



NEA-ALASKA

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March 12, 2019

Senator Mia Costello
State Capitol Room 119
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Costello,

On behalf of NEA-Alaska's 13,000 members I would like to thank you for introducing Senate Joint Resolution 9.

SJR 9 is a necessary and long overdue step towards providing school districts in Alaska the ability to build strategic budgets that maximize the impact of every dollar and provide stability for the educators, families, and students in their districts. The current state budget process leaves critical decisions until late April, May, or even June. This uncertainty causes challenges at the local level as they are forced to guess the level of financial support the state will provide.

One of the most devastating consequences of this approach is the impact it has on teachers and school support staff. Without firm financial commitments from the State of Alaska, many districts are left with the difficult decision to issue layoff notices or "pink slips" to their dedicated educators, many of whom are just entering the education profession. Inevitably, the shock of potentially losing a job because of a delayed budget will force early career educators to look elsewhere for more stable employment—often—outside of Alaska. As more educators leave our state districts are forced to spend their finite dollars on recruitment and training for new employees. It's estimated that this process costs school districts \$20 million a year. This is money that would be far better spent in our classrooms.

SJR 9 would compel the Alaska State Legislature to prioritize the passage of a public education budget and would alleviate many of the perennial concerns facing local school boards and communities. Alaska educators are committed to maximizing student learning, and SJR 9 is an important step in the right direction. NEA-Alaska stands ready to assist you in your efforts to pass this resolution and ultimately to present it to the citizens of Alaska.

Thank you,

Tim Parker, NEA-Alaska

4100 Spenard Road • Anchorage, AK 99517 • (907) 274-0536
201 Main Street, Suite 300 • Juneau, AK 99801 • (907) 586-3090
2118 S. Cushman Street • Fairbanks, AK 99701 • (907) 456-4435

www.neaalaska.org