9, I hope that SRJ9 goes no further than being currently reviewed.

I am testifying for myself and not for any association that I may belong to.

Respectively submitted

Charlene Arneson, Whittier

POB 778 Whittier, Alaska 99693

907-472-2441

HJR 1 is a resolution to change the State Constitution to end the separation of church and state and give money to religious school. I believe this violates the U.S. Constitution. If you are going to give the religious schools state money then start to tax their income.

Gary Miller
20135 Cohen Dr
Juneau, AK 99801-8211
(907) 789-3757
gmliller_juneauak@hotmail.com

TITLE: Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to state aid for education.

I agree wholeheartedly with a gentleman from Fairbanks who offered that the issue before the committee is whether this resolution should be presented to the public for their vote and I would assume the educational considerations of that addition to the ballot, Considering that the option of choice has not proven to be a detriment to public school; but has shown to benefit public schools statistically, now is the time to change the wording of the Alaska State Constitution and expand the options The issue of whether choice is a good idea and what the benefits are, if any, is a discussion for another day after the public has had a chance to express their opinion in that vote.

I know some historical details on how this phraseology about funds to alternative education came to be in the State Constitution; and it is time to change that wording. These days the interests of the public are becoming more and more critical to good government. There are no certainties of how the voters will decide when presented with the option of having a choice in education for their children. After the legislature has passed this resolution and committed to bringing it to the public will be the time for a serious and loud debate driven by the media and the NEA; and hopefully voters interested in choice for parents.

Please PASS this resolution and offer this discussion to the parents of children to be in those classrooms. Thank you for your time to vote for PASSING this resolution on for addition to the Fall 2014 ballot.

Thanks, Christine
Christine Hutchison

281 Juliussen Street

Kenai, AK 99611

907 252-7442

From: Maria Rensel [<mailto:shapeitup2013@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 10, 2014 2:05 PM
To: Rep. Pete Higgins
Subject: Strong Support For HJR 1

"...the first step the legislature could take to give up control. Give parents and the people of Alaska the chance to make decisions about what's best for our children, our Constitution and our State."

HJR 1 would put repealing the Blaine Amendment from the Alaska Constitution on the ballot in November.

The reason to repeal it is that the 1979 Sheldon Jackson decision interprets our State Constitution's Blaine language to mean that no public money, direct or indirect, could be paid to private institutions. When initiatives promoting school choice have come up some law makers have hidden behind the Blaine Amendment. At present there are numerous examples of funding being paid to private vendors, but only when school districts or the state get to choose.

In Fairbanks public money is used to bus kids to Monroe Catholic. From what I understand, the Mat-su school district has many examples of indirectly funding private vendors. The Governor's scholarship can be used for tuition at private colleges and universities.

Because the teachers union has a monopoly on education, costs are high and innovation and competition are not present in the education marketplace. For me it boils down to free market economics. I believe in individual liberty, voluntary exchange and free enterprise. Our state government is supporting a system of collectivism, central planning and cronyism which does not ultimately benefit students or the future economic outlook of Alaska. By 2024 ninety-nine percent of available revenue will be spent in just three areas, K-12 Education, Medicaid and retirement assistance.

Repeal of the Blaine Amendment would simply add one more option to education choice in Alaska, a choice that would foster innovation and competition which would in turn bring the costs of education down. It would break up the monopolistic teacher's union and allow funds to flow to private, free market schools.

Central Planning, like we have now, gives us programs like No Child Left Behind and entraps us (through promises of waiving NCLB) into programs like The Common Core. The SBAC sets up a wealth redistributing regional taxing authority. One state could be held liable for the budgetary shortfall of another state within the consortium.

Many teachers and professional public educators testified over the last few days that School Choice would draw dollars away from public schools. They testified against vouchers and said that parental involvement was a key indicator of the success of a child. But because parents are not professional teachers they were not going to be able to provide their children with an adequate education.

Some even went as far as to say that School Choice has been tried and that it doesn't work. We know from the experiences of many other states that this is simply not true. See: <http://akchoice.org/> and www.edchoice.org <<http://www.edchoice.org>>

Many independent home school parents believe that the Blaine amendment protects them from government intrusion. I don't think this is true and my belief is supported by the closing comments of Sen. Mike Dunleavy in last week's Senate Finance Committee hearing for public testimony. Listen to the committee meeting here <<http://www.360north.org/gavel-archives/>> .

