

From: [Mark Lindberg](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: written testimony
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What Makes a Great State?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the operating budget. I will be unable to testify in person this week so I am providing written comments. My name is Mark Lindberg. I am resident of district 4C and a professor of wildlife ecology at UAF. I appreciate the past support that you have shown for education and I hope you will do so in the future.

My wife and I are both graduates of UAF. Following graduation, we left Alaska for five years moving first to Tennessee and then Montana. Things weren't working out in Montana, although we were living in the state known "as the last best place". We wanted to start a family and we wanted to do so in "the last great place" – Alaska. Until recently, we never really thought hard about why Alaska was labeled the last great place, it seemed obvious. The natural beauty of the state is certainly a reason to characterize the state as great; however, wild places and stunning landscape alone don't define greatness if the citizens of that state aren't served in way that leads to a safe, healthy, and happy life. I won't dispute that those programs that serve the safety and health needs of the citizens are of utmost importance. Close behind those programs and sometimes in collaboration with those programs is education. For us, the educational system of this state is the most defining feature of greatness because it makes a direct investment in the states' most precious, "renewable" resource, its' children, and therefore the future of the state.

Even though education is already paying some of its own way through school taxes, tuition, and cost recovery and matching from research, and through other returns like an education and associated job opportunities, quality of life, and outreach, it's clear we still need to do more to maintain greatness. It's clear that we have reached the limits of investment and returns from a finite resource such as oil and we need to take responsibility for our greatness and future by paying our way through income taxes and more responsible use of the permanent fund.

However, an income tax and wise use of the permanent fund comes with a responsibility and a trust between the citizens of Alaska and its government officials, who will be charged with deciding how to use that revenue. Show us that you deserve that trust by making responsible decisions that value our future. Making poor decisions about matters such as air quality and budget cuts that would cripple the university don't reflect that you value our health or the future of our state. Making uninformed decisions about the role of research in the educational process and in the state economy, do not suggest that you deserve our trust. Misusing the permanent fund by sending \$10,000,000s of dollars out of state in the form federal taxes each year doesn't demonstrate responsible management. We are prepared to do and pay more to assure the future greatest of our state – are you?

We understand that cuts may need to be part of the short term solution, but please consider reasonable and responsible levels of cuts to the state educational system that reflect how you value the future of our state. Please also admit that we need to seek longer term solutions to our state financial crisis that don't just include cuts. Consider forming an alliance and trust with the citizens of this state through an income tax and more responsible use of the permanent fund. We will not be judged by our ability to balance the budget this year or even next year, but by our ability to provide a great state for future generations and that will require that we support a high quality educational system.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.