

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:03 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

FYI *j

From: Sarah and Steve Masterman [<mailto:ssmasterman@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:00 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Click.bishop@akleg.gov
Subject: HJR1

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to express my opposition to public funding for private and parochial schools. I believe that diverting public money toward these schools will do our state and our students a great disservice. These schools are not required to provide the same services and protections that public schools provide. Very few of these schools provide services to students with disabilities. They can pick and choose the students they serve, or can make students who don't fit their agenda feel unwelcome or unwanted. Using public funding to allow students to attend these schools would lead to a fracturing our our school population and thus of our community.

In addition to my practical concerns about the unintended consequences of HJR1, I also have ethical concerns. I believe that all parents should have the right to educate their children about their own religion and to educate their children in the way that they desire. I don't believe that the state government should be funding or subsidizing religious education. There are reasons why our constitution advocates a separation of the functions of the state and of religion. Using public funds for religious schools jeopardize that separation.

Please join my in opposing HJR1.

Sincerely,

Sarah Swift Masterman
PO Box 296
Ester, AK 99725

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:04 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Support for HJR1

FYI*j

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

From: Dr. K [<mailto:drkrichbaum@alask.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:10 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Support for HJR1

Dear Representative,

My name is Charles Krichbaum, D.C. and I live in Representative Bob Lynn's district. I have lived in the anchorage area for over 32 years. Please support HRJ1 and allow freedom of choice for parents to send their children to the schools that best supports their needs.

Thanks Chuck

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:05 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

*j

From: Margo Waring [<mailto:margowaring@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:44 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR 1

Member of the House Judiciary Committee,

Please do not pass HJR 1 from committee. Our constitution is right to separate church (mosque, temple, synagogue) from state . Public funds should be spent for public education.

Margo Waring

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:06 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: No on SJR9/HJR1

*j

From: lynn timer [mailto:lynn@alaska.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: No on SJR9/HJR1

Dear Representatives,

I have been an Alaskan since 1975. Our children have been educated in Alaska, and my grandchildren are now in Alaskan schools. My husband and I and many of our family members are regular church attenders.

Although I understand the difficulties for parents who prefer private schools whether or not it be for religious reasons, **I strongly stand that vouchers are not the choice. As representatives of our remarkable and beloved state, I want you to invest in educational strategies that work and I want you to maintain our esteemed state constitution that separates church and state.**

As I have looked into this issue I have several concerns including but not limited to:

Funding is diminished for public schools and learning is impacted for the majority of students especially those who are already at a disadvantage.

There are already excellent options in the public schools a family can make to meet the educational needs of their children.

Public schools are the cornerstone of American democracy. Parents have an opportunity to voice/vote in parent groups, parent site councils, vote for school board members. Graduation rates in Alaska are improving.

Private schools can choose which students they accept and dismiss. There is NO state or federal oversight of educational standards and safeguards.

Statistics in the lower 48 indicate performance has not improved, nor graduation rates.

There are other ways that private schools can exist as a viable option that do not involve changing the state constitution.

Thank you for your work.

Sincerely,

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:06 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Please let us vote on HJR1. from the Butcher's

*j

From: Joseph Butcher [<mailto:jabutcher@alaska.edu>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please let us vote on HJR1. from the Butcher's

My name is Joseph Allan Butcher, and I would like to be involved as much as I am able in following and supporting THE SCHOOL CHOICE BILL (HJR1). It is my understanding that this comes before THE HOUSE JUDICIAL MEMBERS on the 19th of Feb. I may have called in the past but it is very important to me that you know just how important this matter is to the Butcher's. and even though you may not be the representative of my area on the west side of town, you will be representing the will of our choice. Please vote yes on this HJR1. Simply if you say yes you allow us to vote. Please let us vote. As a father of five and home schooling in partnership with the ASD, it is becoming more and more evident that we do need choices, more choices to make the difference for our kids. Thank you.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:07 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 - Please vote NO

*J

From: Lisa Worl [<mailto:lmworljinu@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:29 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz
Subject: HJR1 - Please vote NO

The primary reason I'm in opposition to HJR1 is it opens the door to allow vouchers and the diversion of valuable state dollars away from public schools. Vouchers cost tax payers money, allow private schools to receive public funds without accountability, and diverts funds from schools that serve all children.

In a time when school districts across the state have been making painful cuts due to flat funding, it is counter-productive for our state to consider spending additional dollars rather than provide more for what we know works in education -- reduce class size, improve the effectiveness of teachers through professional development and provide programs for the struggling students. School districts statewide have been and continue to work diligently. In Juneau, we've made great strides in improving our student's learning and on-time graduation rates from 70 to 79% last year. What we need now is a commitment from our legislature to support our schools that serve all children not constitutional changes that would take away resources from our schools.

Public dollars belong in public schools where there is accountability. Our school board members are elected by our community, our teachers are required to be certified and meet high teaching standards, our school curriculum must meet core standards, and our budgets and meetings are public and open for all to provide input and scrutiny. Our public schools serve all students. In the larger school districts, where most of the private schools are located, they already offer alternative programs such as Montessori, charter, and CHOICE and CARES which offer extra support to students who need more help to graduate.

Research has shown that vouchers cost tax payers money. Alaska is not the first state to consider allowing public dollars to go to private schools. States that have vouchers programs have seen increased costs. They not only cost more but, again, they take public dollars away from public schools.

I oppose HJR1 and I ask that you please vote "No". Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lillian M. Worl
9159 Wolfram Way
Juneau, AK 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:07 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Brenda Riley [<mailto:brendariley81@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:05 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR 1 and urge you to vote NO.

Brenda Riley
PO Box 71618
Fairbanks, AK 99707

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Chris Spears [<mailto:chris.spears204@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:26 AM
Subject: HJR1

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?

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*J

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

From: LORIE STORZA [<mailto:loriestoorza@msn.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:27 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please vote yes. This is an issue that the people of Alaska need to vote since it affects our children.

Thank you

Lories Stoorza
Parent and long time Ak resident

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: BLAINE SISSON [<mailto:nossis4@gci.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:25 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1 and truly hope that you will vote against this measure. Thank you.

Susan Hood Sisson
200 Sunny Hills Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99712
907-457-3840

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:10 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Glenn Clary [<mailto:gclary@ancbt.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:24 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representatives,

Please VOTE YES on HJR1.

First, thank you for continuing to support the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend. My family and I appreciate receiving these state funds every year. These funds are used at our discretion without state mandates. We are free to spend these state funds on items our family chooses. We can purchase a Bible, tithe any portion to our church or purchase additional religious books or magazines. These are our choices and we appreciate your continued support, maintaining our freedom to make these choices.

The same freedom should be granted to parents concerning their children's education. Some are saying that state funds should not be going to private or private religious schools. They say it is unconstitutional and should remain unconstitutional. They maintain that Alaskans should not be giving the opportunity to change Alaska's constitution. They believe only Legislators are allowed to decide where state funds can be used unconstitutionally. You may ask, "Where is this happening?" Let me name a few. Legislators approve major state funds to be spent on a religious Methodist college, APU – Alaska Pacific University. Legislators also allow college tuition funds to follow graduating Alaskan high school seniors to attend BYU, and many other religious institutions.

Just like these legislative expenders', HJR1 (the School Choice Bill) does not fund religious schools; it funds the education of children. If a parent determines that a religious school will provide the best education, then the parent, not the state, is free to make that choice. Appropriating funds to parents and supporting their freedom to make sure their children get an education compatibly matched to their child. This is the role of government. Please provide all children with school choice and VOTE YES on HJR1.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss additional merits of HJR1

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Glenn Clary

907-952-2251

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:10 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Jim Cooney [<mailto:jcooney@btcinc.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:23 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Good morning. I would like to voice my opinion on the upcoming HJR1 vote. To be able to assist with financial assistance for school choice adds an opportunity for parents who would not be able to do so.

I ask that you consider YES on this vote.