Alaska has the most strict interpretation of the Blaine Amendment largely due to activist judges on its Supreme Court. HJR 1 doesn't ask the legislature to repeal the Blaine Amendment, it simply asks the legislature to allow the people to vote whether or not we want to amend the Constitution.

In my testimony last week I said that voting for SJR 9 was the first step the legislature could take to give up control. Give the parents and the people of Alaska the chance to make decisions about what's best for our children, our Constitution and our State.

I hope you'll help me support the two resolutions SJR 9 and HJR 1 and vote to repeal the Blaine Amendment.

Maria Rensel

1676 Taroka Drive

Fairbanks, Alaska 99709

From: Donna Matthews [<mailto:dwmattthews@gci.net>]

Sent: Friday, February 07, 2014 8:01 AM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis

Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Gattis,

You are the steward of our constitution. You vowed to "support and defend the Constitution of the State of Alaska." The authors wrote a constitution that would not invite or require the frequent tampering that has made monsters of many state constitutions. You should not recommend changing it without dire need or grave injustice needing remedy. Constitutional matters are of a fundamental importance.

Does the issue of funding private schools meet either of those standards?

Is the need dire?

Public schools are doing amazing work in Alaska. Schools of choice exist wherever the population permits. Mat Su Superintendent Dr Deena Paramo testified to the Senate Finance Committee on Feb 3 about the extensive options available in her district. Other districts also give choices that that meet diverse student needs.

Is there a grave injustice that needs remedy through constitutional change?

Are public schools perfect? Do they have all the tools they need to educate our Alaska children? No! A major path to good education is appropriate funding. If this were not true, then why would supporters of SJR 9 want a funding route for private education?

And I ask you to consider what is popularly known as the "law of unintended consequences." If the constitution is amended as proposed:

- * Will all that follows this amendment be to the benefit of the education of the children of Alaska?
- * How will you know giving public money to a private school has improved an Alaska child's education?
- * Will you establish and fund standards the schools must meet with oversight of operations?
- * How will you guarantee that public funds do not also become support for private school construction and transportation?

* Will changing the constitution lead to abuses or scandals as other states have experienced when profit-making private education companies divert public funds to themselves or their stock-holders?

Is our State Constitution now inadequate for the task of supporting education?

Consider the minutes of its founders.

The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention show that an unsuccessful motion was made to delete entirely the direct benefit prohibition of article VII, section 1. By rejecting this proposal the convention made it clear that it wished the constitution to support and protect a strong system of public schools. Other authorities have also suggested that a constitutional provision barring aid to all private schools serves to enforce the separation of church and state without requiring executive or judicial inquiry into the sectarian affiliation of particular schools, and furthermore disengages the state from the undesirable task of withholding benefits solely on the basis of religious affiliation.

Delegate John B Coghill, supporter of article VII, Section 1, specifically expressed the thought that the amount of tax dollars available for the support of public schools might be lessened if public funds were used to support private schools.

Please reject HJR 1. The need for this drastic change does not exist except in the hyperbole of its sponsors. The reasons to make this drastic change lack substance and assurances. Please support public education.

Donna Matthews
8916 Gloralee St.
Anchorage AK 99502

-----Original Message-----

From: Dave Atcheson [<mailto:daveatcheson@hotmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 8:25 PM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Paul Seaton

Subject: No public funds for private education

I am writing to ask you not to support public funds being used for private education, and certainly not to support a constitutional amendment allowing it.

Thank you,

Dave Atcheson
P.O. Box 145
Sterling, AK 99672
907-398-4216

-----Original Message-----

From: Michele Vasquez [<mailto:michele.s.simmons@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 7:25 PM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis

Cc: Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson;
Rep. Harriet Drummond

Subject: re: HJR 1

Dear Chairman Gattis, Vice Chairman Reinbold and other members of the House Education Committee:

I wish to express my strong opposition to SJR 9, which would allow our Constitution to be amended in order to utilize public funds for private/religious schools.

