

NAACP

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Anchorage, Alaska Branch - Wanda V. Laws, President

P.O. Box 200089 Anchorage, AK 99520-0089

(907) 272-8717 Fax (907) 222-0907 naacpanchorage@gmail.com*

February 18, 2013

The Honorable Representative Wes Keller
State Capitol
120 4th Street, Mail Stop 3100
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Keller,

One of the goals of the NAACP is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of all citizens. Therefore it is essential that all students have access to an equal and high-quality public education by eliminating education-related racial and ethnic disparities in our public schools.

I am writing to inform you that the NAACP Anchorage strongly opposes HJR 1 because it would create a dual and unequal education system in Alaska. Public schools accept every child whereas private schools can legally discriminate. Ultimately "choice" would not be in the hands of the parents.

The NAACP Anchorage is also in strong opposition to SJR 9. History has taught us that a Constitution is amended with the goal to enhance society. However, this attempt to change the Alaska Constitution is false and misleading because it would allow subsidies for those who are more fortunate to pay for their kids to attend private school. These same subsidies are pulled from a system for which most of us depend on. This action will divert attention, energy, and resources for efforts to reduce class size, enhance teacher quality, provide every student with books and computers, and provide a safe and orderly environment at all of Alaska's public schools.

We cannot seriously talk about advancement in Alaska without talking about our young people and education. The simple truth is that preparing young people for success and 'finding our way back to first' is about much more than what happens inside the classroom. It takes the interest and investment from all of us. When we meet the needs of the whole child we are one step closer to preserving the promise of Alaska. Taking resources away from public schools ensures that Alaska cannot meet these goals.

The NAACP Anchorage asks that you include this letter in the bill packet.

Respectfully,

Wanda V. Laws

Wanda V. Laws
President, NAACP Anchorage

Opposition to HJR1 Amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alaska Relating to State Aid for Private or Religious Schools

I oppose HJR1 for several reasons. First, this resolution seems to have come in part from assertions that public education is failing. However, your actions to date have flat funded public education for a number of years. You expect the same or better educational outcomes with less money, taking into account the ever rising cost of living. This is impossible according to my checkbook.

In addition, private and religious schools have never lived up to the same standard as public education. There are some apparently good schools, but since they do not have to play by the same rules it is hard to compare them. Public schools are required to perform regular testing of students by national standards while private and religious schools are not. Parents may give regular input into public schools and many do, while I'm not sure of such options for other schools.

There are those parents with children in either public, private or religious schools that we are lucky if they get their kids to the school door, much less support the students. Many parents, however, spend many hours in support of their children in school in preparation even before they are old enough to begin Kindergarten.

While I think there should be options, I definitely do not think public funds should be diverted to private or religious schools. Here are two reasons off hand:

- 1 - Public funds should go to public uses.
- 2 - When public money is used, it ultimately means there will be some public control of the funding and curriculum of private or religious schools.

There should be complete separation of church and state. I do not want public officials to have input into any religious organization with which I am affiliated. That is the biggest "no-no" that I can think of, and I'm a very religious person.

My experience is that Alaska's schools have done an excellent job with what they have. I believe if you spent more time with specific schools, teachers and students, you would better understand the needs of those schools and could remedy particular problems.

Personally, my grown children came through the Alaska Public School System and now my granddaughter is coming up through the Fairbanks Public School System. She continues to have great grades, now in the 8th grade, and is thinking of college. They have all excelled! I have two grandsons that are home schooling as their parents' choice and are also doing well.

My children have gone on to have great careers in areas that they have chosen, some in the private sector and some in the public sector. They are all living successful lives and their children are doing well.

There are factors beyond the schools which have much to do with the success of children. Many students which are failing also have other problems. I think that instead of continued decreasing of funding, you should attempt to find out what our local public schools need to improve their success rate.

Sincerely,

Doris Robbins
1281 Overhill Dr.
Fairbanks, AK 99709-6753
(907) [REDACTED]

**Resolution from West High School PTSA:
Requesting the 28th Alaska Legislature
Do Not Pass SJR9 and HJR1**

At a well-attended regular meeting of the West High School Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), an association organized and existing under the laws of the State of Alaska, held on February 6, 2014 at West High School, a quorum being present, the Board unanimously adopted the following Resolution.

WHEREAS two bills SJR9 and HJR1 are currently under consideration by the Alaska Legislature;

And WHEREAS these bills, amend, revoke, and revise wording that had been enacted since statehood in Article VII, sec. 1 and Article IX, sec. 6 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska regarding the prohibition of public funding for private and religious schools;

And WHEREAS if passed, would place these amendments before the voters in the next general election;

And WHEREAS these bills are progressing rapidly through the various committees of the Senate and House;

And WHEREAS the Alaska Legislature has considered these bills with little regard to the impact their passage would cause to public education funding;

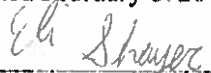
And WHEREAS the West High School PTSA membership highly values public education and recognizes the need for adequate funding for public education;

And WHEREAS those assembled at the West High PTSA unanimously agreed that public money should not fund private or religious schools or their students directly;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the West High School PTSA respectfully requests that the Legislature of the State of Alaska does not pass SJR9 or HJR1.

