

HB

5

FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA
1999 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

BILL NO. SS HB 5

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction)	Dept. Affected	Education
Title	BRU	K-12 Support
education:	Component	New - Voucher Program
Sponsor	Representatives Kohring, Coghill	
Requester	House HES	Component Serial No. _____

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims	****	****	****	****	****	
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	****	****	****	****	****	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

FUND SOURCE	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005
1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type)						
TOTAL	****	****	****	****	****	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY99) cost: _____

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The legislation requires that the Department of Education administer an education voucher pilot program. The department is unable to evaluate the cost of the program as no data exists to show how many students would participate in the program or how that number would change over the life of the program that would sunset on June 30, 2004.

Prepared by	Eddy Jeans, School Finance Manager	Phone 465-8679
Division	Education Support Services	Date/Time 2/16/99 11:41 AM
Approved by Commissioner:	Shirley J. Holloway, Ph.D.	Date 2/16/99
Agency	Department of Education	

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REPRESENTATIVE VIC KOHRING
DISTRICT 26

SPONSOR STATEMENT **SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 5** Representative Vic Kohring

"By any measure one wishes to apply, American schools still fail to provide many of our Nation's children with the education they need and deserve. Standardized test scores used to chart student performance have declined or remained static during the past three years. U.S. students score low in math and science when compared with their peers in other industrialized nations. The high school dropout rate remains unacceptably high.

Education reform measures have not generated the progress we need. It is now time to make basic structural changes in our system of education. President Bush and I view school choice as the cornerstone for restructuring America's system of elementary and secondary education.

The evidence favoring choice is too compelling to ignore. Often States and districts have implemented choice programs and witnessed dramatic educational improvements, Dropout rates decline. Teacher satisfaction improves. Test scores rise. Student behavior and attendance improve. Parents become more involved in their children's education.

Choice is successful because it improves schools from the bottom up. It encourages schools to develop distinctive "flavors" and unique qualities that meet the needs of students. Choice allows each school to excel at something special, rather than sinking to the lowest common denominator and suiting few.

No children, no matter their circumstances, should be held captive in a school that fails to meet their needs or is not doing a good job of educating. Choice offers youngsters a chance for a better education--and for a better life."

These are not my words, but the words of Lauro Cavazos, former U.S. Secretary of Education. I encourage your support for educational choice. Help pass Sponsor Substitute House Bill 5 for Alaska's future, its children.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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REPRESENTATIVE VIC KOHRING
DISTRICT 26

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 5

Section 1. Adds a new chapter establishing an educational voucher program.

Section 14.45.150 - Requires the Department of Education to administer a pilot educational voucher program.

Section 14.45.155 - Allows a parent or guardian, who are below 200% of the federal poverty level, to apply for an educational voucher from the department. The value of a educational voucher is the actual cost of the child's education or the per student amount of state aid represented by the child in that school district, whichever is less. The educational voucher will be paid to the parent or guardian of the child, who is attending private, or home school, in quarterly payments. Allows the department to adopt regulations to administer the program.

Section 14.45.160 Provides that the legislature may appropriate money for educational vouchers. Provides for a pro rata reduction in each voucher if insufficient funds are appropriated.

Section 2. Provides a sunset clause that will repeal the educational voucher program June 30, 2004.

Section 3. Establishes an effective date.

LEGAL SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

January 22, 1999

SUBJECT: Vouchers for education (Work Order No. 21-LS0347)

TO: Representative Allen Kemplen
Attn: Chris

FROM: Michael F. Ford . *2* ✓
Legislative Counsel

You have asked if the legislature could create a voucher system for state education. A system under which the state distributes vouchers worth a certain amount of money to be used for tuition in public or private schools would violate Article VII, section 1, of the state constitution. That section provides, in part:

No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.

The Alaska Supreme Court has interpreted that section to mean that a tuition assistance program awarding students attending private colleges an amount equal to the difference between public and private college tuition is unconstitutional. Sheldon Jackson College v. State, 599 P.2d 127 (Alaska 1979).

Sheldon Jackson is directly relevant to the proposed voucher system. In that case, the Court established a three-part test for determining the validity of public programs that provide economic benefit to private schools. First, the Court looks at the breadth of the class to which the economic benefits are directed. Second, the Court looks at how the public money is to be used; i.e., whether the benefit to the private school is incidental to education (as with fire and police protection) or whether it amounts to direct aid to education (as with tuition and books). Third, the Court looks at the magnitude of the benefit to private education. Significantly, the Court noted that channeling funds to a private school through an intermediary (such as the student or parent) will not save an otherwise unconstitutional program providing aid to private schools.

In the Sheldon Jackson case, the Court struck down the state's tuition assistance program as violative of all three parts of the test. The class which the tuition assistance program benefitted consisted almost entirely of private schools, the funds were to be used directly for educational purposes (tuition), the benefit conferred on these schools was quite substantial, and the fact that the money was actually paid directly to the students, not the schools, did not

mitigate the fact that the students were required to turn the money directly over to the private schools.

The proposed voucher system suffers the same infirmities as the tuition assistance program did. Although the tuition vouchers would be given to all students in the state, only students attending private schools would benefit since there is currently no tuition for attending public school. Thus, for the class of students attending public school, the vouchers would be meaningless. The effect would be the same as with the tuition assistance program: to benefit only the private schools.

