

SENATE BILL NO. 59

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATORS LINCOLN, Ellis

Introduced: 1/24/97

Referred: HESS, State Affairs, Finance

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to a curriculum for Native language education; and providing
2 for an effective date."

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 * **Section 1.** SHORT TITLE. This Act may be known as the Native Language Education
5 Act.

6 * **Sec. 2.** FINDINGS. The legislature finds that

7 (1) Alaska's indigenous Native cultures and languages are unique, essential
8 elements of Alaska's heritage;

9 (2) Alaska's indigenous Native languages are an integral part of Alaska Native
10 people's culture and well-being;

11 (3) knowledge of one's indigenous language is important for the development
12 of social skills and self-esteem; it further contributes to the development of the individual and
13 the ability to communicate;

14 (4) translations from a Native language into English result in the loss of

1 context and deprivation of the full range of social and cultural understanding necessary to
2 function in the individual's environment;

3 (5) when Native children are proficient in their primary indigenous language,
4 they are more likely to do well in school; they also develop a higher degree of proficiency in
5 English;

6 (6) historically, Alaska Native children first learned their Native language in
7 their homes and communities, but, with the passing of Native elders and with a current
8 generation of parents who are not fluent in their Native language, younger generations are less
9 knowledgeable about their language and culture;

10 (7) the loss of indigenous Native languages dates back to the late 1800's when
11 mainstream American missionaries enforced federal policies that forbade the use of Native
12 languages, punished children for speaking their own language, and urged parents to speak only
13 English to their children;

14 (8) the continuation of "no Native language" policies in federal, territorial, and
15 state school systems between 1910 and 1970 resulted in the loss of many Native languages;

16 (9) the fact that only two of the 20 Alaska Native languages are fluently
17 spoken by children today is an indicator of the impending extinction of Native languages;

18 (10) unless action is taken, by the year 2055 only five of the 20 Alaska Native
19 languages will be spoken by anyone, and soon thereafter the Native languages of Alaska may
20 vanish.

21 * **Sec. 3.** AS 14.03.120(e) is amended to read:

22 (e) A district shall, by October 31 of each year, provide to the state board, and
23 make available to the public, a report on the performance of each public school and
24 public school students in the district. The report **shall** [MUST] be entitled "School
25 District Report Card To The Public" and **shall** [MUST] be prepared on a form
26 prescribed by the department. The report must include

27 (1) the percent of district students in the top and bottom quarter of
28 standardized national achievement examinations; results under this paragraph shall be
29 disclosed in a manner that does not reveal the individual identities of students;

30 (2) the percent of students who are not promoted to the next grade;

31 (3) student, parent, and community member comments on the school's

1 performance;

2 (4) the annual percent change in enrollment and the percent of
3 enrollment change due to student transfers into and out of the district;

4 (5) attendance, retention, and graduation rates;

5 (6) the ways in which meaningful parent involvement in school
6 performance was achieved;

7 (7) a summary and evaluation of the environmental education
8 curriculum described in AS 14.30.380;

9 (8) **if Native language education is provided, a summary and**
10 **evaluation of the curriculum described in AS 14.30.420;**

11 (9) other indicators of school performance required by the state board;
12 and

13 (10) [(9)] other indicators of school performance selected by the
14 district.

15 * **Sec. 4.** AS 14.30 is amended by adding a new section to article 6 to read:

16 **Sec. 14.30.420. Native language education.** (a) A school board in a district
17 in which a majority of the students are Alaska Natives shall establish a local Native
18 language curriculum advisory board for each school in the district in which a majority
19 of the students are Alaska Natives. If the local Native language curriculum advisory
20 board recommends the establishment of a Native language education curriculum for
21 a school, the school board may initiate and conduct a Native language education
22 curriculum within grades K through 12 at that school. The program, if established,
23 must include Native languages traditionally spoken in the community in which the
24 school is located. Each school board conducting a program of Native language
25 education shall implement the program as a part of regular classroom studies and shall
26 use

27 (1) instructors who are certified under AS 14.20.020 or 14.20.025; and

28 (2) to the extent possible

29 (A) instructors and instructional materials available through the
30 University of Alaska; and

31 (B) audio-visual, computer, and satellite technology.

- 1 (b) In this section,
2 (1) "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.250;
3 (2) "Native" means a person of one-fourth degree or more Alaskan
4 Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut blood.
5 * **Sec. 5.** This Act takes effect July 1, 1997.