It is unbelievable that this notion is even being entertained at a time when school budgets all over our state are strapped, continuously slashed and can barely hold on because of extraneous impositions on state coffers. Every child in this state should have access to public education. There are far too many examples across this country where public funds have been diverted to "vouchers" for private education, and the results have been an abysmal failure. Private/religious schools do not have to meet the same requirements as public schools.

Public dollars should not support for-profit educational facilities.

It is fundamentally wrong.

When the Alaska Constitution was written, it was a promise to all Alaskans that our children would receive a public education utilizing public funds. It has worked extremely well so why change it now? We must re-focus our efforts and dollars on the public school system in Alaska. I urge you to oppose SJR 9 and encourage you to work hard to secure the best possible public education for our children in this great state.

Sincerely,
Michele Vasquez
PO Box 1150
Kenai, AK 99611

-----Original Message-----

From: Maria Rensel [<mailto:shapeitup2013@gmail.com>]

Sent: Monday, February 10, 2014 2:05 PM

To: Rep. Pete Higgins

Subject: Strong Support For HJR 1

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ultimately benefit students or the future economic outlook of Alaska. By 2024 ninety-nine percent of available revenue will be spent in just three areas, K-12 Education, Medicaid and retirement assistance.

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Some even went as far as to say that School Choice has been tried and that it doesn't work. We know from the experiences of many other states that this is simply not true. See: <http://akchoice.org/> and www.edchoice.org <<http://www.edchoice.org>>

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I hope you'll help me support the two resolutions SJR 9 and HJR 1 and vote to repeal the Blaine Amendment.

Maria Rensel

1676 Taroka Drive

Fairbanks, Alaska 99709

Contemplations on Attempts to Amend Alaska's Constitution

Feb6 by Marc Grober

Jack Balkin, in his text "Living Originalism", suggests that the US Constitution provides an opportunity for the public to daily redeem itself, to reconnect and re-establish our commitment to a way of life despite ever changing circumstances, to pursue a more perfect union. He goes on to say,

The Constitution is an intergenerational project of politics, and the generations of We the People are the participants in the project. The Constitution contains commitments that We the People have only partially lived up to, promises that have yet to be fulfilled, and it is the task of each generation to do its part, however great or small, to help fulfill them and to achieve a more perfect union in its own day. The participants in the project will argue among themselves about how to continue the project; they will make mistakes and commit injustices, but this by itself does not detract from the point of the enterprise. As the Talmud says, we are not required to complete the great Work, but neither are we free to refrain from it.”

If you read the proceedings of the Alaska Constitutional Convention ([click here to listen here to Senator Gardner reading from the archives](#)) you can still hear the same sentiments echoing off the chamber walls as our Founders strove to improve on what they found, so as to adopt a Constitution for their day:

“I believe we should take direct steps to maintain a free public education not encroached upon by any quarter. I think it might be well to bring out in the argument for the direct or indirect benefit of public funds for education is the matter that is now being faced in Europe and in particular in the Netherlands where they have what is called the form of educational pacification, where the government is splitting the tax dollar among some 500 different church groups providing for a parochial school benefit on an indirect basis, and in a community where there is maybe 500 school children there will be as high as seven or eight small schools scattered out throughout the community, not providing for the fullest benefit in the educational field as far as having a good complete centralized program. I think that sectarianism segregation in our educational system is bad for the children. I do not deny the right of people to have their own schools. However, I think that we should always look to the interest of the founders of our nation when they brought about the separation of church and state.” Jack Coghill Floor speech quoted in full with cite below.

Constitutions are, as Jefferson might suggest, sacred not so much for their text as for the compact they represent, our oath that as a society we will strive for the common good. That sense of responsibility is in fact the reason that there are among us those who signed our Constitution who have argued that no matter what else, the power to amend our Constitution should never be used in such a way as to rend asunder that which the Constitution has brought together (see quotes of Jack Coghill, Sr. and Vic Fischer, below.) Unfortunately, the Alaska Senate is engaged in just such a consideration this session.

Let there be no doubt that Joint Resolution 9 is not about rectifying historical faux pas, nor is it about rectifying an “old mistake”. But the underlying purpose, as distressing as that is, almost pales before the grief that this resolution is intended to bring to the people of this State. For this is in a very real sense a cynical ploy; an effort to do just what we should never do. This is an effort to drive a wedge through the heart of Alaska. This is designed to promote the most

vitriolic clash in Alaska's history, to rend our very soul in twain, and is is being done, believe it or not, in the name of Alaskan youth. For shame.

