

STATE OF ALASKA THE LEGISLATURE

2004

Source
CSSJR 31(STA)

Legislative
Resolve No.
46



Relating to urging the United States Congress to compensate the State of Alaska for the effect of federal land ownership on the state's ability to fund public education.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS, for many years, western states, including Alaska, have grappled with the challenge of providing the best education for their citizens; and

WHEREAS western states face unique challenges in achieving this goal; and

WHEREAS, from 1979 to 1998, the percentage change in expenditure per pupil in 13 western states was 28 percent, compared to 57 percent in the remaining states; and

WHEREAS, in 2000 - 2001, the pupil per teacher ratio in 13 western states averaged 17.9 to one compared with 14.8 to one in the remaining states; and

WHEREAS the conditions in western states are exacerbated by projections that enrollment will increase by an average of 7.1 percent, compared to an average decrease of 2.6 percent in the rest of the nation; and

WHEREAS, despite the wide disparities in expenditures per pupil and in pupil per teacher ratios, western states tax at a comparable rate and allocate as much of their budgets to public education as the rest of the nation; and

WHEREAS the ability of western states to fund education is directly related to federal ownership of state land; and

WHEREAS the federal government owns an average of 51.9 percent of the land in 13 western states, compared to 4.1 percent in the remaining states; and

WHEREAS the enabling acts of most western states promise that five percent of the proceeds from the sale of federal land will go to the states for public education; and

WHEREAS a federal policy change in 1977 ended these sales, resulting in an estimated \$14,000,000,000 in lost public education funding for western states; and

WHEREAS the ability of western states to fund public education is further affected by the fact that state and local property taxes, which public education relies heavily upon to fund education, cannot be assessed on federal land; and

WHEREAS the estimated annual impact of this property tax prohibition on western states is more than \$4,000,000,000; and

WHEREAS royalties to the western states are reduced because federal land is less likely to be developed and federal laws often place stipulations on the use of state royalty payments; and

WHEREAS the estimated annual impact of royalty payment policies on western states is more than \$1,860,000,000; and

WHEREAS much of the land that the federal government transferred to states upon statehood as a trust for public education is difficult to administer and to make productive because it is surrounded by federal land; and

WHEREAS federal land ownership greatly hinders the ability of western states to fund public education; and

WHEREAS the federal government should compensate western states for the significant impact federal land ownership has on the ability of western states to educate their citizens; and

WHEREAS Alaska joins the 12 other member states of the Council of State Governments-West that have passed or are in the process of passing joint resolutions addressing the effect of federal land ownership on the states' ability to fund public education; and

WHEREAS just compensation will allow western states to be on equal footing with

the rest of the nation in their efforts to provide education for their citizens;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States Congress to appropriate just compensation to the State of Alaska for the effect of federal land ownership on the state's ability to fund public education.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.