James and Pamela Cooney

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:12 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same

*j

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

From: clover tiffany [<mailto:clovertiffany@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same

Sincerely,
Clover Tiffany

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:13 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HRJ1

*j

From: Jen Foggie [<mailto:JenF@mooreheating.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:18 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Charisse Millett
Subject: HRJ1

Hello. My name is Jen Foggie. I'm an Alaskan who cares about our children.

HJR1 is a wonderful opportunity to further the discussion about what's best for 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.

There is no purpose in retaining this Blaine language in our constitution. An Alaska Supreme Court decision is squashing the will of the people, contrary to federal Supreme Court decisions. We should be given the opportunity to re-align our state with the USA on this issue.

Please vote yes on HJR1...please let us vote. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jen Foggie

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:13 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Mary Pat Schilly [<mailto:mpschilly@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:11 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Mary Pat Schilly
4435 N Douglas Hwy
Juneau, AK 99801
907-321-4214
mpschilly@gmail.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:14 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: AGAINST HJR1

*j

From: Chris and Tina Bernoski [<mailto:ctbernoski@msn.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 7:40 AM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Wes Keller; Sen. Anna Fairclough
Subject: AGAINST HJR1

Dear Representatives,

My name is Tina Bernoski, I grew up in Anchorage and have always attended our great public schools. I am a school counselor and mother of students who attend public education. I am definitely AGAINST HJR1 and want public funds to ONLY go towards public schools. As a school counselor, who works at a "high risk" high school I will tell you that if we go to a "voucher type system" and allow public money to go towards private schools, we are just deepening the divide. We are now promoting a "haves " and "have not" system. Education has always been the "American dream" and allowing for a level playing field, please do NOT take this away from my students and my kids!

I appreciate the hard work you do, however, I truly believe that if you are invested in the betterment of Alaska's future you would increase the BSA to a meaningful amount and inflation proof it. I know the students I work with daily have connections to educators that help them reach their full potential. And when we continually make cuts to educators(due to lack of funding) we take away opportunities. I truly believe that Alaska can be amongst the best nationally if we make education a priority and fully fund public education!

Thank you for your time and consideration

Tina Bernoski
7030 Apollo Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99504
ctbernoski@msn.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:15 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: ParentChoice

*j

From: Dalia Gonzalez [<mailto:daliacgonzalez@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 7:37 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: ParentChoice

Hello Mr. Keller,

I have been a public school employee for over 15 years and had my children attend public schools. About 2 years ago my daughter had the misfortune of being placed with a very difficult class. Two students in her class had severer behavior and mental issues. They were not a danger to themselves or others, is the reasoning they did not need extra services for their behavior. However, when they did get upset chairs, books, pencils and other school objects would fly across the room. Our family decided that it was not safe to have her in that classroom. We had no other alternative because there was no other 2nd grade classroom to switch her into, and there were no other schools to transfer her into. Parents are only allowed to register for schools inside their boundaries and denied schools outside boundaries. After my daughter watched and learned negative behavior/words we decided to look into a private school. It was expensive and did not know if our family could afford the tuition. Then the inevitable came; my daughter started to stand up to the students' negative behavior and was sexually assaulted, as a 7 year old by another 7 year old. He was suspended for his actions, but we knew that the environment would never change. She was with him since Kindergarten and had faced other issues. The next day we pulled her out of public school and made financial changes to make it work.

Our family pays our taxes to the public school levies, but can not use those funds if we want our children to learn and be safe. We never choose to be out of the public school; however, under those circumstances we had no other choice. Please consider allowing parents to make choices on where their children can receive the best education for their own children. For who knows what is best for each child than the parents of that child.

Thank you,

Dalia González

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:15 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: constitutional amendment

*j

From: Tom Smith [<mailto:thsphoto@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 4:48 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: constitutional amendment

Dear Representative Keller

I am writing to urge you to oppose the amendment that would change the constitution article that currently prevents public funding of private schools. Sorry, I do not know the bill number.

I feel quite strongly that taxes should NOT be used to fund non-public education. Private schools, primarily religious, have existed for decades without tax support---they will continue to do so. I have had limited experience in the Southern US with public education and can assure you that the quality is very often quite poor. As you know, it is in the South that private education is most common (originally as anti-integration); this bigotry has resulted in a two tier education system that has had devastating effect on public education and has limited success in private education. Would you want your children educated in Alabama or Mississippi or ????? I certainly would not. I would assume there are some quite good primary and secondary schools in the South, but these are the exception, not the rule.

Please vigorously oppose this move.

Thank you for your attention.

Thos. H. Smith "Tom"

2527 N. Leah Circle
Wasilla, AK 99654
thsphoto@gmail.com

(the father of your friend)

February 19, 2014

From
Glenn M. Prax
1015 Meadow Rue
North Pole, AK, 99705

To
Judiciary Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK

Re: HJR1/SJR9 Constitutional Amendment, Education Funding

Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee;

The preamble to our state constitution proclaims: "We the people of Alaska, ... in order to secure and transmit to succeeding generations our heritage of political, civil, and religious liberty within the Union of States, do ordain and establish this constitution for the State of Alaska." Yet Article VII of that constitution contains a provision that prevents the elected representatives of this generation from funding educational alternatives that thousands of Alaskans say they want to see. Passing HJR1/SJR9 will give this generation of Alaskan voters the opportunity to review that restriction.

You have heard Opponents of allowing citizens to review this restriction express fear of what might happen to Alaska's public education system. But what they are really expressing is an elitist disrespect for the right of the people to control their own destiny under the rules of our governing system.

HJR1/SJR9 only allows the people to vote on a public policy provision within their constitution. If a majority of Alaskan voters decide to remove the restriction, then actual funding decisions are still controlled by a majority of the legislature – just like any other department of state government.

Speculation about what might happen if our governing system is allowed to work as it was designed is no excuse to vote against these resolutions. No rights are infringed if the legislature passes these resolutions, but the public's right to review their constitution would be infringed if it does not.

HJR1/SJR9 are about letting the current generation reconsider a policy decision made fifty years ago by a previous generation. If "our heritage of political, civil, and religious liberty" has indeed been transmitted to this generation, then the judiciary committee will unanimously recommend passage of these resolutions to the full house.

Thank you

Glenn M. Prax

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:20 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 - Email testimony In Support

*j

From: daveyrocket@gci.net [mailto:daveyrocket@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 3:09 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 - Email testimony In Support

Please use my email as testimony in the judiciary committee hearing on HJR1. I support HJR1 which is the constitutional amendment to remove the Blaine amendment from our State constitution.

We support school choice for parents and families. The Alaska Supreme Court, through judicial activism, has prevented programs that allow the use of public funds for private and religious schools. Passing HJR1 will honor the intent of the delegates of our state constitution.

As are public and private schools, religious affiliated schools are primarily in the business of educating students in core curriculum and they should not be discriminated against when public funds are dispersed for educational costs.

Parents and students are the best decision makers in choosing an educational institution that will provide a quality education best suited to achieve the students educational goals.

Public testimony on this legislation has been unequally skewed toward public education providers and unions.

Please pass SJR9/HJR1 so that Alaskans can decide, free of judicial and political bias, on the merits of this constitutional amendment to affirm the original intent of our constitution.

Thank you,

David Agosti
14251 Jarvi Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99515

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:22 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

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

From: Rhonda Bolling [<mailto:rbolling.photos@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:50 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please support HJR1. True school choice should be made possible. We would appreciate our tax dollars reasonably following us for the education of our choice for our children.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Bolling
5878 South Tongass Hwy
Ketchikan, AK 99901
907-617-3588

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:23 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Testimony in Support of HJR1 to Repeal the Blaine Amendment

*j

From: Patrick Travers [mailto:pjtravers@att.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:27 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in Support of HJR1 to Repeal the Blaine Amendment

Dear Representative Keller and Judiciary Committee Members:

I am writing to ask that you vote favorably on HJR1, which would amend Article VII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution to remove the following sentence: "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution." It would also amend Article IX, Section 6 to clarify that it shall not prevent payment from public funds for the direct educational benefit of students as provided by law.