This does not imply that a program giving equal benefit to public and private school students would survive judicial scrutiny, because any direct aid to private schools is constitutionally suspect. But the fact that the proposed voucher system benefits only private schools reduces the likelihood that the system is valid.

The second part of the test would also be violated because the vouchers would be used as a direct benefit to private education (tuition) rather than an incidental benefit.

It is not clear whether the third part of the test, the magnitude of the benefit, presents a problem. That would depend on the value of the vouchers in relation to the cost of the tuition. If the vouchers are to cover the entire cost of tuition, the benefit to private schools would be substantial, and consequently unconstitutional¹. While there is no precise line on this issue, the voucher would appear to be a substantial and unconstitutional benefit unless the voucher was a small percentage of the actual cost of tuition.

Finally, the fact that the vouchers would be given to students or parents of students would not save the voucher system. As with the tuition grant program, the vouchers may be redeemed only through the private schools. Therefore, they confer a direct benefit on the private schools, in contravention of the constitutional prohibition.

The proposed voucher system is also potentially in violation of the "establishment" and "freedom of religion" clauses of Article I, section 4 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska. I am aware that a system in Wisconsin has survived a constitutional challenge under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. However, the Court in Sheldon Jackson noted that first amendment cases upholding forms of assistance to religious schools have no relevance to the preceding analysis of Article VII, section 1 of the state constitution. The prohibition against state aid to any private schools in the Alaska Constitution is much broader than the prohibition under the First Amendment which relates only to religious schools. Thus, the United States Supreme Court case upholding a Minnesota program of tax credits for public and private school expenses against a First Amendment challenge (Mueller v. Allen, 463 U.S. 388 (1983)), as well as the voucher system approved in Wisconsin, are not relevant to the analysis of the proposed voucher system in Alaska. These cases did not consider the kind of prohibition against direct aid to private schools found in the Alaska Constitution. In other words, even if the voucher system could survive scrutiny

Representative Allen Kemplen

January 22, 1999

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under the First Amendment, it would still violate Article VII, section 1 of the state constitution.

In order to survive constitutional scrutiny under the state constitution, a voucher system would have to satisfy all three parts of the Sheldon Jackson test. It is difficult to imagine a voucher system, as I understand the voucher system to work, which would not violate the constitution. The system would have to benefit students in public as well as private schools without giving any substantial direct benefit to education in the private schools. By its nature, the voucher system seems to militate against this.

Finally, the problem could be circumvented by amending Article VII, section 1 of the state constitution. You should be aware, however, that an attempt to do this in 1976 was rejected by the voters of the state in a ballot proposition. As you probably know, a proposed constitutional amendment and statutory voucher system are before the House in HJR 6 and HB 5.

In conclusion, the proposed voucher system suffers serious constitutional problems to which I see no simple solution. Unless amended, the state constitution will not allow such direct benefit to private education.

If I may be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

MFF:jdr
99-030.jdr

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

PLEASE REPLY TO

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DEPARTMENT OF LAW

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

February 22, 1999

FEB 25 1999

Honorable Fred Dyson
Co-Chair, House HESS Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol - Room 428
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: Constitution Issues Raised by SSHB 5

Dear Representative Dyson:

You have asked for a quick response from the Attorney General to questions raised in your Committee regarding the constitutionality of a proposed school voucher program. SSHB 5 would establish an educational voucher program which would provide a voucher equal to the cost of private school tuition to the parents of students enrolled in private schools. We agree with the conclusion of the January 22, 1999, Opinion Memorandum of Legislative Counsel Michael F. Ford, that "the proposed voucher system suffers serious constitutional problems."

The SSHB 5 proposal to provide reimbursement of private school tuition appears to clearly violate Article VII, section 1 of the Alaska Constitution, as interpreted by the Alaska Supreme Court. Art. VII, sec. 1, in pertinent part, states:

No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.

In *Sheldon Jackson College v. State*,¹ the Alaska Supreme Court directly considered the application of Article VII, sec. 1, to a state tuition grant program which was enacted by the Alaska legislature in 1976. Under that grant program, each state resident who attended a private college within the state was eligible for a state grant in an amount equal to the difference between the tuition charged by the private school and the tuition charged by a public college in the same area. The state payment was made directly to the student, not to the college. In interpreting Article VII, sec. 1, the Alaska Supreme Court decision set out several distinct principles or factors which were

¹ 599 P.2d 127 (Alaska 1979).

found applicable to that tuition voucher program, and which we believe would apply directly to the proposal of SSHB 5 as well. The Court concluded:

First, the class primarily benefited by the tuition grant program consists only of private colleges and their students. Though the appellants characterize the statute as merely equalizing the positions of private and public university students, effectively the chief beneficiaries are the private colleges themselves.²

Further:

the public funds expended under AS 14.17.776 constitute nothing less than a subsidy of the education received by the student at his or her private college, and thus implicate the core concern of the direct benefit provision.³

In regard to the fact that no direct payment was made by the state to the private schools under that program, the Court held:

Finally, though the tuition grants are nominally paid from the public treasury directly to the student, the student here is merely a conduit for the transmission of state funds to private colleges. Before the state will deliver the check to the student, the latter must certify under oath and under penalty of perjury that he or she will pay it over to the college. AS 14.40.786. Simply interposing an intermediary "does not have a cleansing effect and somehow cause the funds to lose their identity as public funds. . ."⁴

Article VII, sec. 1, of the Alaska Constitution unquestionably applies to elementary and secondary schools as well as to colleges and universities. We believe that under the express holdings of the *Sheldon Jackson* decision, the SSHB 5 proposed private school voucher program would be held unconstitutional.

