

Alaska State Legislature

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REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON

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Sponsor Statement HB 287 (brf sup maj fld)

"An Act making appropriations for public education and transportation of students; and providing for an effective date."

School districts rely on state and other funds for education funding every year. HB 287 appropriates \$50.8 million from various fund sources for K-12 Aid to School Districts, Boarding Home Grants, Youth in Detention, Special Schools, and for Mt. Edgecumbe Boarding School. The bill also appropriates an estimated \$67.8 million from the Statutory Budget Reserve fund (SBR) for Student Transportation.

The original intent of the bill was to appropriate an additional \$1.2 billion from the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR) fund to cover the remaining amount needed to fund K-12 Aid to School Districts and Student Transportation at the same level as requested by the Governor. The use of the CBR requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the House. Since the $\frac{3}{4}$ vote failed, the use of the CBR was removed from the bill. The funding source for K-12 Aid to School Districts and a portion of Student Transportation can be added back to the bill.

The bill is intended to pass separately from the regular operating budget and early in the session to enable school districts to avoid mandatory teacher layoff notices. Many lawmakers agree that education funding cannot withstand further cuts without negatively affecting Alaskan children. An early, separate appropriation for education that has existing funding identified would prevent these problems and will allow school districts to finalize their budgets on time.

Even after the budget has passed the legislature, line item veto or veto reductions can be made by the Governor. In 2015, the Legislature needed to come back in special session to pass a second operating budget that included education funding. In 2016, the state operating budget was passed by the legislature on May 31. Last session, the state operating budget did not pass the Legislature until June 22 and signed by the Governor on July 1. All this uncertainty for the funding amount forces school districts to draft multiple budgets. The Anchorage School District is required to submit their budget to the Municipality by the first Monday in March. Anticipating low amounts requires districts to give termination notices (pink slips) to tenured teachers by May 15 and non-tenured teachers by the last day of school.

Education is one of the highest priority programs for the state, and educators are shaping future generations. HB 287 reflects the importance of education to our state.