



March 18, 2013

Senator Gary Stevens
State Capitol Room 429
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Stevens:

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide support and input on behalf of NEA-Alaska's nearly 13,000 members for Senate Bill 57.

NEA-Alaska fully supports the legislation that promotes early literacy for Alaska's school children. A voluminous amount of research exists that addresses the gains made by children when they are provided a robust and properly funded early literacy program. Our members often work with students that have only been attending school since the age of seven (7). Many do not have the advantage of learning to read early and well before they are required to begin attending school.

My members are also supportive of your legislation to inflation proof pupil transportation costs. Many districts have to reallocate classroom dollars to cover pupil transportation costs. SB 57 will allow for the fuel costs to at least be assuaged through inflationary increases to the amount of money available to transport students.

However, the legislation that changes the date upon which contracts are issued to tenured teachers is of concern. While we appreciate the need for districts to know what the resources from Juneau will be for the next fiscal year, we believe the date is too late to be justified. If, for some budgetary reason there was to be non-retention of tenured teachers, the May 15 date would occur after several job fairs have been completed and would be unfair to teachers trying to acquire employment in other districts or states. NEA-Alaska would proffer a date of April 20 as a compromise. This date would be late enough to get through the legislative session, while still allowing some time for the employee affected by non-retention to move on with their teaching career.

Thank you for your legislation and for allowing me to submit this letter of qualified support into the official record. The members of NEA-Alaska appreciate your leadership and ingenuity in addressing education issues in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Ron Fuhrer
President