The SSHB 5 proposal for vouchers to home schooling families raises constitutional implications from the establishment clause prohibitions of the state and federal constitution,⁵ which have been uniformly interpreted to deny expenditures of public funds for sectarian educational programs and materials. We can also foresee challenges to the home schooling vouchers under the public purpose doctrine of the Alaska Constitution⁶ due to the extremely broad category of costs and fees which appear to be compensable by the state under that section.

² *Sheldon Jackson*, supra at 131.

³ *Sheldon Jackson*, at 131.

⁴ *Sheldon Jackson*, supra at 132.

⁵ U.S. CONST. amend. I; Alaska CONST. art. I, sec. 4.

⁶ Alaska CONST. art. IX, sec. 6.

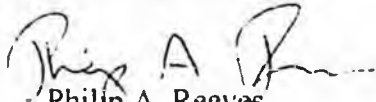
Honorable Fred Dyson
Co-Chair, House HESS Committee

February 22, 1999
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In summary, the private school voucher proposal of SSIB 5 appears to be fundamentally at odds with Art. VII, sec. 1 of the Alaska Constitution and we believe would be invalidated under the *Sheldon Jackson* analysis of the Alaska Supreme Court. In addition, the home schooling vouchers raise significant constitutional concerns under both the establishment clause and the public purposes clause of the Alaska Constitution.

Sincerely,

BRUCE M. BOTELHO
ATTORNEY GENERAL

By: 
Philip A. Reeves
Assistant Attorney General

PAR:ebc

cc: Honorable John Coghill, Alaska State House

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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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February 23, 1999

The Honorable Fred Dyson, Co-Chair
House Health, Education and Social Services Committee
State Capitol, Room 104
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Dyson:

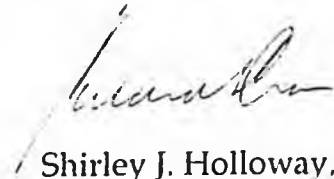
At the February 16 the Health, Education and Social Services Committee hearing on vouchers, questions were asked of Department of Education staff that I would like to answer.

- 1) Representative Brice asked how Sec. 14.31.020 (d) might be implemented, and how much direction from the legislature would be necessary to regulate and implement the bill. Sec. 14.31.020 (d) reads "the department may adopt regulations necessary to administer the education voucher program under this section." Therefore, assuming the program is constitutional, the only way to ensure program quality or accountability for this voucher system would be in Department of Education regulation.
- 2) Representative Whitaker asked if federal funding and local funding would also be provided for students participating in the voucher program. The answer is no. Only state aid would be made available for students participating in the voucher program.
- 3) Representative Kemplen asked if the legislature appropriated funds that were not equal to the amount applied for by parents with students in the voucher program, what would be the result? The bill states that if the legislature appropriates insufficient funds, the department would distribute the available funds on a pro rata basis.

Letter, Representative Dyson
February 23, 1999
Page 2 of 2

As you know, the State Board of Education is opposed to any voucher plan that would take public money from public schools and give it to private schools. As the Board considers the topic of choice within the public school system, we hope to continue this constructive dialogue with the legislature. We certainly share the same goal to improve student learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shirley J. Holloway".

Shirley J. Holloway, Ph.D.
Commissioner

cc: The Honorable John Coghill, Jr.

STATE OF ALASKA

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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February 16, 1999

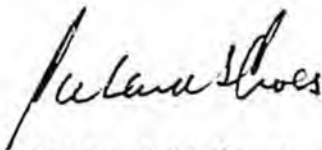
The Honorable John Coghill, Jr., Co-Chair
House Health, Education and Social Services Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 104
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Coghill:

The State Board of Education has taken a strong position in opposition to any voucher plan that would take money from the public school system and give it to private schools. The Board is careful to note that it supports expanding parental choice within the public school system. Enclosed is the State Board of Education Motion passed January 21, 1999.

Thank you for your attention to the State Board of Education's position on this issue. Your Committee members and staff are invited to attend the upcoming Board meeting scheduled for February 24-26, at Goldbelt Place, 801 West 10th Street, Juneau. The Board plans to discuss school choice during its work session at 10:00 AM, Wednesday February 24.

Sincerely,



Shirley J. Holloway, Ph.D.
Commissioner

cc: The Honorable Fred Dyson

Enclosure

*Exact of Unapproved minutes of the
Alaska State Board of Education meeting
January 21, 1999*

The following motion was unanimously carried by the Alaska State Board of Education at its meeting held on January 21, 1999 in Juneau, Alaska.

The State Board of Education opposes any voucher plan that would take public money from public schools and give it to private schools. The Board supports expanding parental choice within public schools. The motion was seconded and carried by unanimous roll call vote.



Lawrence a. Wiget, Ed.D.
Executive Director, Public Affairs
Anchorage School District
4600 DeBarr Rd.
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TO: HOUSE HESS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SUBJECT: HB 5: VOUCHERS FOR EDUCATION

DATE: FEBRUARY 16, 1999

Attached please find a copy of **A Resolution Opposing Private and Parochial School Vouchers** passed by the Anchorage School Board on April 13, 1999.

The Anchorage School Board urges policy makers to oppose efforts to use public tax dollars to finance private and parochial school vouchers. The Anchorage School Board also urges policy makers to work with local communities to ensure that our public schools provide world-class educational opportunities for children.