The language that would be removed from Article VII, Section 1 has its infamous origin in the "Blaine Amendment," an attempt in the late Nineteenth Century by anti-immigrant "Nativist" groups to prevent government assistance to religious schools, even when this would be otherwise permitted by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It was intended by supporters of this proposed amendment to the United States Constitution to deprive the children of the largely Catholic immigrant communities coming from Ireland and southern and eastern Europe of their religion and culture by forcing them into public schools. There they would be overtly or covertly encouraged to adopt the beliefs, doctrines, and practices of the "Native" majority having its roots in northern European Protestantism. (For Alaskans, of course, the arrogation to themselves of the "Native" title by people whose northern European ancestors had themselves only recently arrived on this continent is itself full of irony.) This proposed amendment, backed by presidential candidate James G. Blaine, fell one vote short of the qualified majority of both Houses of Congress that would have made possible its submission for ratification by the States. Nevertheless, its supporters continued to further its purposes by imposing the requirement that it be included in the constitutions of new States as a condition for their admission to the Union. We can be confident that the framers of the Alaska Constitution did not share the odious intent of the Blaine Amendment, but found it included in a large number of State constitutions upon which they were relying as sources.

Thus, the original intent and the continued effect of the language that would be removed from the Alaska Constitution by HJR1 has been to place a burden on the free exercise of religion that is guaranteed by Article I, Section 4 of that Constitution and by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It is important to remember that any funding of religious schools that might take place if HJR1 were to be adopted would still have to meet the stringent requirements of the prohibition of the establishment of religion that is provided for by these same constitutional provisions. It is thus the Blaine Amendment that imposes additional limits on Alaskans' freedom of religion, and not proposed State funding of religious schools meeting the requirements of the establishment clause.

I would hope that everyone on every side of this discussion supports a strong public school system in our State as the powerful foundation of our educational system. One of the most basic purposes of government is to provide for the education of the young, and it is through the public schools that this will be achieved for the great majority of our children. Any measure that would weaken our public schools would necessarily weaken our State and our society, and have catastrophic consequences for our young people. Growing up in a military family, I had the opportunity to attend three wonderful public high schools, and know well the positive impact that they have had on my life. I am also aware, however, that my experience in public high schools was enhanced, and not limited, by my earlier experience of Catholic elementary schools, and that this earlier experience helped me to contribute more fully in the socially, culturally, and spiritually pluralistic public school environment.

In a State like ours which places such emphasis on individual liberty, the freedom of families to have wide discretion in the education of their children should be widely recognized and implemented. Instead, most Alaskan families find themselves confronted with no practical choice except an effective monopoly of their children's educational opportunities by the local public school system. This is largely the result of the presence of Blaine Amendment language in our State Constitution, preventing State financial assistance to families that choose an educational alternative to the public schools. Human experience has repeatedly demonstrated that such monopolies consistently fail to maximize excellence, innovation, and flexibility, while frequently succeeding in maximizing costs and inefficiencies. Apart from the historical and moral considerations discussed above, a powerful argument can be made that the encouragement of religious and other private schools in Alaska will, in the end, greatly strengthen our public schools by breaking their current monopoly and encouraging them, through competitive motivations, to improve the quality of their service to students and families. In addition, collaborative arrangements among public schools, religious and private schools, and home schooling families can lead to innovative approaches to education in the diverse social and cultural circumstances of our communities. It should in no way reflect poorly on the wonderful abilities and dedication of so many of our Alaska public school teachers and staff that the system in which they work--a monopolistic system resistant to needed change and adaptation--has consistently been shown to be wanting in its service to our children and their families. As important as generous funding of our public schools undoubtedly is, I am convinced that spending more money exclusively on the public school monopoly will not produce the results that we all want for our children.

Thank you for your consideration of the points I have presented, and for your service to our State.

Sincerely yours,

Reverend Patrick J. Travers

Pastor

Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Church

9055 Atlin Drive, Juneau, Alaska 99801

Cell phone 907-723-7303

Email pjtravers@att.net

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:23 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Hester Sanders [<mailto:daveandhester@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:14 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

We would like to encourage you to vote for HJR1.

We support HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy discussion this year and vote on it in November.

While we see things like oil taxes and pot 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?

Don't be afraid of the possibilities. That's why we sent you to Juneau to make sure that Alaskans like us are represented.

Please make the right choice and vote in favor of this ballot.

Dave and Hester Sanders

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:23 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: we support SJR1

Importance: Low

*j

From: Dvdgamble [<mailto:dvdgamble@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:39 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: we support SJR1
Importance: Low

and we vote, thank you for listening.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:27 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Debbie Clary [<mailto:debbie.clary@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:36 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I would appreciate a yes vote on this bill. I believe parents should have a choice where their child is educated.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:26 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: SJR9/HJRI

From: Drew and Marcie [<mailto:drewandmarcie@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:33 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: SJR9/HJRI

Dear Representative Keller-

We ask that you support SJR9/HJRI. There are many reasons, but one reason is we believe the constitution has not been interpreted correctly by the courts. If it needs to go up for a vote, we believe the people of Alaska should be involved with the process of helping correct this wrong.

At this time we do believe we have enough information to know if we support vouchers, even though we do send our daughter to a private school. We also understand that the voucher system is a long way off and will face many battles.

Thank you for your time

Respectfully,

Drew and Marcie Koop

_____ Information from ESET Smart Security, version of virus signature database 9440 (20140218)

The message was checked by ESET Smart Security.

<http://www.eset.com>

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:26 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJRI

*j

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

From: Andy Romanoff [<mailto:andykristen@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:45 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJRI

Dear Representative Keller,

I support public education wholeheartedly, and feel strongly that if passed, HJRI would have lasting negative consequences for Alaska's schools and the quality of education for our children. I do not support diverting public funds to private schools. I believe in providing the opportunity for a quality education for all students and do not believe that diverting funds to the private sector will result in this.

Please do not vote to move HJRI out of the Judiciary Committee. It's a dead end for equity in education!

Sincerely,

Kristen Romanoff
Parent of two children in the Juneau School District

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:26 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Phil Campbell [<mailto:nlucpastor@ak.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to HJR1. Public funding for private schools is a bad idea. Voting to put a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot allowing this will extend a discussion that diverts attention from adequately funding public education. I urge you to vote against this resolution in committee. You can put a stop to this divisive proposal before further time and energy is expended on this ill-conceived idea. We need to come together and focus on solutions that strengthen public education rather than spending time on matters that further separate us.

I oppose public funding for private education because I believe in the common good. Money for education should not be divided up into private, individual pots. We all have a responsibility to care for all children, not just those in a particular segment of the population. We all benefit when public schools are strong. Public schools have the right and the obligation to educate all students. Private school can choose who they educate. We can't afford to siphon off public resources for narrow interests.

As a pastor, I respect the right of religious and other private entities to establish schools, but the responsibility of funding such endeavors rests with the religious communities and private sector. I am involved in religious education, but I do not expect the state to subsidize it. What I do expect is for all of us to join together to strengthen public education that is accessible to all children in our state. HJR1 does not do this.

Thank you for considering my views, and thank you for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Phil Campbell

Pastor

Northern Light United Church

400 W. 11th St.

Juneau, AK 99801

907-586-3131

www.northernlightchurch.org

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

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

From: Ashley Nohr [<mailto:ashleynohr@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:10 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Yes yes yes
Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Craig Wood [<mailto:cwood1776@outlook.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:29 PM
To: Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Wes Keller
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: HJR1

Greetings Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am a concerned parent of four children and two grandchildren who desires to improve the educational system for *all Alaskans*. I live in Representative Josephson's district. I have read the language and the intent behind HJR1 and support it with all my heart and mind! This is a special opportunity to introduce innovation and accountability in our educational system. I especially envision the empowerment of those parents with limited resources.

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.

I urge you to vote yes on HJR1.

Respectfully,
Craig Wood

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: School choice editorial

*j

From: Jess T Ellis [<mailto:jesstellis@aol.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: School choice editorial

Rep. Keller,

Thank you for your efforts in support of school choice legislation. I think it is the most important issue of our day. The potential for improving education is limitless.
Attached is a copy of an editorial I authored on the subject:

SCHOOL CHOICE WOULD BENEFIT EDUCATION IN THE VILLAGES AS WELL AS CITIES

Most parents want what's best for their child. They want them to be successful in life and to receive the education needed to qualify for a well-paying job or occupation.

