

James R. Johnsen, Ed.D.

President

Butrovich Bldg, Ste. 202, 910 Yukon Drive
P.O. Box 755000, Fairbanks, AK 99775-5000
Phone: (907) 450-8000; Fax: (907) 450-8012
Email: ua.president@alaska.edu
www.alaska.edu



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March 9, 2017

The Honorable Mia Costello
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Building
Room 504
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Costello,

Thank you for introducing Senate Bill 17 authorizing the University of Alaska to establish the Ted Stevens-Daniel K. Inouye student exchange program with the University of Hawaii.

The University of Alaska enthusiastically supports the development of an academic exchange program that provides an excellent political science education while honoring the tremendous contributions Senator Stevens and Senator Inouye made to Alaska and Hawaii during their decades of public service.

The hallmark of Senator Stevens' career was his dedication to public service and his deep love of Alaska. Senator Inouye, a Democrat from Hawaii, was sometimes called Alaska's third senator, because of his close friendship and strong working relationship with Senator Stevens, a Republican. The collective impact they had on their states and our nation is legendary. They represented America's two youngest states, and the only noncontiguous ones. Political trailblazers from states with tremendous promise but unique and difficult challenges. During one of his many visits to Alaska, Senator Inouye said, "Our parties don't understand, but there are things that are more important than political considerations, and that's friendship." Over their years of public service, Stevens and Inouye demonstrated that bipartisanship can be an effective and powerful force for political innovation and change. It's fitting and appropriate that today's students of politics in Alaska and Hawaii have an opportunity to learn from each other and from the shared legacy of the partnership between Senator Stevens and Senator Inouye.

Please let me know how the University of Alaska can assist you in advancing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

James R. Johnsen