Rationale. Public schools educate every child, regardless of race, ability, religion, economic circumstance or special need. Public schools, through their elected school boards, are directly accountable to the citizens of the community for the expenditure of public funds.

Taxpayer-funded vouchers for private and parochial school tuition and fees drain scarce resources from public school classrooms and diminish revenues available for public schools.

POSITION STATEMENT

Be it further resolved that we urge policy makers to work with our local community ensure that our public schools provide world-class educational opportunities for all our children.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 13th day of April, 1998.

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD


Debbie Ossiander, President

Kathi Gillespie
Kelly Haney
Dave Werdal

Rita Holthouse
Harriet Drummond
Peggy Robinson-Wilson

Bob Christal, Superintendent

The New Accountability

*If schools can't do a better job of educating all students,
parents will opt out of public education altogether*

BY MARC S. TUCKER AND CHARLES S. CLARK

When school officials vow to resign or take pay cuts if students' test scores don't rise, you can be sure the age of accountability in education is here. One example of the new accountability is Swanton, Ohio, Superintendent Roger Barnes, who has promised to resign if test scores fail to improve. Another is Philadelphia Superintendent David Hornbeck, whose contract stipulates that he will receive a \$16,000 annual bonus if test scores go up but an \$8,000 pay cut if scores stay low. Similarly, Alexandria, Va., Superintendent Herbert Berg stands to receive a bonus of up to \$30,000 if enough elementary and middle school student pass the state's new Standards of Learning examination.

Why is this happening now? Is it yet another fad that will once again draw the attention of managers and policy makers away from instruction, which is what really matters? Or is it somehow at the heart of the matter?

To find the answer, educators might look at some lessons from the business world—in particular, the transformation Xerox Corp. went through in the early 1980s. At the time, Xerox was among the world's most widely admired industrial corporations. Yet just as David Kearns was becoming the new chief executive officer, he found out that Japanese competitors were learning how to design copiers and build them in a fraction of the time it took Xerox to design and build comparable machines. He also learned that these machines were of substantially higher quality than Xerox mod-

els and—worst of all—that the Japanese were able to sell them to consumers for less than it cost Xerox just to build a comparable machine. The challenge was simple, if daunting: to make enormous improvements in quality and time to market and, at the same time, to greatly reduce cost. Xerox was forced to learn to produce more (or better) for less. And it did.

That is precisely the challenge faced by American education. The economic facts of life have dramatically changed in recent decades, and the facts of American education have not kept pace. Since 1950, the proportion of American jobs available to people with limited literacy and strong backs has been steadily decreasing, and the proportion requiring high-level skills and knowledge has been swiftly rising. Nevertheless, despite a slow, steady rise in the educational achievement of our high school graduates, as evidenced by the rising numbers attending college, the National Center on Education Statistics reports that half or more of the young people who leave our high schools with or without a diploma have no more than an eighth-grade level of literacy—well below what it will take to land jobs that enable wage earners to support a family above poverty level.

The only way public schools will survive is by learning how to educate virtually all of their students to a much higher standard at a cost no greater than current costs. That's why coming up with an adequate response to this challenge is no fad. It is a matter of survival. If public school districts do not muster a credible response, then those who have political power will opt out of the public school system and take as much public money with them as they can.

Paving the way

In the past, when educators have talked about accountability, they have asked, how can we produce public data on

Marc S. Tucker (mtucker@ncee.org) is president of the National Center on Education and the Economy in Washington, D.C. Charles S. Clark (cclark@ncee.org) is the center's senior writer-editor.

performance? But the public has been asking a different question: If students are not performing, who (among the professional educators) is responsible, and what should happen to them? The public is fed up with what it sees as excuses. It demands improved student performance at no increase in cost. Public educators do themselves no good by complaining. Whether we call it accountability to the public (as educators would have it) or better management (as business and government would have it), the challenge is to get much better results at no increase in cost.

In the business world, this process begins with top management being very clear as to the organization's goals, formulating those goals in measurable terms, communicating them clearly and forcefully to everyone in the organization, and demonstrating in every conceivable way that the goals are not mere rhetoric but real core values on which the actions of top management will be based every day.

It continues with devising accurate measures of performance against the goals and then constructing a system in which managers produce data on those measures and send that information directly to the people who need it. Top management then seeks to make sure that the people who are in direct contact with the customer and who are actually making the products are empowered to decide how the product will be made and how the service will be rendered. This entails cutting intervening layers of staff and management and giving real authority over budget, hiring, staffing, and so on to the people who previously were simply told what to do.

