

HB

427

AN ACT TO REDEFINE "SCHOOL YEAR" FOR THE ALASKA STUDENT LOAN PROGRAM

Currently subsection (5) of Section 160 ("Definitions") of AS 14.43 reads *"school year means the period from September 1 of one year through August 31 of the following year;"*

Our request is to amend the definition to read: *"school year' means an academic period that is a minimum of 30 weeks of instructional time that begins between September 1 of one year and August 31 of the following year;"*

WHY?

The current definition of "school year" assumes an agricultural society, such as existed when public education in America began in earnest in the 1820's and 1830's. Then the vast majority, perhaps 85 to 90 percent, of Americans lived on family farms. The school year was designed to begin after fall harvest and end before spring planting.

Today hardly more than one percent of our population lives on family farms. That school calendar is obsolete, especially for higher education in urban America.

The U.S. Department of Education defines an academic year as thirty weeks of instruction, and virtually all colleges and universities follow that pattern, either offering two fifteen-week semesters or three ten-week quarters. However most continue to use that "agricultural" calendar, making it difficult to offer a fast-track program for urban individuals who want to get on with their education in a vigorous fashion. Yet, the U.S. Department of Education will offer a full loan to a full-time student who completes successfully a thirty-week academic year, and will offer another loan as soon as that student begins another similar period of full-time study.

Charter College, in Anchorage, has experimented with offering five ten-week quarters in one calendar year or one and two-thirds academic years in one calendar year. That has proven popular because it permits a student, intent upon a serious and vigorous approach to education, to complete a two-year associate degree in just fifteen months. Charter is now in the planning stage of four-year bachelor degree programs, which will permit ambitious and hard-working students to complete their degrees in as little as thirty consecutive months. But unlike students in other programs following the slower and more traditional calendar, they cannot now get four state loans for their degrees, given the current definition of a school year. They deserve the option of taking on the challenge of a fast-track baccalaureate degree. Under that circumstance, the sum total of their loans for their education will be no more than that for their counterparts following traditional calendars. However, the cost of their education will have been reduced because they will have yielded less foregone income during their college years when they were in no position to hold full-time jobs.

There will be no additional cost to the state or to the loan program as a result of this redefinition.

(7)

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Referred to Committee: March 1, 2000

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Finance

Date of Committee Action: 03/16/00

The HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES Committee considered:

HB 427

HOUSE BILL NO. 427

POSTSECONDARY LOAN PROGRAM:SCHOOL YR

"An Act relating to the school year for purposes of the postsecondary student loan program; and providing for an effective date."

recommends it be replaced with the following committee substitute

CSHB 427 (HES)

the same title
 a new title

additional referral to _____ Committee
 attached amendment(s)

ADOPTS: _____ Letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): (Dept) _____

APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date) _____

fiscal note(s) _____

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____

SIGNING WITH RECOMMENDATIONS	DP	DNP	NR	AM
<i>Jul Dyer</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<i>John Mitchell</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<i>[Signature]</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<i>Tom Blinn</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE *Jul Dyer* 3/16/00