There are Alaska Senators who believe that they should use the Constitution as a political weapon, a device with which to promote their political agenda, not because it is in the best interests of all, but because they think they can get one over on someone else and get their way. In a 1996 article for the *Atlantic Monthly* about Jefferson and about the true nature of America's "civil religion" (a far cry from the Protestant intolerance informing the positions of many in Juneau today), O'Brien states, "In an address at Michigan State University on May 5, 1995, President Bill Clinton warned right wing militias not to attempt to 'appropriate our sacred symbols for paranoid purposes.'" And that it is what we face today.

But the Alaska Legislature does not represent the interests of some Alaskans. It represents the interests of ALL Alaskans, and I have to ask the Legislature, in all sincerity, if they truly believe the horrific politicization of education that this resolution would unleash is going to benefit Alaska.

We do not live in a democracy. Indeed our founding fathers were terrified of democracy as well they should be, schooled as they were in Greek Philosophy. Instead they fashioned a republic specifically designed to prevent demagoguery. Specially fashioned to insure that popular passion would not result in momentary advantage. In other words, to protect us from what the Legislature is here asked to unleash.

We understand now that JR9 is about holding hostage the students of this State for the purpose of promoting a highly polarizing effort to divert public funds to private purposes, among those purposes, religious education. It is about opening Alaska media to millions of dollars of outside advertising intended to destroy public employee unions and public education. It is about the Texification of Alaskan education.

I call on all Alaska Senators to uphold that redemption offered by our Constitution, and acknowledge that the Alaska Constitution, that organ of unification, must not be used as a means of shattering the public trust or confidence in its public institutions.

Resources

Balkin, J.M. *Living Originalism*. Harvard University Press, 2011. 75
<http://books.google.com/books?id=khidNUWpY8UC&pg=PA75#v=onepage&q&f=false>

O'Brien, Conor Cruise. "Thomas Jefferson: Radical and Racist." *Atlantic Monthly*, 1996. Accessed March 27, 2013.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/96oct/obrien/obrien.htm>.

“But in his opinion, some of the more than 20 amendments have been political in nature, and unnecessary. “It’s not that the Constitution is a holy document. It’s that it has proven very effective.”
<http://www.litsite.org/index.cfm?section=Reading-and-Writing&page=Pass-The-Word&viewpost=2&ContentId=1597>

“My inclination is to leave it alone,” Coghill says. “It’s a real simple and well put together document.”
http://www.anchorapress.com/news/constitutional-questions—in-you-can-vote-for-a/article_012327eb-76e8-5a72-9b5d-2ec4b55c146d.html

“COGHILL: Speaking in defense of my proposed amendment, I would first like to say I am very prone to the problem of putting any religious persecution into the Constitutional Convention or among the delegates. It would be the same thing as me trying to convince Mr. Ralph Rivers of the principles of the Republican party, and he in turn of the party he belongs to. I don’t believe that is the problem at all. I think that they certainly have a right, a private right or a religious right, or a parochial right under our constitution to have schools. However, I believe that the way our government was set up 175 years ago, that the founders felt that public education was necessary to bring about a form of educating the whole child for civic benefit through a division of point of the home taking a certain part of the child, the church taking a certain part of this education, and the government or state through public schools taking the other part. I adhere to that principle, and I might say that I am the president of the Association of Alaska School Boards and one of the formers of that twelve-point program we developed in Anchorage last October. I think that the problem could probably be well misconstrued here as to the motive and intent. However, I feel that the intent of public education is primarily a state function and does not belong to any private or any one particular group, whether they are in the minority or the majority. I believe we should take direct steps to maintain a free public education not encroached upon by any quarter. I think it might be well to bring out in the argument for the direct or indirect benefit of public funds for education is the matter that is now being faced in Europe and in particular in the Netherlands where they have what is called the form of educational pacification, where the government is splitting the tax dollar among some 500 different church groups providing for a parochial school benefit on an indirect basis, and in a community where there is maybe 500 school children there will be as high as seven or eight small schools scattered out throughout the community, not providing for the fullest benefit in the educational field as far as having a good complete centralized program. I think that sectarianism segregation in our educational system is bad for the children. I do not deny the right of people to have their own schools. However, I think that we should always look to the interest of the founders of our nation when they brought about the separation of church and state. The problem was brought, and it was brought about by Thomas Jefferson quite well when he said, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in the state of civilization, it expects something that never shall be”. Therefore out of his deliberations with John Madison they brought about a form of free public education starting in Virginia, and it has come forward ever since under the intent of having the tax dollar only brought to the public educational system. I know there have been many law cases on it, Supreme Court rulings and what not, and I think that the matter still is divided as far as the general public is concerned, as between the sects of religion and not on the principle of preserving the free public education as