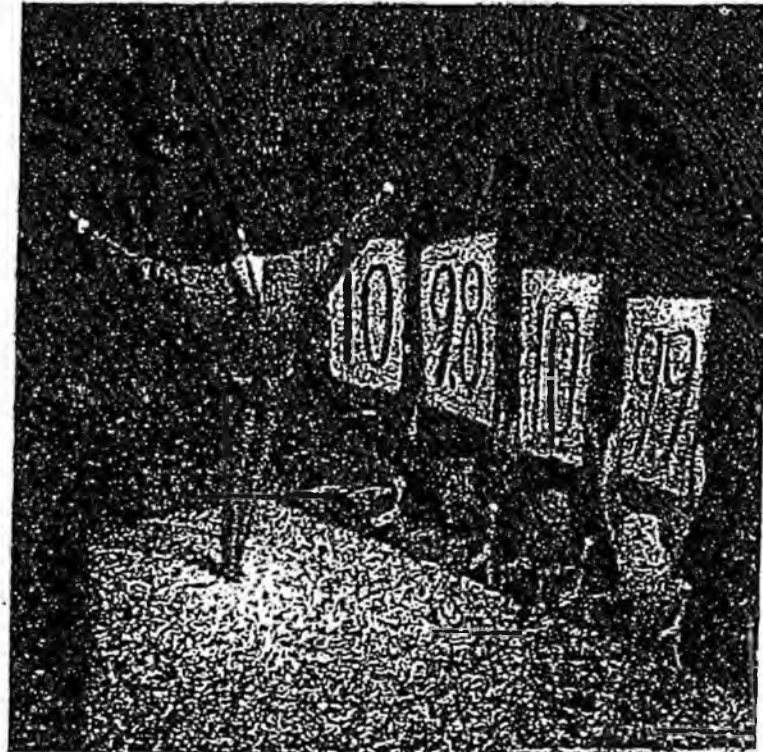
But none of this happens until the newly empowered people on the front line are given strong incentives to make every possible effort to reach the established goals. It is only by changing incentives that top management can be sure people on the front line will use their new power to benefit the organization. So systems are set up to make sure that units in the organization that make continuous improvements are rewarded and that units that do not improve face consequences.

Nowhere, we submit, are these ideas more applicable and more needed than in public education, especially since various school reform efforts over the past 20 years have helped paved the way for them.

The first such reform is site-based management, which responds to the call for pushing decisions about how to get the job done right, down to the people making the product or rendering the service. As the 1986 Carnegie report *A Nation Prepared* pointed out, the bureaucratic mode of management that dominates public education might well be replaced by something that looks more like the professional practice model that characterizes true professions such as architecture, medicine, and law. In that model, the faculty of the school would get to make the important decisions about how the needs of the students could best be met, within the

bounds determined by the standards set by the larger system. Whatever rewards came from doing a good job would be shared among the faculty, and the faculty would suffer whatever consequences came from a poor performance.

But in the real world, school boards and superintendents proved reluctant to give up power when they would still be accountable in the end. Instead, in many places, they instituted site-based councils composed typically of teachers and parents and presided over by the principal. Sadly, this conception of site-



based management produced the worst of all possible worlds. Power was not transferred from the central office to the school, because the central office did not trust the schools to do the right thing—nor did it want to give up long-held powers. Accountability, instead of being strengthened, was actually weakened. Weak principals in this system simply deferred to the site council, saying to the superintendent when something went wrong, "I knew that was the wrong way to go, but it was what the council decided to do." Strong principals spent much of their time subverting the council to get it to do what the principal thought right. The council became just another group of people who could say No but was not itself accountable.

Merit pay for teachers was the second precursor to modern accountability. Following the release of the famous federal report *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, many states decided to "get tough" on teachers and insist that their pay be related to the quality of their teaching. Tennessee took the most visible lead in this direction, but many other areas followed,

including local school districts such as the Fairfax County (Va.) Public Schools.

Teachers, however, hated this system and, in the end, successfully mobilized political power to defeat it. Many people concluded that it would never be possible to link teacher pay to student performance unless the unions were broken. That was the wrong conclusion. The reason these merit pay plans failed is that teachers perceived them as unfair. Teachers everywhere had seen principals using their power to reward those they believe to be loyal and punish those they believe to be disloyal. And the merit pay plans typically relied on principals to make the decision as to whose teaching was meritorious.

The third development that laid the groundwork for the new accountability was the move toward academic standards. From President Bush's call to governors to join him at the nation's first education summit in 1989 to President Clinton's call for "national—but not federal—standards" at the beginning of his second term, an enormous amount of work has been done by states, a consortium of states and districts, and national organizations devoted to teaching in the core disciplines.

In the eyes of many observers, however, the resulting standards vary widely in quality. Few make it clear what kind of student work will meet the standards, and few states have developed assessments that match the standards. Hence most of the standards are no more than symbolic. Teachers cannot teach to them, and few have any interest in doing so because they know their performance will be measured by the tests their districts administer—not by the standards their state has adopted.

The most important lesson from these precursors to today's accountability is how weak they are against the strength of the system they are intended to change. From one end of the nation to the other, the basic model of school system governance and organization is unvarying and deeply rooted. So was the mass production model in the business world. The only way to really change the way the organization functions is to see all these components as part of a much larger design for changing the way the system works.

Three good starts

Though no school district we know of has succeeded in creating this larger design, we believe three contemporary models of accountability are much further along than the rest. They are the systems used in Kentucky, Chicago, and Edmonton in the province of Alberta, Canada.

The landmark Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 established a six-part "accountability index." Every two years, student progress has been measured by statewide test scores in reading, math, social studies, and science, as well as writing performance on open-ended test questions, a problem-solving activity, and portfolios of student work. An additional score has been factored in that measures attendance and graduation rates. Schools that outperform their improvement goals on these publicly released scores receive cash awards from the state, which the faculty may

choose to put in their own pockets in the form of salary bonuses or invest in staff development or a schoolwide improvement program. In this system, the schools have been essentially competing not against each other but against their own record, trying to do better each year than they did the preceding year. The rewards have gone not to individual teachers based on a supervisor's often biased or self-interested assessment, but on the basis of the scores that students received on an externally scored assessment.