I, Eli Shayer, the undersigned Secretary of the said West High School PTSA, certify that I am the Secretary of the West High School PTSA, that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct representation of the Resolution passed by the Board on the day specified, and that the Board has never revoked, rescinded, or set aside the Resolution, and that it is now in full force and effect.

Dated February 6, 2014



Eli Shayer, Secretary
West High School PTSA

cc: all members of the Alaska Legislature; all members of the Anchorage School Board

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:34 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR 9 and HJR 1 Vouchers and Quality of Public Schools and Longer Term School Budgeting Process

FYI
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From: David Nyman [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 10:26 AM
Subject: SJR 9 and HJR 1 Vouchers and Quality of Public Schools and Longer Term School Budgeting Process

I would like to express my opposition to the recent movement to amend the constitution to distribute public funds to private schools. I have 4 teens in the public school system in Anchorage. They have variously attended Chugach Optional, Central Middle School of Science, Steller and West High. My step daughter attended Girdwood Elementary and now attends South High. It is a challenge to keep up with the scholastic and extracurricular activities but in doing so I have come to the opinion that Anchorage Schools offer a wide range of options and in most cases excellent educational environments. When there is a problem it is up to me the parent to work with the child and school system to identify it and resolve the issue. Thus when I hear others grouse about the public school system I think to myself that perhaps they need to be more involved with the school system.

In my opinion the initiatives identified above as SJR9 and HJR1 are flatly misguided and will detract from continuing to promote and build the best public education system possible. Thus I object to these measures and the constitutional changes they would require. Alaska's constitution has been shown time and time again to be well crafted as it is based on sound principles. What I see in the current efforts is some folks who are in a position of authority believe they should change the current system based on their perception of what is occurring versus the reality of the situation.

With that said, Alaska can always do better in managing the expenses or the quality of the school system. The year to year budgeting process, I believe, detracts from any manager's ability to plan over a longer time frame as proposed by forward funding. The herky jerky nature of our annual budget scramble affects all branches of our government, allows for easy insertion of poorly justified projects into the process. Mega projects that are sexy like the Knik Arm Crossing or the Susitna Hydro siphon capital away from basic services including our schools.

In conclusion I hope everyone has a productive session and works toward the benefit of all Alaskans!

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:33 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR 1; SJR 9

FYI
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From: Lisa Rickey [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 12:32 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1; SJR 9

Dear Representative Keller

I am writing to urge you to NOT support any constitutional amendment that would allow public funds to benefit religious or other private educational institutions.

I am appalled that HJR 1 and SJR 9 are threatening our constitution and attempting to not only break the boundary of the separation of church and state, but to allow the state, which is facing huge deficits in educational funding for public schools, to fund private and religious schools.

Please vote against these constitutional amendments.

Thank you,

Lisa Rickey

[REDACTED]

60-year resident of Alaska

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:33 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR9

FYI
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From: Danna Grammer [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 1:06 PM
Subject: SJR9

Dear Legislators and Governor,

Thank you for your service. As a voter in Anchorage and a parent of a child in the Anchorage School District, I am writing to you to let you know that I oppose SJR9. I believe the founding members of our constitution had the insight that public funds should not be used to fund private and religious schools. Those funds need to be utilized in our public schools to provide better opportunities for ALL Alaskan children. Whether a parent chooses to send their child to an Alaska public school or find alternative schooling is a personal choice, but I do not believe that is a choice that should be funded by the citizens of Alaska. Instead, our state's money should be used to make this state's public schools the best they can be and something that ALL Alaskans can be proud of.

Furthermore, it seems counterintuitive to a voter like myself that if there is not enough funds to fund our public schools in such a manner that every child is given an opportunity to excel at education rather than just getting by with a mediocre education, that there would be enough funds available to provide vouchers for private and religious schools. My answer is that there shouldn't be.