an instrument of the state.” From the Minutes of the 48th Day of the Alaska Constitutional Convention Accessed at <http://www.law.alaska.gov/doclibrary/conconv/48.html>

My name is Jason Hofacker. I am a parent of 4 children and I live in Senator Fairclough's district. I support SJR9 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have the opportunity to vote and decide what is best for our children and their education. I know you have seen the polls that show many Alaskans support this so let's put it in the hands of the voters to discuss and decide.

Thanks

Jason Hofacker

Rep. Lynn Gattis, Please oppose HJR-1 and support Alaska Public Schools.

Thank

you, Shirley Marshall, Tok, Alaska

My name is Chris Spears and I'm a public school parent and concerned Alaskan who cares about our kids. I support SJR9 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can vote on it. It is an American tradition to have choices and discussion. How could you not support school choice?

I would like to encourage you to support HJR1 for school choice. As a parent with 3 kids, issues about kids is more important to me then whether or not marijuana should be legalized. If you can place marijuana or oil issues on the ballot, then surely you can choose for education issues on the ballot. as an Alaskan, we need to have choices for our kids and the education that they have. You are in Juneau because people in Alaska voted you in. Represent the thousands of parents instead of the small population that really want marijuana on the ballot because they can get stoned and it won't be illegal anymore. We are raising the next generation. We are leaving a legacy for our children. Do we really want to be remembered as giving them a gateway drug because our President sees no problem with it? Or do we want to leave a legacy that is going to have generational effects on our children and their children....

You decide, but please Vote in support of HJR1

Thank you,

Dave and Hester Sanders

My Name is Lorie Stoorza and I'm a public school parent and I care about our kids. I live in Representative Gabrielle LeDoux District.

Please send this bill out of committee now. Since this will affect all of the children in Alaska, all Alaskan's should have the opportunity to vote on this, instead of just a few people making this decision for our children.

Again I am asking that you sent HJR1 out of committee as it is a great opportunity to further the discussion about what's best for the children of Alaska.

Thank You

Lorie Stoorza

907-717-9036

I'm an Alaskan who cares about my child's education and I support SJR 9 and HJR 1. It is critically important that our children have the best education possible, and these bills would help do that. Alaskans deserve a chance to vote on these issues.

Please vote to move this bill forward.

Joseph Kurber

Chief Executive Officer

Chena Hills LLC

(907) 978-9486

Thank you for the work that you are accomplishing through the legislative process. I live in Lance Pruitt's district. I would like to express my support for HJR 1 - the School Choice Bill. As a parent of four children who will be in school next year, I would like the opportunity to vote on this issue. Please vote yes and give the parents in Alaska the opportunity to express their opinions. Thank you for your consideration,

Sheri Pankion

From: John and Kathleen Tappel [<mailto:jktappel@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 12:52 PM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis

Subject: HJR 1

As a retired educator of children for 19 years and a concerned parent and grandparent I urge you to support HJR 1, to allow for more choices, more freedoms to Alaska's parents and guardians of children. I support school choice going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion about what's best for our kids this year and vote on it in November.

Competition naturally makes for better products and services. The same has proven true in education.

I urge you to support HJR 1! The Polls show that Alaskans do support it and want the chance to vote on it in November.

Thank you,

Kathleen R Tappel

Anchorage

District 25

From: Jen Foggie [<mailto:JenF@mooreheating.com>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 12:37 PM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond



Subject: HJR1 School choice

Hello, my name is Jen Foggie and I'm a concerned Alaskan who cares about our kids.