Kentucky's statewide reform is not just a story of rewards for improved performance; it is also a story of consequences for failure. Kentucky identifies schools and districts that are not improving or are actually slipping behind and makes available highly skilled educators to serve as change agents. Kentucky schools that are unfortunate enough to earn this status usually improve quickly. But those that continue to perform poorly risk being reorganized, and their staff members risk dismissal.

If rewards are one side of the accountability coin, penalties are the flip side. In Chicago, 1995 reforms that brought schools under direct control of Democratic Mayor Richard Daley have prompted the school system's CEO to place more than 100 schools "on probation." Such schools are required to get help from one of a number of providers of outside technical assistance approved by the district central office and are assigned an "academic probation officer." This officer is empowered to recommend expedited dismissal of school staff, including the principal, and must approve of the school's program plan and budget every year before they are forwarded to the district central office. Students whose performance is exceptionally poor must attend a special summer school. Scores of principals and hundreds of teachers are at risk of being dismissed in Chicago under the provisions of this plan, and their schools reengineered or reconstituted.

The drive for accountability has not been simply a story of standards, assessments, empowerment, and rewards and consequences, however. Holding people accountable also requires being clear about who is responsible for what. That is the centerpiece of the Edmonton system, which has revolutionized relations between individual schools and the central office and attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners from three continents.

Edmonton's pioneering system streamlines the organizational hierarchy so that everyone reports to just one "boss." It then allocates district resources in dollars to the schools, each of which will be held accountable for student results on benchmarked tests, as well as the results of "customer satisfaction" surveys. The schools then acquire their own professional staff, learning materials, equipment, and supplies, from textbooks to globes to art supplies. If the schools are going to be held accountable for student results, the reasoning goes, then the schools, and not the central office, should control the mix of resources needed to produce those results.

The support functions in the central office, which account for by far the greatest fraction of central office employees,

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must derive their budgets from the decisions that schools make about how to spend their money to get results for the students. And the schools can choose to spend that money outside the central office for services such as transportation or psychological counseling. This shift in budget power means that central office service staffs become accountable to the schools for their performance. Poor performance results in no dollars and therefore no employment for the central office service staff.

This system, of course, is likely to lead to many negative effects unless staff members at local schools are highly motivated to make decisions about the use of their new funds on the basis of student achievement rather than the convenience or ambitions of senior staff in the central office.

In all three cases—Kentucky, Chicago, and Edmonton—control of the program and budget of the schools moved from the central office to the school itself. And in varying degrees, control over the resources has been vested in the person or body that would get the rewards for good re-

sults—or suffer the consequences if results were poor. In all of these cases, too, many or all of the rules and regulations that had been in place to determine the inputs into the educational process were swept away. In their place was put a set of incentives related to the schools' success or failure in producing results.

Putting the pieces together

What would an ideal relationship between the central office and individual schools look like under a first-class accountability system? In the box on this page we sketch such a relationship.

Almost every piece of this system is in place somewhere in the United States or in the world. But there is not yet any place where strong incentives for students to achieve have been combined with strong incentives for the professional staff to help students achieve. When these elements are finally combined, we will be watching for unprecedented gains in student performance. ❖

A comprehensive accountability model

Functions of the central office

• Set the student performance standards, including a base salary and entitlement to a cost-of-living increase and a merit-based salary increase, and standards of pay for positions (teachers, administrators, and other staff) based on the national standards for each position and the amount of research and development done in the university or college.

• Decide on the measures of student performance that will be used to assess progress toward the standards.

• Decide on other common measures of results, including customer satisfaction surveys.

• Decide on the responsibilities of individual groups of staff in the school and the way in which they will be rewarded for their performance.

• Decide on the results at the school level that will be rewarded and to whom the rewards will go.

• Define the results at the school level and how they will be measured and how they will be rewarded.

• Decide on the formula to allocate resources to the schools.

• Negotiate contracts with all major unions.

• Set standards for each school level, including a plan for how to get strong orientation, program to new teachers, and maintain a stock of teachers and other staff available to meet the needs of the schools.

• Publish a comparison of the data and standards by which the schools must abide.

• Monitor the compliance of the schools with the laws and regulations of the state and federal government and national accreditation systems.

• Collect and publish data on the central office and the system.

• Provide information on the central office programs, including the central office program, to all schools and monitor the schools' compliance with the central office programs.

• Decide on a method of assessing the performance of the schools and publish the results among public schools, including the results regarding the performance of protected places (e.g., schools that are not permitted to select their principal or teachers) and other schools.

• Provide parents (through a parent council or council) with information on the school's performance and the results of the schools' efforts to meet the standards.

Functions of the individual schools

• Decide on the goals and objectives for the school to develop and implement the school goals and plan.

• Decide on the code of conduct to establish order and discipline.

• Add the school standards and goals to those of the central office.

• Decide on the measures they will use to assess progress toward those goals and the methods they will use to track progress.

• Decide on the basic research, practices, or curricula and instructional programs designed to help students to meet the standards.

• Decide on the best staffing structure to implement the instructional program.

• Decide how to organize the school (e.g., classes, students, classes, what the master schedule will be, and whether there will be after-school, Saturday, and summer school programs).

• Decide on the best way to use non-personnel resources to get their students to the standards.

• Decide what skills and knowledge the staff will need to execute the plan and what professional development program best provides those skills and that knowledge.

• Decide how the school wants to involve parents, social service, and public health agencies, local employers, and others in the life of the school and build a plan to make that involvement successful.

• Build a base on which the school is an operational plan and operating budget that will make best use of the available resources.