Education--the gaining or transfer of knowledge--is really one of the basic functions of life. It's why we have a brain with a nervous system feeding it information from our five senses. Much of human activity in this world is intended to affect how well education is accomplished. Attentive parents spend much of their time teaching and nurturing their children.

Education is big business. We spend vast amounts of money on schools where educators add to the effort. Education is a major part of the state budget. Education doesn't start with pre-school, nor end with a college degree, or even a PhD.

Then there is "the media".

Ours is called the "Information Age". People with a good idea of how to convey information better have founded new schools, started news networks, created the internet or improvements to it, and invented computers, "Smart phones," fax machines, and other gadgets. With these aids to communication information is literally flying everywhere at the speed of light.

When it comes to formal education, all this has rendered the education model of one teacher at a chalk board in front of a class of fifteen to forty students expounding on some chapter in a text book as obsolete as a Princess phone.

Our standings in national test scores witness to the need for improvements in Alaskan education. For example our fourth grade reading scores for low income students were dead last; reading scores for fourth grade middle/upper income students were 49th out of 51.

Parental interest in improved ways of schooling has given rise to home schooling, charter schools, and a demand for other educational options.

In many cases the private sector is stepping up to the plate and providing solutions. In Alaska, there are more than 2200 students paying tuition to attend the top 5 (by attendance) private K-12 schools.

The Constitution of the State of Alaska needs to be amended to allow the Legislature to provide more families the option of choosing the schools their children attend. A sentence in Article VII of the state constitution, sometimes referred to as the Blaine amendment, has been interpreted by the Court as prohibiting the Legislature from directly or indirectly funding parental choices of alternative schools.

Many Alaskans are content with the offerings of their neighborhood public school. For those who are not satisfied, the Blaine Amendment needs to go. In education, one size doesn't fit all. There are too many different needs for one giant bureaucracy to effectively meet.

Some have expressed skepticism that "school choice" could work in the bush. Such a view suggests a lack of vision or a lack of knowledge of the many innovations in distant learning currently available to anyone, especially those with a computer and access to the internet. These offerings from the private sector are made to order for the bush, particularly those villages with too few students to qualify for a school.

Educational achievement in Alaska could take a giant leap forward were parents free to use their child's government provided educational allotment on the school of their choice, whether it be a public or private sector developed program.

Passage of SJR 9 and HJR1 which are ready to be voted upon by the Legislature, are required to put the question on the 2014 ballot so Alaskan voters could decide this issue. If you haven't expressed your views on this issue to your state senator and representative, now is the time to do so.

Submitted by:

Jess T Ellis, DDS, MS
11741 Barr Road
Anchorage, AK 99516
Cell: (907)947-0298

Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:24 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

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

From: Mary Spalding [<mailto:mbspalding@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:28 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please do not let this bill go any further. Listen to the reasons of those who oppose public spending for private institutions. The state cannot afford to divert funds away from the important task of educating all children no matter their income level or abilities.

Mary Spalding
5406 W Dimond Blvd
Anchorage, Ak 99502

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:24 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Choice education

*J

From: norma [<mailto:latinotour@kpunet.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:38 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Choice education

Hello Mr Keller.

We support HJR1 . We hope the possible elimination of the onerous Blaine Amendment from the State constitution to permit State financial assistance to families to make true school choice possible.

Sincerely.

Mick & Norma McGinnes

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:24 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 Vote

*j

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

From: Ted Kuehn [<mailto:kuehn@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:37 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; representative.neil.foster@akleg.gov; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1 Vote

Good Morning:

My name is Karl Kuehn and I have Grandchildren in the school system.

I live in Anchorage and my Representative is Representative Pruitt.

I'm sending this e-mail to share my opinion regarding HJR1 and why I believe you should vote for it to be put on the Nov. ballot.

HJR1 has become such an important topic in the media as well as personal opinion, that it appears people need to voice their choice (yes/no) on school choice at the ballot box.

If oil taxes and pot were important enough to be put on the ballot, it would seem to me children's education should be of a higher importance and the voting public should be allowed to make that decision.

Somewhere I heard that three polls have been taken over the last three years and each were in favor of school choice. If this is the case it would seem to be a "No Brainer" Let the people decide this issue.

I believe if the parents have the right to choose which school they want their kids to attend, they would be more involved in their education and more apt to make sure their kids are up on time and get to school.

Thank you and please make the right decision and vote for HJR1 to be put on the ballot in Nov.

Best Regards

Karl Kuehn

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

From: jack.newell@acsalaska.net [mailto:jack.newell@acsalaska.net]

Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 12:56 PM

To: Rep. Wes Keller

Cc: Rep. Wes Keller

Subject: Constitutional Amendment

To the
Honorable Wes Keller,

This is an email to be used as testimony in the hearing of HJR1. There are many proposals and opportunities that are presented every year. I would like to present my support for the opportunity we have as Alaskans to improve the state of educating. Many parents are questioning why their privilege as parents and providers are not allowed choice in the development of their children. Some may think that an upgrade to a structure is enhancing education, but I think there is a deeper possibility to improve the opportunities for a family and their children, thus to the benefit of our greatland, the State of Alaska.

The thought of allowing parents to select a school, public or private, for their children should be forefront on the minds of those who govern this state. I believe the merits to promote a choice in parenting, mainly how our young minds our formed is a parent's choice, not a state provided only, thus no choice. This opportunity will benefit when if we are bold and sincere towards providing a quality non-biased education for our young minds and future leaders.

I ask for you to allow a vote of people on this to provide a father and a mother a choice in the future of our children. Please support a citizen vote on SJR9 and HJR1. The founders of our state recognized that future generations needed the flexibility to respond to possibilities in a way that would benefit the minds of many. SJR9/ HJR1 would restore it. Please let the people vote on this amendment.

The opportunities for the future are best when we allow for our principles that were strong when were a territory to continue as a state. We should be a leader for our children benefit to encourage them - for a mind is a great strength not to be to wasted by deceit of a few.

Wishing you the best in health and prosperity in this great time in our lives,

Respectfully
submitted,

Jack R
Newell
Anchorage, Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: I Support School Choice

From: chuck kaucic [<mailto:studefan1@email.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:38 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: I Support School Choice

Rep Keller,

I am a Palmer resident who works in Wasilla & strongly supports School Choice & urges the passage of HJR1.

TX for standing strong.

CK

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: the Blaine Amendment

From: Judy Henley-berg [<mailto:henleyse1@kpunet.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:49 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: re: the Blaine Amendment

Sir, as a product of Catholic school here in Ketchikan, I strongly urge you to consider changing the constitution that would allow funds to be distributed to school of the familie's choice. We all know that we need a little or sometimes a lot of God in our lives in this scary world we are living in now. Not all children fit in the public school systems and the parents that decided that their school district is not working for their child, should be able to choose another method of schooling, without it financially draining their funds. I do think if it was changed, we would have a much better product in education as it would, number #1, make the schools more competitive in getting students to go to their school and number #2, teachers would be able to teach in the schools that work better with their methods of teaching. I hope you will seriously consider changing this law. Thanks you Judy Berg 1-907-247-4369.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: School Choice HJR1

From: SHERI PANKION [<mailto:pqslp@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:57 PM
Subject: School Choice HJR1

By the time school begins this fall, I will be the parent of four children ages 5 - 11. I would like to ask you to support the movement of the school choice concept to the voters so that we have the opportunity to speak on this issue. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to public policy and legislation in our state.

Sheri Pankion, District 25

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:31 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: hjr1 testimony

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

From: Allen Hippler [<mailto:allen@faulknerwalsh.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 5:49 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: hjr1 testimony

Dear Representative Keller,

Please accept the following as my testimony on HJR1.

Given the reality in our society that education of young people is a collective responsibility, the question becomes, 'What is the most efficient and best method of delivering education to students?' It is my belief that private enterprise provides the best and most efficient use of society's resources. One has to look no farther than poor results in school districts, and overwhelming costs relative to existing private education. I encourage you and all legislators to get the most value for our money by using the most efficient schools available.