I feel as a governing body, it should be the position to do what's right for the greater good of the citizens of the state rather than a select few, which is what I believe SJR9 would be doing to the education system of our state.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,
Danna Grammer

[REDACTED]
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907-[REDACTED]

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:32 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

FYI
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From: William Luttrell [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 4:07 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

I FULLY SUPPORT THIS EDUCATION BILL . IF YOU LISTENED CLOSELY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA'S PRESIDENT, HE SAID (FOR THE 3RD YEAR IN A ROW) I'M HAVING TO PROVIDE REMEDIAL TRAINING/EDUCATION TO AK. HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR'S JUST SO THEY CAN PASS THE ENTRANCE EXAM TO ATTEND COLLEGE. PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND'S SHOULD FOLLOW THE CHILD , WHEREVER THE PARENT'S CHOOSE TO SEND THEM, THEY KNOW WHAT'S BEST. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:31 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: NO on SJR9 / YES on BSA increase

FYI
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From: Staci Cox [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 9:00 PM
To: Sen. Fred Dyson; Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Dennis Egan; Sen. Berta Gardner; Sen. Pete Kelly; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. John Coghill; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Lesli McGuire; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Mike Dunleavy; Sen. Anna Fairclough; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Kevin Meyer; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Hollis French; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Peter Micciche; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Doug Isaacson; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Mark Neuman; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Steve Thompson; Rep. Mike Chenault; Rep. Eric Feige; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Pete Higgins; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Kurt Olson; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Mia Costello; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Bill Stoltze; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Mike Hawker; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Benjamin Nageak; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Geran Tarr; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Cc: sean.parnell@alaska.gov
Subject: NO on SJR9 / YES on BSA increase

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I was pleased to hear Gov. Parnell declare this the "Education Session" during his State of the State address last month, since education is the most important issue for me as a parent of two young children.

I am absolutely opposed to the use of public funding for private schools, and will not vote for any representative who promotes such legislation. I was disturbed to hear that SJR9 moved another step forward today, and urge you not to pass this bill.

Furthermore, I believe the BSA for public education must be increased immediately. Please do not hold today's children hostage to factors outside of their control: the unfunded retirement liability, spiraling health care costs, and increasing energy costs to name a few.

I hope you support Senator Gardner's proposed legislation that would increase the BSA substantially more than Gov. Parnell's proposal. Senator Gardner's proposal takes into account the losses and cuts that have been felt by Alaskan school districts since 2011. As I am sure you are aware, the Anchorage school district requires a BSA increase of \$251 to avoid this year's cuts alone, and \$400 to make up for the past three years of flat funding. I believe inflation proofing the BSA is another essential component of future legislation.

Please don't let education become a partisan issue; our children are worth too much!

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Most sincerely,

Staci Cox

House District 27/Senate District N

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:31 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR 1

FYI

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From: John and Kathleen Tappel [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 12:53 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Keller,

As a retired educator of children for 19 years and a concerned parent and grandparent I urge you to support HJR 1, to allow for more choices, more freedoms to Alaska's parents and guardians of children. I support school choice going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion about what's best for our kids this year and vote on it in November.

Competition naturally makes for better products and services. The same has proven true in education.

I urge you to support HJR 1! The Polls show that Alaskans do support it and want the chance to vote on it in November.

Thank you,

Kathleen R Tappel

Anchorage

District 25

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:31 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

FYI
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From: william luttrell [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 1:42 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Re: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

On Wed, Feb 5, 2014 at 4:07 PM, william luttrell <wm.lut.ir@gmail.com> wrote:
I FULLY SUPPORT THIS EDUCATION BILL . IF YOU LISTENED CLOSELY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA'S PRESIDENT, HE SAID (FOR THE 3RD YEAR IN A ROW) I'M HAVING TO PROVIDE REMEDIAL TRAINING/EDUCATION TO AK. HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR'S JUST SO THEY CAN PASS THE ENTRANCE EXAM TO ATTEND COLLEGE. PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND'S SHOULD FOLLOW THE CHILD , WHEREVER THE PARENT'S CHOOSE TO SEND THEM, THEY KNOW WHAT'S BEST. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:30 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Support SJR 9 and HJR 1

FYI
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From: Joseph Kurber [mailto:jkurber@chena-hills.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 2:16 PM
Subject: Support SJR 9 and HJR 1

I'm an Alaskan who cares about my child's education and I support SJR 9 and HJR 1. It is critically important that our children have the best education possible, and these bills would help do that. Alaskans deserve a chance to vote on these issues.

Please vote to move this bill forward.

Joseph Kurber
Chief Executive Officer
Chena Hills LLC
[REDACTED]

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:23 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Opposition to HJR1

FYI
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From: Ann Gifford [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 8:51 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Opposition to HJR1

Dear members of the House Judiciary Committee,

This is to express my opposition to HJR1/SJR 9. I am an attorney who has worked with public school districts for many years. I am also the parent of three children who graduated from public schools in Juneau. The comments below reflect my personal opinions as a citizen of our state. I am not writing to you on behalf of any client.