• Implement the plan and review it continuously based on analysis of the data on student performance gathered by the school and the central office.

• Be prepared to make school-level goals, whether the school would actively recruit a body of students and parents interested in those goals and to provide a regular reporting plan.

• Provide information on the school's performance to the central office, to the parents, and to the public.



NEA-ALASKA

Affiliated with the National Education Association

Pres

SSHB 5 – Tuition Vouchers NEA-Alaska Position Statement

SSHB 5 is an attempt to provide low income Alaskans with an education voucher of an undetermined amount to educate children at home or at a private school. NEA-Alaska opposes SSHB 5 because it is unconstitutional, vouchers are too expensive and vouchers will not improve student performance in Alaska's public schools.

Article IX, sec. 6, Constitution of the State of Alaska states, "no money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution."

At a time when the State of Alaska is faced with a \$1 billion deficit, a voucher proposal extending public funding to children enrolled in private and denominational schools and home schools is an extravagance we cannot afford. Our schools are not adequately and equitably funded now.

At a time when our public schools are required to set new educational standards and will be requiring students to pass difficult graduation examinations, weakening educational opportunities of public school children by diverting fiscal resources from public school classrooms to private and home providers is counter productive. Taking money away from these efforts and giving it to students who aren't required to meet similar standards, pass tests or improve learning is inconsistent with the legislature's quality school initiative embodied in SB 36. Giving public money to private and home schools that have no accountability to the public or have no requirement to meet quality school standards is a poor exercise in fiscal and instructional responsibility.

How much will SSHB 5 cost? In 1997, a year for which data exists, there were 157,691 children between the ages of 5 and 19 of which 129,940 were

instead of a public education or if current funding is diverted from public classrooms to pay for the voucher, urban schools will be hurt most.

The only variable limiting voucher distribution is a parent's standing in relation to the federal poverty line. How many Alaskans with school age children fall above or below this line? SSHB 5 invites those with household incomes greater than 200 times the federal poverty guideline to receive an education voucher. The poverty level for a family of four in 1997, as reported by the Census Bureau, was \$16,400. We assume that any household of four with income of \$32,800 or less would qualify for a no strings attached cash voucher. If the 1997 Alaska per capita income is \$24,945, how many parents will qualify?

A significant barrier for low-income families seeking greater choices for their child's education is lack of transportation. Many families do not have the means to provide transportation for their children to attend other school alternatives, let alone private schools. The bill seems to accommodate greater benefit to those who educate at home.

If only a modest sum of money is appropriated for SSHB 5's voucher program, the bill provides for an unencumbered incentive for any qualifying parent to apply to receive the education cash. As the legislature demands greater accountability from schools, it makes no sense to add to the cost of education through cash vouchers.

Currently schools are working to implement new standards, preparing students to pass exit exams and designing new curriculum and opportunities for children. We oppose weakening those efforts through vouchers.

We believe in a strong system of public education. Schools have been critical to Alaska's economic, social and cultural development. Public education is critical to our state's future and its continued development. Public schools demonstrate the very spirit of our democracy by accepting and educating all students regardless of means or position in life. If our state does not continue to inspire that purpose, our most precious resource, our children, will be wasted.

NEA-Alaska wants to provide A+ Schools for Alaska's Kids. Cash vouchers do not contribute to making our schools A+.

Memorandum

To: Co-chairs: Representative Fred Dyson
Representative John Coghill
Alaska State Legislature
House BESS Committee

From: Tim Peterson – President
Kenai Peninsula Education Association
1124 Walnut
Kenai, Alaska 99611
907 – 283 - 5177

Date: 02/16/99

Re: House Bill 5 – Sponsor substitute

Please accept these thoughts regarding: Sponsor Substitute for House Bill 5 "An act relating to vouchers for education; and providing for an effective date."

We appreciate the concern of the legislature relative to improving education of Alaska's children. It is incumbent on all citizens of our great state to make every reasonable effort to provide a quality education for our children.

It is difficult to understand how this legislative act will meet that standard. The legislation seems to be predicated on the belief that home schooling and/or a private school education will provide an education equal to or better than that provided by the Alaskan public schools. Educational studies do not support that belief. To our knowledge there is no validated research comparing home schooling achievement in Alaska to that of the public schools.



Distributed by
Rep.

Anchorage has a warm heart

My family and I moved up here last October from Arizona. I'm writing this letter solely as a compliment. Never in the Lower 48 have I seen more courteous, concerned and caring citizens on topics that most God-fearing Americans take for granted. As a father of three, I have found your school system has exceeded my expectations (Turnagain Elementary, specifically). I also have never seen more examples of neighbor helping neighbor on a day-to-day basis.

Clearly our system of things do need a little "fixing," but for the most part I feel this city has most of its act together. Believe me, I've seen worse in Arizona. I just felt the need to be on the record for this city that my family and I have adopted and call home. Anchorage may be a cold land, but it's people have a warm heart.

— Deciderio Gonzalez & family
Anchorage

Anchorage Daily News
02/16/99



Alaska State Legislature

Please enter into the record my testimony to the House Health, Education & Social Service
 committee name Social Service
 committee on HB 5- Voucher, dated 2/16/99
 bill/subject
System for Education

Signed: Helene Antel Brooks, Esq.
 Testifier self

Representing (Optional)
HCO2 7516, Palmer, Ak 99645
 Address
(907) 745-3394(h); (907) 746-1547(h)
 Phone No.