Allen Hippler
CFO
Faulkner Walsh Constructors
Rivercity Development, LLC
Top Fuel Co, LLC
Suite 881, LLC

(907)344-2522 tel
(907)344-2836 fax

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:31 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

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

From: Judith.mcquerry@yahoo.com [<mailto:judith.mcquerry@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 5:05 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

Please do not support this bill! the last thing our education system needs is the loss of funding that could happen with the passage of this bill. We NEED to support education for all. the parents who really want religious education for their children will find a way to pay for it and NOTHING is stopping benefactors from contributing extra money to schools which emphasize whatever they especially value.

Passage of this bill would support Yeshivas and Madrasas, as well as Protestant and Catholic religious schools.

Judith McQuerry

Sent from my iPad

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:30 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: James Connelly [<mailto:jcon53@kpunet.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 6:32 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Representative Keller,

This email is my testimony in support of HJR1. It's time to stop discrimination against the children of Alaska because of their freedom of choice regarding religion and the freedom of speech. In their pursuit of an education which guarantees those constitutional freedoms, they are denied the financial assistance that is given to public school children. It is time to right this wrong, and I ask for your support of HJR1 so all of Alaska's children have an education which is consistent with their constitutional freedoms and those benefits which should be afforded to all.

James R Connelly
PO Box 5681
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:30 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Please Vote yes on HJR1

From: LeighSteele-Ross [<mailto:lsteele1234@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 6:56 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please Vote yes on HJR1

In RE: School Choice Bill HJR1

My name is Leigh Johnson-Steele and I'm a grandparent, who cares about my grandchildren as well as all Alaskan Children.

Representative Bob Lynn is my Representative.

I support HJR1. Although HJR1 doesn't have any programs attached, it could open the door to benefiting many children so I urge you to put this on the ballot for Alaska's voters.

I believe it is 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.

Please vote yes on this bill.

Thank you.

Leigh Johnson-Steele
6641 Crooked Tree Dr
Anchorage AK 99507

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:30 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: vote yes onHJR1

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

From: Michele Faison [<mailto:mmfaison@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:31 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: vote yes onHJR1

please vote yes on HJR1

I could use the financial help to continue my son in private his Christian school

Sent from my iPhone. Michele

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:34 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Susan T. Heinrichs [<mailto:susan.heinrichs@k12northstar.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:44 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1. Our public schools are desperately underfunded.

Here in Fairbanks, Denali Elementary School has 30 children in each first grade classroom. Small class sizes are imperative to decent education.

Public education is a right. Private and religious schools are a luxury. Please represent our children by supporting their right to great public education.

Thank you.

Susan Heinrichs

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Mark Runkle [<mailto:mrunkle@ancbt.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:49 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

As a parent of a school age child, please give us the opportunity to vote on the proposed changes regarding school choice. Our children deserve the very best educational opportunities that we can give them. It sounds like we the people of AK will have the chance to vote on legalizing marijuana usage. Shouldn't our children's education get at least the equal time on the ballot?
Thanks for your time and consideration.

Mark Runkle
Assistant Pastor/Executive Assistant
Anchorage Baptist Temple
6401 East Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99504
(907)333-6535
mrunkle@ancbt.org

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Barbara Eaton [<mailto:drb@drbarbaraeaton.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:53 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Hello!

I was unable to call in to testify this morning; however, I do want my voice and that of my family's heard!!! We are FULLY in favor of HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion this year and vote on it in November.

School Choice is FOR PARENTS and STUDENTS and thus 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. Unfortunately, some groups like the NEA want to dictate to parents where and how their children are to be educated. THAT'S NOT FAIR and it's NOT AMERICAN!!! We the PARENTS deserve the right to say what's best for OUR children, not the NEA!!! Much of their agenda runs in opposition to what we stand for in our home so why in the world should we be forced to PAY for that kind of indoctrination of our children????? It would be like the government forcing kids to go to a private, religious school....no one would think THAT was fair so why is it fair that the liberal NEA gets to exercise its influence on MY kids???

It is time for parents to have a choice.

I am sure that you're well aware that this is a VERY crucial issue that carries a lot of weight as we head into the voting booth. Your decision regarding HJR1 will have a dramatic affect on votes that are cast for YOU or your opponent.

Will you give parents their RIGHT to choose or will you act like Washington big government and force us to abide by what you, and the NEA, determine is best for our kids?

Thank you for your attention and service.

Ben and Barbara Eaton

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Joann Mitchell [<mailto:joann.mitchellak@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:07 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Sen. Hollis French
Subject: HJR1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to ask you to NOT support HJR-1--the "school voucher" bill. I simply do not understand how diverting dollars from public schools to private schools will help improve the quality of education in our state. What exactly are the problems that are trying to be solved and how will private schools solve them? How does a voucher system help improve a student's chance for success in Little Diomedes or other remote locations?

I grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Milwaukee was one of the first school districts to implement a voucher system. But as I understand it, parents could only use the vouchers if their neighborhood school was considered a "failing school". And, in Milwaukee there is a large number of private schools already established and ready to accept the kids (heck, in my suburb there literally was a Catholic grade school within 2 blocks of every public elementary school). While in principle I am vehemently opposed to vouchers, at least in Milwaukee there was some reasoning behind the program. I have yet to hear any logical reasoning to go to vouchers in Alaska.

My children went to a private preschool and I was on the board of directors there. In addition to its preschool program, they also has a struggling elementary school. At the time I was on the board, there were about 20 kids in grades k-3 and 6 in grades 4-6 (3 of the 6 were brothers). The reason the elementary program struggled is not because it was too expensive for the families that attended the school but rather because there are so many outstanding options in the public school system! The key is to find ways to expand those great options within the public schools and not send the money to private schools.

And for those that argue that parents who send their children to private schools should be "reimbursed" because the public system does not have to educate their child, well, we don't reimburse residents without children because the belief is everyone needs to contribute to public education because everyone benefits from a well-educated society. We don't reimburse citizens that never have a fire at their home, never have a need to call the police, etc. Let's not make education an exception to this!

Please vote NO on this. Let's focus on improving our public education system and that is not going to happen if public funds are diverted to private schools.

Joann Mitchell
2521 St. Elias Drive

Anchorage, AK 99517
(907) 248-9565
joann.mitchellak@gmail.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

From: llolmb [<mailto:lindablefgen@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Greetings,

I am very concerned about and opposed to HJR1 funding private and religious schools.

I understand the desire to move this forward without a fiscal note, however, the implications are irresponsible to the needs of public education and the separation of church and state.

Per a Juneau Empire news article:

"Meyer said he did not see moving forward this session with companion legislation that would spell out how the change could be implemented. The proposed constitutional change would be the first step, he said."

We do not buy homes without a long term financial plan. Why would we even consider passing this resolution without knowing the financial impact on our public school system?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Linda M. Blefgen

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Bill Leight [<mailto:bleight@ancbt.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Good Morning:

I am sending this email to encourage you to vote YES on HJR1. Thank you for listening and serving our great State of Alaska.

William Leight

2400 Scarborough Drive

Anchorage, Alaska 99504

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Vote No on HJR1

From: Nancy Courtney [<mailto:cabowabo1@gci.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:18 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz
Subject: Vote No on HJR1

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am a lifelong resident of Juneau. I was well educated in our Juneau public schools and have two daughters who have also been well educated in our public schools. I respectfully urge you to vote No on HJR1.

Public school education is the foundation for ALL Alaskans to get a good education, no matter their race, religion, or financial class. Private and religious schools, many of which also provide Alaskans a good education, are not required to follow the same rules as far as accepting all students, no matter their race, religion, or financial class. Also, some are for-profit institutions. I do not believe Alaska's public funds should be put into educational systems that do not include ALL Alaskans, no questions asked.