I'm in favor of HJR1 getting out of the House Education Committee, so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion this year and vote on it in November. It's part of our American and Alaskan tradition to have choices and to have a discussion. All of Alaska's children are affected by this, so all Alaskans should have the opportunity to vote on it. Alaska is obligated by its constitution to provide every student with a public education. It must be prepared to educate all students—including those who are now in private schools. So which kids are we NOT going to educate? Where are the polls to show that Alaskans do not support school choice? I know of three polls in the last three years, all of which show that Alaskans do support it, and want an opportunity to vote on it. Send this bill out of committee now, so we can get a chance to vote on it. I encourage you to vote yes on HJR1 as soon as possible. It is a wonderful opportunity to further the discussion about what's best for our kids. Why would someone not be for more choices and possibilities? How could more choices and possibilities not help our children? The main issue is to allow this to go forward so the people can have a vote. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely, Jen Foggie

From: Patrick LeMay [<mailto:patrick.lemay@lemayengineering.com>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 12:25 PM

To: patrick.lemay@lemayengineering.com

Subject: HJR1

Representative:

Good afternoon. I'm Patrick LeMay and am a parent of a high schooler from the East Anchorage Area. I'm in support of HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can choose and vote. My wife and I are owners of LeMay Engineering & Consulting, Inc. and

are both UAA School of Engineering graduates. We have employed five UAA/UAF Engineering Graduates over the last eight years in business. In three short years, our son will be attending UAA School of Engineering.

We believe that school competition is what is best for our Alaska kids. Along with other school parents, we are very active in our son's school by volunteering our time in sports and music activities. We have skin in the game both as parents and employers. Also, I am a US Marine Combat Veteran and fought to protect Americans' rights. One of the rights that I fought for is for Americans to vote on issues rather than have special interest groups (NEA and NAACP) cram their viewpoints through as policy. My Wife and I would like to have a say at the voting booth in November as to how our future employees are educated. All parents should have a vote in what type of education their children receive. Please let Alaskans vote on this issue.

Patrick M. LeMay, PE

President/CEO

LeMay Engineering & Consulting, Inc.

(907) 250-9038

Representative Gattis,

Although I'm not yet a parent, I would like to let you know how incredibly important it is to me that I choose where my child will attend school in the future. Wouldn't you say that the future of our nation lies in the hands of our children? I am in favor of School Choice for Parents, and I would venture to say that many of Alaska's parent's would agree. Thank you for your time, and have a wonderful day.

Warmly,

Amanda N. Runkle

From: Janna Leight [<mailto:jleight77@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 11:35 AM

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis

Cc: Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond

Subject: The School Choice Bill (HJR 1)

My name is Janna Leight, and I am a music teacher in the city of Anchorage. I live in Senator Pruitt's district.

As an American, I enjoy and exercise my right to vote whenever an election is held. I believe that it is every American's right, as well as a tremendous responsibility, to express themselves with a ballot box. I believe that it is my job as a contributing citizen to learn about issues and express my opinion by my vote.

Hearing, considering, and following through with what the people want is the primary responsibility of those in public office. Your job as our representatives is to allow us citizens the opportunity to vote on important public issues. Issues that affect all Alaskans.

That is why I am in favor of HJR1. Getting this on to the ballot for the November election provides Alaskans with the opportunity to discuss and make their voices heard. If we are in favor of educating all Alaskan students, both in public and private schools, we then owe it to our students and parents by allowing them the chance to speak up by voting in November.

Not providing Alaskans a chance to vote on such an important issue is to deny your responsibility to the people. I am one of many Alaskans who believe that HJR1 will be a tremendous benefit to both parents and students, regardless of whether that student is in public or private education. Several polls have indicated that Alaskans want this chance to vote on the issue of school choice.

Please allow the School Choice Bill (HJR1) to go to ballot for this November's election. Thank you for your time.

Representative Gattis,

I am asking you to vote yes on HJR 1 to allow the bill to go forward. I believe a healthy, statewide discussion of this vitally important topic is critical. Let the bill go forward so the arguments can be presented and the people can decide. The way the current system is set up is literally a form of economic discrimination against the lower class who can't afford the option of paying tuition for the education of their children the way essentially ALL of our elected officials in Washington do.

Let the people decide.

