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The Honorable John Coghill  
State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 119  
Juneau, AK 99801

March 18, 2013

Dear Senator Coghill,

I have attached my March 18, 2013 testimony in support of support of SJR 9. We believe that the current education system does not adequately meet the needs of all Alaskan children. We believe that Alaskan children will benefit from more education opportunities. As you may know, Alaska spends more per capita than any other state in the Union. For this funding, we get last place in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading. It is clearly evident that we are not getting an acceptable return on our investment.

The Blaine Amendment language in the Alaska Constitution is an overreach by the Federal government, dictating to Alaska education policy. The Federal government continues to increase its influence and overreach every day in all areas of education. These include what our students cannot eat, the common core curriculum standards, and national standardized testing coming from the common core curriculum standards.

There appear to be many instances of State government violating the Alaska Constitution in many areas of funding private, even religious organizations. For example, the Alaska Performance Scholarship Program provides funding to students to attend the Alaska Baptist College, the Alaska Bible College and Alaska Pacific University. All are clearly violations of the Constitution, yet they continue. Even the Anchorage School District pays rent to a church to house the Rilke Schule Charter School.

One thing should be very clear-all Alaskans deserve equal treatment. This appears not to be the case as noted above. SJR 9 will bring clarity to the issue of "direct" and "indirect" funding of private and religious education institutions. We need to align our Constitution with the U.S. Constitution. Note that even the U.S. Government funds private and religious education in the District of Columbia through the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program.

Let the people vote on SJR 9. Pass it out of committee so we all have the opportunity to exercise our rights under both the U.S. Constitution and the Alaska Constitution.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

David Boyle  
Executive Director  
Alaska Policy Forum

1 Attachment  
Testimony on SJR 9, March 18,2013

TESTIMONY ON SJR 9, BY ALASKA POLICY FORUM, MARCH 18, 2013

CHAIRMAN COGHILL, COMMITTEE MEMBERS, I AM DAVID BOYLE AND I AM REPRESENTING THE ALASKA POLICY FORUM, THE ONLY FREE MARKET THINK TANK IN ALASKA. I MIGHT ADD THAT WE MAINTAIN OUR INDEPENDENCE BY NOT TAKING ANY FUNDING FROM EITHER FEDERAL, STATE OR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

WE SUPPORT SJR 9 BECAUSE IT WILL LEAD TO BETTER EDUCATION OUTCOMES FOR ALASKAN CHILDREN. IT WILL LOOSEN THE GRIP OF SPECIAL INTERESTS ON EDUCATION. EDUCATION IS THE ONLY MONOPOLY IN ALASKA. WE DON'T HAVE THE AK STATE FISHING COMPANY. WE DON'T HAVE THE AK STATE MINING CO, AND WE DON'T HAVE THE AK STATE PETROLEUM CO.

THE BLAINE AMENDMENT LANGUAGE IN THE ALASKA CONSTITUTION HAS A VERY SORDID HISTORY. IT IS ONE OF ANTI-CATHOLIC, ANTI-IRISH, AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND. IN THE EARLY 1900s IT WAS EVEN SUPPORTED BY THE KU KLUX KLAN-SOMETHING NOT TO BE PROUD OF. ALASKA IS BETTER THAN THAT. FOR MORE IN-DEPTH INFORMATION ON THE BLAINE AMENDMENT, WE HAVE A SHORT SLIDE STORY AT [WWW.ALASKAPOLICYFORUM.ORG](http://WWW.ALASKAPOLICYFORUM.ORG).

