

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

**Session:**  
State Capitol Building,  
Room 424  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-2186  
Phone (907) 465-4230  
Fax: (907) 465-3883  
Toll Free: (877) 465-4976



**Interim:**  
1292 Sadler Way  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701  
Phone: (907) 452-6084  
Fax: (907) 452-6096

## REPRESENTATIVE PETE HIGGINS Memorandum

**TO:** Representative Bill Stoltze, House Finance Committee

**FROM:** Representative Pete Higgins

**DATE:** March 4, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Questions Asked in House Finance Committee Hearing on 3/4/2014 on  
HB 220

---

### Questions from the House Finance Committee:

**1. Why don't we end the exam this year?**

**Answer:** We could end the exam this year if the bill was signed into law before April 2014. April is the month the exit exam will be administered to all 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Should the Legislature do so, all students and persons who did not receive their High School diploma will be forever denied that opportunity.

**2. How would the fiscal note be affected if we discontinued the exit exam this year?**

The contract is a year to year contract that is currently set to expire in December 2014. If the Legislatures intent is to disallow any opportunity to a student to take the exit exam and gain their diploma the cost to the state would be zero in fiscal year 2015. The reduced costs reflected in the fiscal note for FY 2015 is what is believed to be the cost to administer the exit exam to those who are still in need of passing the exam to gain their High School diploma.

**3. What test will replace the exit exam?**

**Answer:** There is no intent to replace the exit exam. There are a number of standardized tests or assessments that could be optional to show performance or progress. It is the intent of the sponsor that no test replaces the exit exam. If the student earned credits at each grade level, passed semester exams and the final exam for each grade level, they would graduate. The thought being, if the student met the curriculum and attendance standards for each grade level the student has met all the requirements to receive a High School Diploma.

**4. Are you going to let the exam continue for another couple of years?**

**Answer:** No. The exit exam will naturally expire at the end of the 2015 fiscal year (June 2015). That being said, each person who has not passed the exit exam and wishes to take the exam will have two opportunities to complete all the requirements. One opportunity will be in October, 2014 and the other opportunity will be in April, 2015. After that, the exit exam will not be offered.

**5. If a student does not take the exit exam will they still get a diploma?**

**Answer:** That depends. If the student was required to complete the exit exam under current statutes and is in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade regardless of whether they met all the curriculum and attendance standards, the answer is no. If the student is in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade and has met all the curriculum and attendance standards, the answer is yes.

**6. When will exit exam testing end?**

**Answer:** The exit exam as it currently is proposed in the bill would end with the testing cycle in April 2015.

**7. Why make students who pass their High School curriculum but don't pass or take the exit exam wait another year to get their diploma?**

**Answer:** This legislation would not make a student wait another year to get a diploma.

**8. Why don't we allow number 7 above to happen at the end of this school year?**

**Answer:** Under current statutes, it is a requirement. Unless the bill is signed into law before April, 2014; or as a minimum, before the end of the school year, the question becomes moot as the graduating class would still be under the current statutes.

**9. How many years do I have to take the exit exam?**

**Answer:** As the law is currently written a person may take the exit exam as many times as is needed to pass. There is no limit on the number of years a person has to take the exit exam. In this bill the exit exam testing would end after the April 2015 testing cycle.

**10. Can we use the General Education Development (GED®) exam this year in-lieu-of the exit exam for those who need to take the exit exam to receive their High School diploma?**

**Answer:** No. While the adult education program, administered by the DEED and the GED® is delivered by the DOL; the GED® is a privately owned entity working with the US Department of Education and authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998. The policy set by the owner of GED® is the following minimum eligibility requirements must be met to take the GED®; Individuals must be at least 16 years old and not currently enrolled in an accredited high school, including those accredited by regional accrediting bodies and also those approved by the jurisdiction's department of education. Misuse of the GED® test includes, but is not limited to: (1) use for the purposes of grade placement or promotion; (2) as a measure of student progress in instructional programs; (3) use as a means of awarding academic credit (e.g. Carnegie units); or (4) use as a means of awarding alternative credentials to currently enrolled high school students. We have no control over the owner to change their policy.

I have checked the accuracy of these answers with DEED and DOL.