Tom Cobaugh

Anchorage

Hello,

My name is Stephanie Gaiser and I am a mother of two school age children in the Anchorage School District. I believe that allowing bill HJR 1 to be passed so that it will allow voters to voice their opinion on the November ballot is extremely important for Alaska's future. Competition has proven to benefit

consumers, just imagine the possibilities that Alaska's children will have if schools are competing to be the best. Our children are Alaska's future, please allow Alaskans to vote on HJR 1.

Thank you for your time,

Stephanie

Please give the citizens of AK the opportunity to vote on HJR 1. We will most likely be voting on the marijuana issue, shouldn't we give our children's education choice the same opportunity?
Thanks for your consideration. Mark Runkle

Please give the citizens of AK the opportunity to vote on HJR 1. We will most likely be voting on the marijuana issue, shouldn't we give our children's education choice the same opportunity? Thanks for your consideration.

I want encourage you to support HJR1 to go to the ballot. Parents need a greater say in the education of their children. Please allow the people the opportunity to voice their opinion on this issue, not through polls but through the voting booth.

Thank you
Tony Smith
Anchorage

My name is William Leight and I'm a concerned Alaskan, (of 45 years) and a grandparent. I have raised three children in Anchorage. I now have three grandchildren, here in Anchorage, going through the school system and I'm an Alaskan who cares about all our kids.

It's part of our American and Alaskan tradition to have choices. Don't keep this discussion to yourselves. All of Alaska's children are affected by this, so all Alaskans should have the opportunity to vote on it. We vote on everything imaginable, here in Alaska.....including pot. We certainly should have the opportunity to vote for the choices of our children and grandchildren. I support HJR1 going on the ballot.

Thank you for your time and devotion to all Alaskans.

William Leight

2400 Scarborough Dr

Anchorage, Alaska 99504

I am a 43 year Alaskan resident and a retired Anchorage School District teacher. I fully support HJR1 and I believe all Alaskans should have the opportunity to vote on this issue. As our representatives, no matter where you stand on this issue, you should allow the people of Alaska to decide for themselves if this is something they want for their state. I appreciate your careful consideration of this issue and I look forward to voting on this issue in the near future.

Dawn Giroux

representative gattis, please move this bill out of committee and give the voters of Alaska a chance to discuss and vote. Choice here in Alaska can only help our most important asset..

our children. Please do your job and put this out for a vote.

thank you joyce zerkel

My name is Ben Smith and I am a concerned Alaskan parent who cares about our kids. I support HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion this year and vote on it in November. HJR1 is a wonderful opportunity to further the discussion about what's best for our kids.

It's part of our American and Alaskan tradition to have choices and to have a discussion. Don't keep this discussion to yourselves. All of Alaska's children are affected by this, so all Alaskans should have the opportunity to vote on it. Why would someone not be for more choices and possibilities? How could more choices and possibilities not help our children? Don't be afraid of the possibilities. That's why we sent you to Juneau—to make sure that Alaskans like me are represented.

There is almost no fiscal impact attached to this resolution. With the many challenging fiscal issues facing Alaska, just pass this and get back to the real business of the House Education Committee. 2014 is the "Education Session." Passage of this gives legislators many more options in trying to ensure that Alaskan kids get the best education possible. Competition naturally makes for better products and services. The same has proven true in education. Don't be afraid of competition—it's working in other states.

As a constituent, I am looking forward to having this discussion. You have likely seen the polls so keep in mind that I am one of *many, many Alaskan* families who support this resolution. I know of three polls in the last three years, all of which show that Alaskans **do** support it, and want an opportunity to vote on it.

We voted to send *you* down there. Send this bill out of committee now, so *we* can get a chance to vote on it. Don't stand in the way or we will remember that you did. If HJR1 dies in your committee or your body, you are on the hook for prohibiting Alaskans from having an important discussion that we want to have. While we see things like oil taxes and marijuana go on the ballot, how could you tell us that we don't have the right to have a discussion about the future of our children?

Anyone who doesn't support this will be shown to be on the wrong side of history because all indications are that this is what Alaskans want. Which side of history will you be on?

Thank you for your time and representing us. I trust you will represent us well.

Ben Smith

-----Original Message-----

From: Mike Coons [<mailto:mcoons@mtaonline.net>]

Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 8:33 AM

To: Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Doug Isaacson; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Lynn Gattis; Nancy Manly; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Wes Keller

Subject: HJR Testimony

Nancy, this is updated from the first testimony one I sent to you.