I oppose HJR1/SJR9 because it is not good for kids. Here are a few reasons why:

The amendments open the door to vouchers and other forms of direct public assistance to private schools. Public money should not be used to pay for private school. We have taken on the societal obligation to provide a free public K-12 education for all children in the state because as a society we all benefit from an educated, productive populace and we all pay the price in things like higher crime rates and expensive incarceration when kids grow up without a good education. We expect even residents who have no children to pay taxes to support public schools. No parent or child has a right to a "share" of the state's education money. They are entitled to access the public educational program that we collectively provide. If they want something different, that is their choice, but it should also be their responsibility to pay for it.

One big concern is that vouchers don't generally help the kids who need help the most. The students who use vouchers to attend a private school are those whose parents are able to navigate the admissions process, transport their kids to the schools and provide all the other types of support that are needed to help kids succeed in a private school. Many students who live in poverty don't have parents or other family who can do all those things. This is a particularly big problem in Alaska, where many of our neediest students live in remote bush communities where there aren't any private schools to begin with.

Another concern is that vouchers haven't been shown to produce significant benefits even for the students who are able to use them. Most studies on the voucher programs that have been tried in other states show little or no improvement in educational outcomes. Meanwhile, there have been numerous scandals associated with misuse of public funds by private schools who aren't held to the same standards as the public schools. When we spend public money for education, we're entitled to expect safe schools that don't discriminate, that provide due process before excluding students, that use certified teachers and that teach a curriculum that meets state standards. How would we assure that private schools meet these standards?

I am also puzzled by those who say that "competition will lead to better public schools." That idea imports business concepts into the public arena where they don't fit very well. Competition can lead to better results for consumers of something like auto insurance because the businesses that are competing are driven by a profit motive. What is the motivation that would spur a school to improve in the presence of private competition that isn't there otherwise? School teachers and principals don't get paid any more when more children attend their schools. If personal pride is supposed to be the motivating factor, why do people think it would only be triggered by beating out private competition, or that the State needs to fund that private competition to make that happen? School officials obviously take a lot of pride in their successful programs now. Supt. Paramo of Mat-Su clearly is very proud of the successful choice programs Mat-Su offers its students. If pride is the key, recognizing successful programs seems more likely to get results than bashing the less-successful programs and spending public dollars to increase the amount of private competition on what is already an uneven playing field.

Finally, I disagree with those who say that the proposed amendments to our constitution are necessary to assure that school districts can continue to purchase goods or services from private educational vendors like Sylvan Learning Systems. Our constitution prohibits only direct support to private educational institutions. Even though the Alaska Supreme Court has interpreted our constitution to prohibit some types of support to private institutions that other courts have found to be "indirect", I see nothing in our court's decisions that suggests it would invalidate the purchase of secular services or materials for public school students simply because the vendor of them is a private educational organization.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this. I hope that you and our other legislators will turn your attention and effort to ideas for strengthening our public schools, for the benefit of all our children and the future of our state. Sincerely, Ann Gifford

Ann Gifford • [REDACTED]

(907) [REDACTED]

Ernest Prax

From: Jim Pound
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 11:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Oppose HJR1

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 11:07 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Oppose HJR1

FYI*j

From: Denise Koch [mailto:denise_koch@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 16, 2014 6:40 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Cathy Munoz; cjarr@hotmail.com; sean.parnell@alaska.gov
Subject: Oppose HJR1

To Representatives and Governor
Parnell:

I am not a member of the NEA.

I am only representing myself.

I am a mother of two children. One daughter goes to Harborview public school. The other daughter will enter kindergarten at Harborview next year. I am also a proud graduate of public school, from kindergarten through graduate school.

With all the gloom and doom talk about public education, I wanted to say that I'm very happy with my daughter's teachers. However,

the flat funding of education is already leading to increases in classroom size. There is a limit to how many children even a good teacher can reach. This problem has been exacerbated by the decrease in the number of paraeducational aids that assist children with behavioral issues in the classroom.

I want strong public schools. The years of flat funding for education for the past three years followed by this resolution seems like an engineered failure for public school in order to privatize education.

It's fine to foster educational competition with charter schools – as long as they are public. This would be a fair comparison, where schools can't turn low income, low performing, or students with disabilities away.

It's important to preserve strong public schools as a foundation of the common good and of our democracy.

Please oppose HJR 1.

Thank you for your consideration.

Denise Koch

924 D Street

Juneau, AK 99801

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Ernest Prax

From: Jim Pound
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 11:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: House Resolution 1

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 11:04 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: House Resolution 1

FYI "j

From: Jeff and Gretta Trotter [<mailto:trotter@mtaonline.net>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 8:01 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: House Resolution 1

Dear Representative Keller,

No public dollars should be spent on private or religious schools. There are already numerous choices for students to enroll in classes in our public schools. Please focus on ways to support our kids in the public schools.

I am against House Resolution 1.

Sincerely,

Jeff Trotter

971 S Joanne Drive

Palmer, AK 99645