By voting against HJR1, you are not limiting school choice, you are confirming to every Alaskan child that he or she has the right to receive a good public education and that their State government and legislative representative supports public education.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Courtney
5001 Pond Vista Drive
Juneau, AK 99801
907-321-2285
cabowabo1@gci.net

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:31 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

From: Donna Matthews [<mailto:dwmattthews@gci.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Keller,

I realize that as the primary sponsor of HJR 1, you are not likely to consider rejecting it in your committee hearing today. But I wanted you to know that there are opposing views.

You are a 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 and HJR 1 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 and SJR 9. 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.

Sincerely,
Donna Matthews
Anchorage and Halibut Cove

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:00 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: THANK YOU FOR COSPONSORING HJR 1!

From: Gail Grafton [<mailto:chezgrafton@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 04, 2014 9:07 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: THANK YOU FOR COSPONSORING HJR 1!

Alaskan families not only need the freedom to choose the most appropriate educational institutions for their children, they also need it to be more affordable! It is time school choice became a real option for the middle class - those who find it difficult to fit into their budget but don't qualify for financial aid.

Thank you for cosponsoring this legislation!

Sincerely,
Gail Grafton
Anchorage

RE:
BILL: HJR 1
BILL VERSION:
CURRENT STATUS: (H) EDC
THEN JUD, FIN
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KELLER, Reinbold, Lynn, Stoltze
HEARING: (H) EDC Feb 07 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106 TELECONFERENCE
SHORT TITLE: CONST. AM: EDUCATION FUNDING
STATUS DATE: 01/16/13
TITLE: Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to state aid for education.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:59 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: House Bill JHR1

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
Maranatha

Learning for Life

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:44 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: No on HJR1

From: Gene Randall [<mailto:gene.randall2014@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:19 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep.kathy.munoz@akleg.gov; Sen. Dennis Egan
Subject: No on HJR1

Honorable House Judiciary Members,

If we truly honor our governmental forefathers, we will recognize their wisdom in crafting a state constitution designed to provide protections for the public, meaning all Alaskans. An amendment to subsidize private or religious organizations just flies in the face of the letter and spirit of the Alaska Constitution.

I strongly urge a "NO" vote on HJR1.

Eugene "Gene" Randall
11346 N. Douglas Hwy
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: School choice editorial

*j

From: Jess T Ellis [mailto:jesstellis@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: School choice editorial

Rep. Keller,

Thank you for your efforts in support of school choice legislation. I think it is the most important issue of our day. The potential for improving education is limitless.
Attached is a copy of an editorial I authored on the subject:

SCHOOL CHOICE WOULD BENEFIT EDUCATION IN THE VILLAGES AS WELL AS CITIES

Most parents want what's best for their child. They want them to be successful in life and to receive the education needed to qualify for a well-paying job or occupation.

Education--the gaining or transfer of knowledge--is really one of the basic functions of life. It's why we have a brain with a nervous system feeding it information from our five senses. Much of human activity in this world is intended to affect how well education is accomplished. Attentive parents spend much of their time teaching and nurturing their children.

Education is big business. We spend vast amounts of money on schools where educators add to the effort. Education is a major part of the state budget. Education doesn't start with pre-school, nor end with a college degree, or even a PhD.

Then there is "the media".

Ours is called the "Information Age". People with a good idea of how to convey information better have founded new schools, started news networks, created the internet or improvements to it, and invented computers, "Smart phones," fax machines, and other gadgets. With these aids to communication information is literally flying everywhere at the speed of light.

When it comes to formal education, all this has rendered the education model of one teacher at a chalk board in front of a class of fifteen to forty students expounding on some chapter in a text book as obsolete as a Princess phone.

Our standings in national test scores witness to the need for improvements in Alaskan education. For example our fourth grade reading scores for low income students were dead last; reading scores for fourth grade middle/upper income students were 49th out of 51.

Parental interest in improved ways of schooling has given rise to home schooling, charter schools, and a demand for other educational options.

In many cases the private sector is stepping up to the plate and providing solutions. In Alaska, there are more than 2200 students paying tuition to attend the top 5 (by attendance) private K-12 schools.

The Constitution of the State of Alaska needs to be amended to allow the Legislature to provide more families the option of choosing the schools their children attend. A sentence in Article VII of the state constitution, sometimes referred to as the Blaine amendment, has been interpreted by the Court as prohibiting the Legislature from directly or indirectly funding parental choices of alternative schools.

Many Alaskans are content with the offerings of their neighborhood public school. For those who are not satisfied, the Blaine Amendment needs to go. In education, one size doesn't fit all. There are too many different needs for one giant bureaucracy to effectively meet.

Some have expressed skepticism that "school choice" could work in the bush. Such a view suggests a lack of vision or a lack of knowledge of the many innovations in distant learning currently available to anyone, especially those with a computer and access to the internet. These offerings from the private sector are made to order for the bush, particularly those villages with too few students to qualify for a school.

Educational achievement in Alaska could take a giant leap forward were parents free to use their child's government provided educational allotment on the school of their choice, whether it be a public or private sector developed program.

Passage of SJR 9 and HJR1 which are ready to be voted upon by the Legislature, are required to put the question on the 2014 ballot so Alaskan voters could decide this issue. If you haven't expressed your views on this issue to your state senator and representative, now is the time to do so.

Submitted by:

Jess T Ellis, DDS, MS
11741 Barr Road
Anchorage, AK 99516
Cell: (907)947-0298

Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:44 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: No on HJR1

From: Gene Randall [<mailto:gene.randall2014@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:19 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep.kathy.munoz@akleg.gov; Sen. Dennis Egan
Subject: No on HJR1

Honorable House Judiciary Members,

If we truly honor our governmental forefathers, we will recognize their wisdom in crafting a state constitution designed to provide protections for the public, meaning all Alaskans. An amendment to subsidize private or religious organizations just flies in the face of the letter and spirit of the Alaska Constitution.

I strongly urge a "NO" vote on HJR1.

Eugene "Gene" Randall
11346 N. Douglas Hwy
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:35 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: please vote against vouchers

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

From: Sally Kieper [<mailto:sally.kieper@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:40 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Subject: please vote against vouchers

Dear Legislators,
I oppose HJR1 and urge you to do the same. I want my tax dollars to go for PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sally Kieper
1055 Chickadee Loop
Fairbanks, AK 99712

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:34 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Testimony in favor of HJR1

From: EDWARD BURNS [mailto:bpburns@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:45 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in favor of HJR1

Dear Representative Keller and Judiciary Committee Members:<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

I'd like to offer this testimony in support of HJR1 and ask that you vote in favor of this bill. As the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Juneau, it is my moral obligation to raise with you the grave concern about having language in our Alaska Constitution that is based on bigotry of years past. Allow me to present to you what I wrote in my article in the Juneau Empire on February 2, 2014 (which can be found here: <http://juneauempire.com/opinion/2014-02-02/moving-forward-education>):

The Blaine amendment, which was unfortunately included in the Alaska Constitution, is rooted in 19th century anti-Catholic bigotry and discrimination. Initially proposed in 1875 by Speaker of the House James Blaine as an amendment to the United States Constitution, it was intended, under the rhetoric of "separation of church and state", to block any public funding of "sectarian" (meaning Catholic) schools, even when this would have been permitted under the First Amendment. Tellingly, Blaine and his supporters had no objection to prayer, Bible reading or religious instruction in the public schools, as long as it was non-denominational and Protestant.

The Blaine amendment and other national and state laws ostensibly intended to separate church and state grew out of a pervasive prejudice that many Americans held regarding Roman Catholicism, which they believed was incompatible with democracy and freedom. Many 19th century native-born Americans were openly suspicious of the loyalty and patriotism of the millions of Catholic immigrants (mostly Irish) entering the country, fearing that their first and most important allegiance was to the Pope, who they considered an authoritarian and anti-democratic foreign ruler.

Although this attempt to amend the national constitution narrowly failed in the Senate, Congress did require that all states admitted to the Union after 1876 must include a version of the Blaine amendment prohibiting the use of public funds to wholly or in part support religious schools. This is how it came to be included, almost 100 years later, in the Alaska Constitution.

Repeal of the Blaine amendment would, for the first time since territorial days, allow public per pupil funds to be used by parents to send their children to the school of their choice, including religious and other private schools. Such funding would still have to satisfy the stringent requirements of the First Amendment and the corresponding provision of the Alaskan Constitution.