THIS IS A BATTLE BETWEEN THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF PARENTS TO CHOOSE THE BEST EDUCATION FIT FOR THEIR CHILD AND THOSE WHO WANT TO MAINTAIN THEIR STRANGLEHOLD ON ALASKA EDUCATION, TO THE DETRIMENT OF MANY ALASKAN CHILDREN. THIS IS ABOUT POWER AND CONTROL-NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

HERE IS WHAT BOB CHANIN, GENERAL COUNSEL FOR THE NEA FOR 41 YEARS SAID IN HIS FAREWELL SPEECH IN 2009,QUOTE:

"...IT IS NOT BECAUSE OF OUR CREATIVE IDEAS. IT IS NOT BECAUSE OF THE MERIT OF OUR POSITIONS. IT IS NOT BECAUSE WE CARE ABOUT CHILDREN. AND IT IS NOT BECAUSE WE HAVE A VISION OF A GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR EVERY CHILD. NEA AND ITS AFFILIATES ARE EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES BECAUSE WE HAVE POWER. AND WE HAVE POWER BECAUSE THERE ARE MORE THAN 3.2 MILLION PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO PAY US HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN DUES EACH YEAR BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT WE ARE THE UNIONS THAN CAN MOST EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT THEM" UNQUOTE.

AND HERE I WOULD ESPECIALLY LIKE TO NOTE THAT THE NEA-AK DOES NOT REPRESENT THE VOICE OF ALL TEACHERS.

THE NEA IN ALASKA COLLECTED MORE THAN \$5.6 MILLION DOLLARS FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR. AS YOU KNOW, THAT IS POWER AND INFLUENCE. BUT THE NEA ONLY SPEAKS FOR ITSELF AND WHAT BENEFITS ITS MEMBERS. IT DOES NOT SPEAK FOR THE CHILDREN OF ALASKA. YOU SEE, THE CHILDREN OF ALASKA DO NOT PAY DUES TO THE NEA ALASKA. NOT YET.

SOME HAVE SAID THAT ALLOWING ALASKANS TO VOTE ON THIS CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IS A "LOUSY IDEA". WAS THE PFD A LOUSY IDEA? WAS LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 18 A LOUSY IDEA? I DON'T THINK SO. THAT IS WHY OUR CONSTITUTION HAS

PROVISIONS FOR AMENDING THE DOCUMENT. THERE IS A PROCESS AND THE PEOPLE PLAY A LARGE PART IN THAT PROCESS.

TODAY, MY KIDS CAN GET AN ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP AND GO TO ANY SCHOOL OF HIGHER LEARNING, AS LONG AS IT IS IN ALASKA. THEY CAN GO TO APU OR EVEN ALASKA BIBLE COLLEGE WITH PUBLIC FUNDS. IF THEY CAN DO THAT, WHY CANT I CHOOSE THE BEST K-12 EDUCATION FOR MY CHILD?

FINALLY, IT IS TIME TO RID OUR CONSTITUTION OF ITS DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE. SOME STATES HAVE ALREADY DONE SO. MOST STATES SIMPLY IGNORE THEIR BLAINE AMENDMENT LANGUAGE.

WE HAVE A PROCESS IN OUR CONSTITUTION. THAT INCLUDES THE PEOPLE OF THE GREAT STATE OF ALASKA. IT IS OUR RIGHT TO VOTE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS. DO NOT DENY US THAT RIGHT. THE NEA DOES NOT OWN ALASKA'S CONSTITUTION. WE OWN THE CONSTITUTION.

GIVE ME AND ALL ALASKANS THE FREEDOM TO EXERCISE THEIR VOTE. THIS IS AN HISTORIC BATTLE. ON ONE SIDE WE HAVE THE PEOPLE AND THEIR CHILDREN; ON THE OTHER SIDE WE HAVE POWERFUL MONEYED SPECIAL INTERESTS. MANY TIMES WE HEAR THAT SPECIAL INTERESTS CONTROL OUR DESTINY. DO NOT LET SPECIAL INTERESTS CONTROL OUR CHILDREN'S DESTINIES. YOU HAVE THE POWER TO LET THE PEOPLE VOTE.

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ON THIS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ISSUE-THE FUTURE OF ALASKA IS IN YOUR HANDS. I WILL PROVIDE A RECORD COPY OF THE ALASKA POLICY FORUM'S POSITION ON SJR 9.