



March 2, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Alaska's 13,000 education support professionals and teachers, I am writing to express my support for HB 98 – Jury Duty Exemption for Teachers.

Over the course of the school year, as students master everything from math to music, their teachers are learning about them. Teachers learn what their students excel at and where they need more help, their career dreams and aspirations, and what inspires them to learn. It is a special relationship that is at the heart of good teaching.

Over the course of the school year, even one day missed is significant. Alaska's teachers do their best to minimize disruptions during the school year. Serving on a jury is a civic duty that teachers gladly undertake, but during the school year jury duty can mean days or even weeks away from the classroom. In rural school districts, jury duty can even require travel to another community.

As the Legislature considers HB 98, we would like to make sure that the final bill strikes the right balance of allowing teachers to put their students first while also giving teachers the ability to do their civic duty. We would support the following provisions:

- An opt-out provision, to allow teachers to serve on a jury during the school year if they feel they can leave their classrooms with minimal disruption.
- A deferral option for classified school district employees who work in the classroom with students. Special education aides, for example, work with students every day. Classified employees serve a vital role in the classroom, and their absence causes disruptions for students as well.

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation. By postponing jury duty until the summer months, HB 98 will keep teachers where they belong during the school year: in the classroom with their students.

Sincerely,

Ron Fuhrer, President, NEA-Alaska