As a citizen and as a Catholic leader, I believe that in the 21st century, the Blaine amendment should be removed from our State's Constitution. I welcome legislation that would allow the citizens of this State to repeal its provisions.

Why? Not only because this amendment, motivated by sectarian prejudice, has no place in our State Constitution, but because I believe that parents should have the freedom and the resources necessary to send their children to the school which best meets their needs. They should be able to do so using their child's share of public education funding through programs of parental choice such as tuition tax credits, educational savings accounts, scholarship tax credits or opportunity scholarships.

Growing up as I did in Pittsburgh, I am grateful that my parents were able to choose the schools that I attended as a child and as a teenager. In my early childhood I attended two Catholic schools where I was taught by dedicated and committed religious sisters. For high school I attended Lincoln High School, a public institution. In choosing these schools, religious and public, my mother and father exercised their right and responsibility to choose the school best suited for their children. I am grateful to them for the education I received, an education reflecting the value they placed on academic faith formation, excellence, high moral and ethical standards and religious instruction.

However, in our State and across our Nation there are many families, especially those in poverty, who do not have the financial resources to choose the best school for their children. All of our families in Alaska should have access to the resources needed in order to attend the school of their choice, including traditional public schools, public charter schools, secular and religious private schools and homeschooling.

In addressing parental choice, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has said, "For nearly 150 years, the Church has unequivocally taught that parents have the right and responsibility to serve as the primary educators of their children. To assist them in this sacred duty, the Church has articulated clearly that children have the universal right to an education in faith, and the state has the fundamental obligation to enable such a right. In both written word and lived witness, the Church has advanced parental choice as a fundamental part of its mission to protect the equality of educational opportunity that is the birthright of all children."

Thank you for your time and for your consideration on this important matter. Blessings to you for all you do in service to the people of Alaska.

Respectfully yours,

Bishop Edward J. Burns

Diocese of Juneau, Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Letter and Attachment regarding HJR 1
Attachments: OppositiontoSchoolVoucherlegislation02-19-14.pdf;
2-19-14SelectedPublicSchoolDistrictSponsoredAlternatives.docx

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

From: hommek [<mailto:kimberlyhomme@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:13 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn
Cc: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Letter and Attachment regarding HJR 1

Dear Representatives Keller and Lynn,
I understand that HJR 1 will be heard in the House Judiciary Committee today. I am submitting testimony and an attachment in opposition to HJR 1. Please do not pass this resolution from your committee because of the negative effect of reduced funding for public schools, already at the bare-bones minimum. Regards, Kimberly Homme

February 19, 2014

Representatives Wes Keller and Representative Bob Lynn, Chairs
House Judiciary Committee, Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Keller and Representative Lynn:

I hope the session is going well for you in Juneau. I am writing to express opposition to House Joint Resolution 1 under consideration by the House Judiciary Committee. As you know, HJR 1 seeks to change the constitution to allow public funds be used for private, for-profit religious and secular schools. I think that the most important responsibility of the members of the Alaska State Legislature is to accept responsibility for providing for an educated and strong Alaskan community, and provide adequate funding to support that ideal by sufficiently managing our plentiful resources. The voucher legislation is in direct conflict with that goal. It will deplete limited resources and provide more resources to students whose families have demonstrated that they are able to afford the religious alternatives in which they have enrolled their children.

Providing an adequate education within the public education system for children of our Great State is of utmost importance. When you travel throughout the regions of our state, you will find schools that have failed to provide an adequate, minimal level of education for a lot of complicated reasons. As policy makers, there needs to be great attention to what must be done to support those schools in crisis and help their students make adequate academic growth. Instead of providing more resources to the families that have demonstrated they can afford options, we need to find ways of better supporting those school districts with the lowest student achievement performance. The effect of HJR 1 is to divert potentially over \$100 million for a purpose that does not benefit the ideal goal of government providing basic needs.

Another important point is that when families want to exercise their right to choose, they have many choices. Families can choose to have options within our public education system or they can choose private education. Private education is often subsidized by the primarily religious organizations which provide the private education system. Private education, more often than not, experiences low taxes as non-profit organizations or are tax-free. Private education choices can be provided at a low cost to the consumers. When I was growing up, my parents enrolled my two sisters and me in a religious school in Anchorage. There was only one wage earner in the family. There was a lot of financial support opportunities for those who wanted the assistance.

The fact of the matter is that within public education, there are choices. It is not a one size fits all type of education program. School districts have encouraged options within public education by providing choices, outside of the typical charter school model.

I've worked as a professional educator for over 20 years in three school districts, which include the Juneau School District, the Anchorage School District, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. I own property in each of those school district boundaries and continue to have connection to those communities. During my years of public service, I've witnessed a number of education options become more available to parents. Parents have wanted options and districts have provided many options, as long as they could be options provided to the all. Please find the enclosure an overview of options available within the largest five school districts in the state. The information is from the school districts' webpages.

Best wishes,

Kimberly Homme

Attachment: The Big Five Alaska School Districts' School Alternatives

Examples of Public Education Program Alternatives

The “Big Five” Alaska School Districts’ School Alternatives

Anchorage School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 48,492

Elementary Alternatives

Anchorage Basic Curriculum (ABC):

- Birchwood ABC
- Northern Lights ABC
- Northwood ABC

Montessori:

- Denali Montessori

Open Optional:

- Bowman Elementary
- Chinook Elementary
- Chugach Optional
- Eagle River Elementary
- Polaris K-12
- Susitna Elementary

At-risk teens:

Note: These programs are for students who have fallen behind in credit and are more likely than others to drop out of high school and not attain a high school diploma.

- AVAIL, Ages 16-19
- Benny Benson/SEARCH, 7-12
- SAVE, 11-12

International Baccalaureate:

- Romig Middle School, 7-8
- West High School, 9-12

Online:

- ASD iSchool, 9-12

Open Optional:

- Polaris K-12
- Steller Secondary

School-within-a-school:

- East High School, 9-12
- School through the Arts
- West High School, 9-12

Continued

Page Two of Four

Anchorage Public Charter School/Choice Programs, grade group served (continued):

Seminar:

- Service High School, 9-12

Science focus:

- Central Middle School of Science, 7-8

World Discovery Seminar:

- Chugiak High School, 9-12

Charter schools:

Cultural & language charters:

- Alaska Native Cultural Charter School
- Rilke Schule Charter School

Homeschool charters:

Note: these charter schools provide resources and support to families interested in home schooling their children:

- Home-school
- Family Partnership Charter School
- Frontier Charter School

Open optional charter:

- Aquarian Charter School

Structured charter:

- Eagle Academy Charter School

Technology-focused charter:

- Highland Tech Charter School

Waldorf-inspired charter:

- Winterberry Charter School

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice
Student population: 14,273

Charter Schools:

Chinook Charter, K-8

Effie Kokrine Early College Charter, 7-12

Watershed Charter, K-8

Star of the North Secondary Charter School: Career Education Center (grades 11-12) & North Pole Campus (grades 7-12)

Continued

Page Three of Four

Other Fairbanks Schools of Choice:

Barnette Magnet, K-8

Fairbanks B.E.S.T., K-12 (correspondence: home school or online classes)

Hutchison High School 9-12

At-risk/Other Alternative Schools or Programs:

SMART/DW PASS (district's program for suspended/expelled students)

BRIDGE (special education - formerly known as the HIRE Program, helps students learn skills to help them transition from school to adult living.