My name is Mike Coons from Lazy Mountain, Palmer area. I am speaking forMy name is Mike Coons from Lazy Mountain, Palmer area. I am speaking for myself and Citizen Initiatives.

Convention of States and Compact for America, along with Citizen Initiatives are all strong patriot organizations who have a valid concern about a run-a-away Congress and Judiciary. Thus we are all working toward the use of Article V of the US Constitution in a save and consistent manner to propose amendment(s) which will strengthen our Constitution, nation and to stop the over-reach, mandates and Executive Orders that are rapidly approaching that of a dictator.

That said, I would be remiss in not pointing out our major difference with COS that appears in this resolution, that of subject, vs specific amendment. Article V is specife in "2/3rds of the several states, shall call a convention for proposing amendments. What is before you are "impose fiscal restraints on the federal government, limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, and limit the terms of office of federal government officials. In conversations with Don Brand, the intent of the resolution is to be able to propose multiple amendments off of each subject.

Citizen Initiatives major concern is that Congress will disallow this resolution because it is too general in nature.

I have sent to Representative Wilson and Keller documentation and e-mails on this matter along with a white paper outlining the pro's and con's of COS' methodology. Sadly, I do not see that in the resolution packet but hope that all committee members will have a chance to review that.

In closing, Citizen Initiatives and myself are for using Article V in a safe and clear manner and that will get a convention through Article V so that We the People can get our nation back and away from the precipitate of a dictatorship. We have specific calls for specific amendment that we tried to put forward this year, sadly not enough time. We will be putting forward our State Sovereignty and States Rights Amendment and Countermand Amendment for the 2015 session.

Mike Coons
Lazy Mountain
745-6779

From: Jennifer LeMay [<mailto:jlemay@lemayengineering.com>]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 10:16 AM
To: Jennifer LeMay
Subject: Please pass HJR1 out of committee

Representative:

Please support HJR1. This bill will allow the voters (not special interest groups) to decide on what school is best for educating their children. As a concerned parent and Alaska super-voter, I am in full support of HJR1.

I listened to three plus hours of public testimony last week regarding SJR9 and was so disappointed that a large, powerful special interest group (NEA) hijacked the testimony. NEA members were not speaking for themselves but were instead speaking union doctrine. The testimony was not representative of a random sampling of Alaska voters (i.e., recent polls show that a majority of Alaskans are in support of a public vote) and illustrates why a vote of the people is needed. I urge you to stand with the Senators of this great state and pass HJR1 out of committee. The people of Alaska need to vote on this important issue.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Jennifer LeMay, PE, PMP

From: Stephanie Duchatellier [<mailto:sduchatellier06@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 1:27 PM
To: Rep. Lynn Gattis
Subject: SJR9...Supporting a Public Discussion on School Choice for Alaska's Children

My name is Stephanie Duchatellier, from Anchorage, AK. I am a mother dedicated to seeing my children succeed. And giving them the best possible educational opportunities is a part of that dedication and my parental responsibility.

I support SJR9 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have an opportunity to openly discuss the pros/cons of school choice for our Alaskan children. Although SJR9 doesn't have any programs attached, it could open the door to benefitting many children so I urge you to put this on the ballot for Alaska's voters. As a constituent, I am looking forward to having this discussion. I know that I am not alone in this desire. I know of three polls in the last three years, all of which show that Alaskans DO support it, and want an opportunity to vote on it.

School Choice **For Parents** needs a statewide discussion because it is so important in allowing parents to have a say in their child's education. Polls show that the general public is in favor of parents having school choice. Unless something like school choice happens, many lower income single parent families will not have a choice for their children. It is time for parents to have a choice.

SJR9 is a wonderful opportunity to further the discussion about what's best for our kids. Why would someone not be for more choices and possibilities? How could more choices and possibilities not help our children? Competition naturally makes for better products and services. The same has proven true in education.

While we see things like oil taxes and legalizing marijuana go on the ballot, how could you tell us that we don't have the right to have a discussion about the future of our children?

I urge you to let Alaskans decide, through a public discussion and vote, whether SJR9 is right for Alaska's children.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Duchatellier

A mother and constituent