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>>>>>>>> Transcript of proposed testimony for SCR1<<<<<<<<<<

Submitted by Stuart Thompson,
PO Box 870702, Wasilla AK 99687
1-877-950-7980
lookitover@att.net

I greet the chairpersons and members of the House Education Committee. I am an active citizen in Rep. Neuman's district—speaking on behalf of myself. I thank both Senator Stevens and Representative Keller for granting me extended testimony time in support of SCR 1. Here is that prepared testimony.

This committee has the text of my comprehensive SCR1 testimony to the Senate Education Committee—which I pray that you'll look at. This committee also has direct familiarity with some of my ideas about civics from support testimony given last year for Rep. Keller's Constitutionalism bill. I DO NOT, I repeat, DO NOT withdraw that support in favor of SCR1's Civics Education Task Force. Please imagine civics as a road every Alaskan must travel, and that your oath of office compels you to remove all physical and educational obstacles to that travel—hence the task force's purpose. Keller's Constitutionalism bill simply addresses the most obvious hole (as in a crater made by a cruise missile) in that road. We desperately need the full power of the people—not genius leaders—to survive the coming future. We desperately need to empower every citizen with full knowledge of the tools our political heritage grants us. To permit too many people—as now shown by their conduct—to think representative government is just electing public servants to be glorified complaint handlers and prejudice gratifiers, is human degradation of the most piteous kind. So now that I explained the stakes, let me show the simple educational principle that gives an indomitable foundation to Senator Stevens' bill.

The greatest obstacle to learning, and getting results from that learning, is the attitude that you know enough already to get by. Never mind that you then get plagued with repeated disappointments at making your way successfully or even making things better. Here's how you get to thinking you have no talent, no ability, and you're just a glorified animal that your betters have to protect and provide for. You're condemning yourself to thinking you can't fight city hall, to enduring injustice and irrational conduct by government and law enforcement, and to enduring public utility service abuses like lead-poisoned water.

One of the most glaring historical examples of what I am talking about is General George Armstrong Custer's attitude toward Indian capabilities before the catastrophe of Custer's Last Stand. And its companion lemming effect that had his followers rush to their deaths with him.

Let me get real with an example that Alaska is suffering from right now. It's the crashed state income from declining oil and investment revenues. Around a decade ago I directly contacted legislators about the need to apply specific parts of our political heritage to ensure the state's financial security. I wasn't the only one. I even published poetry about it in the Juneau Empire. Go ahead and laugh at my desperation. I don't mind. Subsequently, I was brushed off like I was a clueless barking dog.

Not giving up, in compliance to Alaska Legislative Rules, I approached the Rules Committees with a rule proposal. I suggested that the Rules compel on-going education about our political heritage by legislators—like nearly every other profession requires in our country. My legitimate, rule-based effort was ignored by both houses. However, Sen. Stevens (now sponsor of SCR1—then Rules Cmte Chairman) did have me in and heard me out. He showed comprehension of what I was getting at, but regrettably expressed his opinion that such an education focus was over the heads of most citizen legislators. The best we could hope for was chance driven forays by legislators into learning more about our political heritage. The reality of this shocked me with its hypocrisy—as these people were also the ones overseeing law and funding for public education. I then turned my efforts in the years since to encouraging civic participation by fellow citizens.

Now, what is the cure for this sort of human irrationality? It is the one executed by SCR1—organized, multifaction-balanced looking by a cooperative group of citizens. The SCR 1 task force should even encourage formation of satellite community task forces that are similarly composed. The specious non-sense that running such task forces is unaffordable should be answered by oath-keeping public officials putting their own money where their mouths are. I'm serious. Operating under principles from our political heritage, such task forces yield what are, literally and by dictionary definition, common sense results. Such principles include scientific discipline enforced on task force members to gather direct or verifiable observations and facts first before conclusions are attempted. This is what is called inductive reasoning—the hallmark of the scientific method.

I have spent over ten years encouraging civic participation by directly coaxing people to give their own ideas and advice to elected officials. My work enabled me to talk to literally several thousand people from Fairbanks through to Ketchikan, and from Kodiak through to Cordova. The SCR 1 Task Force needs to duplicate, almost at all costs, that depth of investigation. Their output then would become one of the most valuable works ever made available to the Alaska legislature—well beyond anything lobbyists could ever do.

Let me conclude with a very brief observation. You are the House Education Committee. Your legislative scope and function influences almost every thing the public and government does or could ever do. Therefore, let me leave this for you to think about for the rest of your legislative careers: The volume of true citizen participation in government of, for, and by the People is probably the most reliable test for the effectiveness of public education that could ever be.

Thank you for your attention. Good luck on your deliberations.

Stuart Thompson
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