

From: [Sen. Pete Kelly](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: SFIN Public Testimony FW: testimony
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Please find the following public testimony below

From: Jeffrey Merkel [mailto:mrkl8717@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2015 2:45 PM
To: Sen. Pete Kelly
Subject: testimony

Dear Senator Kelly

There are some hardships I believe make us stronger. Forcing our Fairbanks North Star Borough School board to slash education is not one of them. Saddling our kids with a cut-rate school system which increases class sizes, slashes extracurricular activities, vocational programs, art/music programs and other enrichment options, is certainly not one.

I am happy with the efforts which the Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board and the School Administration have put forward. It's the Legislature's priorities which I feel are off base.

Education is of the highest value to the future of a people. Everyone in the adult generation will eventually depend on our children for a decent quality of life as we age. They will be our doctors, our leaders, our businessmen. It will fall to them to keep our economy running, our rivers clean, our frontier values burnished.

As we deal with our fiscal crisis, please take the long view. We can't afford to lose our committed professionals, like teachers, physicians, and managers, either by layoffs or by scaring away potential transplants to our state. We need to show people with families that we care about their concerns by how we do public policy. We need to show our priority by caring for the future at a time like this.

Cutting back on crucial investments is not the only way. I haven't heard anything about the Legislature looking at new and more radical ways to increase our revenue stream while maintaining our quality of life – which excludes a “fire sale” of ours and our children's natural resources.

Could we consider a gasoline tax to take care of infrastructure needs, creating new money streams where people who use roads and airports “tank up?” Why not hit workers from outside (via an income tax) working in mines and on the North Slope? Why not educate our own citizens to pitch in (capping the PFD at \$1000 a year, for example) and help create an environment where all our people can grow and thrive.

Besides these funding sources, there are other cuts available which don't lay the heaviest burden on the next generation, in their critical developing years.

Why not lead with new ideas in this crisis, instead of bickering over cuts?

Respectfully,

Rev. Jeff Merkel

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*'Hope has two beautiful daughters;
their names are Anger and Courage.
Anger at the way things are,
and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.'*
Saint Augustine of Hippo