OPTIONS (program located at Hutchison - pregnant/parenting students)

Juneau School District charter school and other schools of choice

Student Population: 4,957

Public Charter School/Choice Program(s), grade group served:

School Programs:

Tlingit Culture, Language and Literacy, K-5

Montessori Borealis 1-8

Charter School:

Juneau Community Charter School, K-8

Online School Program:

HomeBRIDGE, K-12

At-risk Teens:

Yaakoosge Daakahidi Alternative High School, 9-12

C.A.R.E.S., a credit recovery program, 9-12

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 8,892

Charter Schools

Aurora Borealis, K-8

Fireweed Academy, K-6

Soldotna Montessori, K-6

Kaleidoscope School of Arts and Sciences, K-6

Continued

Page Four of Four

Other Kenai schools of choice:

River City Academy, 7-12

Connections, K-12 (home school program)

Distance education program, 9-12 online (also, as needed, video-conferenced classes from Kenai Central HS to smaller schools)

Homer Flex, 9-12

Kenai Alternative High, 9-12 & PK

Mat-Su Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 17,247

Public Charter School/Choice Program(s), grade group served

Charter Schools

Academy Charter, K-8

American Charter Academy, K-12

Birchtree Charter, K-8

Fronteras Spanish Immersion, K-8

Midnight Sun Charter, K-8

Twindly Bridge Charter, K-12

Schools with a Specific Mission

Beryozova (Russian-speaking school), K-12

Mat-Su Central School (homeschool), K-12

Mat-Su Day School (students experiencing behavioral issues), 6-12

Mat-Su Career & Technical High School, 9-12

Burchell High School (opportunity for credit recovery), 9-12

Valley Pathways (opportunity for credit recovery), 9-12

District Choice Programs/Alternatives

Alaska Middle College School, 11-12

Palmer High School's International Baccalaureate (IB) program, 11-12

Note: urban Alaskan school districts also have policies that allow students to attend schools outside of their attendance area if there is space at the receiving school and the parents provide transportation.

Ernest Prax

From: Janet Ogan
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:09 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Nothing came thru #2

From: Dennis Fradley [mailto:denfrad@gci.net]
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 12:24 PM
To: Janet Ogan
Subject: Fwd: Nothing came thru #2

March 20, 2013

Sen. John Coghill, Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

Please include my comments in the record for the hearings on SJR9

Thank you
Dennis Fradley

Time to end discrimination in education

After the end of the American Civil War, the country added the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment guarantees fair and equal treatment for all Americans.

However, the ink barely had time to dry before two discrimination policies were adopted that penalize certain children because of their race or their religion.

Many states didn't want black boys and girls attending their all-white schools. They came up with a "separate but equal" policy that in theory provided an identical quality of education -- in segregated schools. In reality the education in black schools was inferior.

Racial discrimination in education lasted about 75 years -- until 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the end of the separate but equal practice in its landmark decision on Brown vs. Board of Education.

Then there was religious discrimination.

It began about the same time period, following a large immigration of Catholics to the United States in the mid-1800s, a result of the potato famine in Ireland.

Over the years these new American families began voicing objection to the religion being taught in the public school system. Schools were teaching a generic form of Protestant religion, using the King James version of the Bible, and prayers and teachings that were different than Catholic teachings.

There were reports of harassment and bullying of the Catholic children. Parents began requesting government support for their children to be taught their own religion.

The nativists (we call them sourdoughs in Alaska) strongly opposed that idea. They called on government to prevent it. The complaints caught the attention of President Ulysses Grant. According to a history professor from Maine with whom I spoke, the President was up for reelection and happened to be looking for an issue to draw voters attention away from scandals of his first administration.

Grant's campaign encouraged then Speaker of the House, James Blaine of Maine, to sponsor a constitutional amendment to prohibit government spending from benefitting sectarian (meaning Catholic) institutions. The amendment got the necessary two-thirds majority vote in the House but failed in the Senate.

Advocates then moved to individual states, which were urged to amend their constitutions with a Blaine-like clause. Congress also passed a statute requiring territories to have such a clause in their Constitutions in order to be accepted into the Union.

Alaska and Hawaii, the last two to enter the Union, include it as the law required. Ours, confirmed by voters in 1956, is in Article VII.

Thirty-seven states at one time had some form of a Blaine-like clause in their constitutions. In some states, their courts dismissed the significance of the provision while in others the courts called for it to be strictly enforced. Alaska's court is in the latter category.

It's a little ironic that at the time Alaskans voted to ratify their constitution the nation was preparing to elect a Catholic as U.S. President. That's a fairly good indicator that the anti-Catholic sentiment that had swept the nation a century earlier was disappearing. By this time, however, the "Blaine-like" amendment was serving another purpose -- it was helping to ensure a reliable revenue stream for the collective bargaining units that represent school employees.

Unlike the separate but equal racial discrimination policy which kept black children out of the white public school system, the religious discrimination laws in the early half of the 20th Century kept non-Protestant families from receiving educational assistance to enroll their children in other than government-run public schools. The option of a private school education was not economically feasible for most of these families, especially those with a large number of school-age children.

Religious discrimination in the United States has gone on for more than century. In Alaska it's been practiced since statehood. Families that contribute their share of taxes for education are denied the benefit for education unless they put their child in the assigned government-run school.

In 2002, 50 years after Brown vs. Board of Education put an end to "separate but equal" racial discrimination, the court issued another landmark decision.

It declared that the U.S. Constitution does not necessarily bar states from providing voucher or other educational assistance to families to allow them a choice between government and non-government schools.

The Zelman decision, which upheld the legality of a voucher program in Cleveland, identifies specific guidelines available for all states to follow if states want to provide school choice for their residents.

The Establishment clause is part of the first amendment of the Constitution. It says "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." A number of years ago the court said this clause applies to state and local governments as well as to Congress.

According to Zelman, for a state education assistance program to not offend the establishment clause, the program must be neutral with respect to religion and provide assistance directly to a broad class of citizens. The recipients of the assistance in turn direct government aid to non-government schools wholly as a result of their own genuine and independent private choice.

State and local governments, under the Zelman ruling, cannot determine which non-government schools can be chosen by a parent, nor can a state or local government provide funding or property directly to a religious institution.

Bottom line -- the high court says school choice is possible under the U.S. constitution. Unfortunately, our own constitution stops us. Article VII in Alaska states "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution."

Today, more than 20 states offer parents some form of education choice. According to a number of studies, students in these areas where choice is provided are doing much better in both the private and in the government-run public schools. Competition is working.

A few weeks ago the Senate Judiciary committee heard from the lawyer from the Institute of Justice, Richard Komer,. He reported that 12 states so far have amended or repealed their Blaine provisions. Alaska should be among them.

The resolution now before the committee would give Alaska voters the opportunity to repeal the Article VII, Section 1 clause and give the Legislature and Governor the go-ahead to consider school choice for Alaska.

Alaskans look to their representatives in Juneau to provide them this opportunity.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:43 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: NO on HJR1

From: SueAnn [<mailto:porcupinewoman@hotmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:51 AM

To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg

Subject: NO on HJR1

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

I am a Mother of four adult children who attended Juneau School District public schools and excelled in their studies. They went out of state to attend to their university studies but returned to Alaska to raise their families. A major factor in their return was the GREAT public education they had received.

I now have eight grandchildren, five of them attend elementary school through high school- all of whom are excelling in public schools.

The best education for anyone is one which provides diversity coupled with opportunity. Public schools are excellent venues for learning. A public school education encourages and provides students the perfect opportunity to look, think and question . . . and recognize that THEY are the masters of their dreams.

Public education has the potential to enable the potential in *all* students.

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

SueAnn Randall
11346 North Douglas Highway
Juneau Alaska, 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:43 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 Testimony

From: James K. Johnson [<mailto:freetochoosealaska@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:41 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 Testimony

Greetings Rep. Keller:

You may use my testimony at the hearings for HJR1:

I support HJR1 because it will remove the Blaine admendment from our State Constitution. Alaskans need the opportunity to vote on whether public funds can be used to benefit students that attend private or religious schools. The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention reveal that the delegates voted two to one to uphold this type of funding. Real competition amongst Alaska schools will benefit Alaskan families, our state, and ultimately our nation. The NEA opposes real school choice because competition will mean they will have to compete for the educational dollars; they believe their personal lives are much more secure when they enjoy a virtual monopoly on K-12 education in America. Unfortunately, our educational and behavioral standards in our nation have taken a steep decline because of the lack of accountability in our public schools. Please support HJR1 so many Alaskans can have a real choice in their children's education.

James K. Johnson, Owner
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