

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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Senator Gary Stevens *President of the Senate*

SPONSOR STATEMENT **Senate Bill 221**

Excerpt from NCSL's "The Path to a Degree" by Brenda Bautsch, November 2009:

"America is no longer the world leader in education. U.S. performance at the K-12 and postsecondary levels is falling behind other countries. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), America and Germany are the only two OECD countries where the younger generation is actually less educated than the older generation. In February 2009, President Obama declared the lack of educational attainment in the United States a 'prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow,' and he set a goal for the United States to reclaim its position as the leader in college graduates by 2020. To accomplish that, states need to set their own college completion goals; study and diagnose where and why students are dropping out of the education system; and target state policy to those problem areas. Effective state policy can help more students obtain college degrees, be successful in life and contribute to the economy."

Alaska has seen this problem growing for many years. There is a disconnect in our education system. If enrollment in and completion of some form of higher education is the goal, then we must clearly identify why our students are failing to perform and devise a means to help them succeed. There are several challenges that must be faced. We have the resources to improve the situation, and Senate Bill 221 calls for the stakeholders to assemble and devise a plan to do so.

This task force will serve to identify ways to strengthen the education pipeline, improve student preparation for college, decrease the need for remediation in college, improve access to financial aid, increase retention and graduation rates in postsecondary education, provide enhanced funding and governance for our education system, address data and tracking needs, and ultimately to support economic development vis-à-vis a better trained, better educated citizenry.

Thank you for your consideration of this worthwhile legislation.