1/28 Legislative Information Office

Ronald Nordquist

From: Ronald Nordquist <ron.freda@worldnet.att.net>
To: _Vick_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us
Subject: ron.freda@worldnet.att.net
Date: Tuesday, February 23, 1999 12:18 PM

In regard to Sponsor Substitute For House Bill No. 5

Education Vouchers

We are very much in favor of the voucher program. We have two young girls that are in a private school due to unhappy experiences with the Anchorage School District.

It would be very nice to have assistance in paying our education bills. We are property owners, also business owners, and we feel that we do pay more than our share in school taxes.

The Anchorage School District yearly budget is more than out of control.

Monies should be put for the students education, NOT for oversized Administration and their benefits.

It is very important that something be done about the cost of education in the State of Alaska, mostly in the Anchorage area.

The Nordquists

Ronald and Freda

Date: Feb. 23, 1999
To: Representative Vic Kohring
From: Donna & Bill Walker
2234 Kissee Ct.
Anchorage, Ak. 99517
Re: Education Vouchers

Thank you for sponsoring HB5. We support your effort wholeheartedly. All four of our children received their elementary education at Sunrise Christian School & it was the best decision we could have made for them. When Polaris K-12 opened several years ago we thought this might provide a comparable education as it was very difficult paying tuition for 4 children. But after one year, we moved them back to Sunrise--there simply was no comparison to the quality of education at Sunrise. As our children have moved into junior high & high school, they continue to be excellent students & are very involved in school, church & community activities. We credit the wonderful foundation they received at Sunrise for much of their success. The public school system could learn a lot from some of these small private schools that get by on a shoestring budget but provide an outstanding education program. Education vouchers will make this a viable option for others.

2/18/99

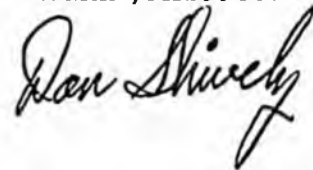
Dear Representative Kohring,

I'm writing concerning House bill 5. My sons are 16 and 18 years old and have been in private schools their entire lives. My oldest son will start collage for an Engineering Degree next fall at UAA, the other is still considering what he will do. Private education is a fine place for children to learn. We have borne the cost our selves and have been happy to do so. I do believe that we as citizens all have a right to the same funding resources regardless of where we choose to send our kids to school.

Thank you for your work on this bill.

Thank you,

Dan Shively
PO Box 876137
Wasilla, AK 99687

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Shively".

Subject: SSHB5 School Vouchers

Date: Thu, 18 Feb 1999 09:51:22 -0900

From: Karl.Schleich@MSB.Mat-Su.k12.ak.us (Karl Schleich)

To: House HESS Committee Members;

TO: Health, Education & Social Services Committee Members
Alaska House of Representatives

FM: Ley Schleich, MHA, CHES
P. O. Box 874216,
Wasilla, AK 99687-4216

Honorable House HESS Committee Members,

This is a follow-up to my testimony February 15th during the House HESS hearing on SSHB5, School Vouchers. At the hearing I had only time to comment that I was pleased to hear the right questions being asked about Mr. Kohring's voucher legislation. The concerns raised by Mr. Rose especially mirrored my own. I would like to expand on my thoughts regarding the school voucher proposal.

I agree that "education for our children is so important that better ways to improve upon it must be found" (Mr. Kohring's words). Tweaking the system isn't enough; dramatic changes are needed to make our education system something in which we can be fully confident and proud. The sooner the better.

My two children go to a "government school" because their parents want them to become educated and believe that our public schools can do the job. Period. I submit that this is the reason almost all children go to school. We have the means to have chosen any of the alternatives to public school here. We examined them and rejected them in favor of the public schools. The claim that government laws rather than choice compel people to send their children to "government schools" disregards an inherent belief in public education that most of my friends and I still feel. The statements sound similar to what I have read from Milton Friedman and others. I would ask them, as I ask you: if public schools were producing adequately educated graduates, would we be challenging whether compulsory education is a good thing?

I strongly disagree with the premise that parents should be exempt from paying for public schools if their children do not attend one. Is it not in the best interest of all members of society to have an educated populace? Is not education the very foundation upon which democracy rests? The recognition of the need for an educated population of voters was the motivation for the formation of a public education system in our country in the first place. (Interestingly, a public education system was created in response to the perceived failure of the private schools to educate kids.) Given this, educating our nation's youth then must be seen as the obligation of every citizen of this land, whether or not they choose public education for their own children and indeed, whether or not they even have children.

I believe the voucher system is the wrong remedy for our education woes for the following reasons:

- 1) It will undermine current positive reform efforts currently under way. The Legislature saw fit to enact the mandated standards and other pieces of the Quality Schools Initiative. The assessments, curriculum alignment, and modification of teaching practices and programs is a huge undertaking statewide. To lay vouchers, complete with DOE regulations and oversight, over the QSI efforts would do it in before we even have a chance

to make it work. I would add that it would diminish the credibility of the Legislature: why did you endorse QSI if you don't believe it will result in change?

2) It lacks assurances that the education dollars will actually be spent on education, and fails to assure that the education provided would be what children deserve and need. Sure some of the money would be used exactly as you and I would want it used, but not in all cases. Vouchers would present too big of an incentive for economically struggling or greedy individuals to misuse. Regulating this would be an expensive nightmare for DOE. Furthermore, the legislation does not require private or other educational institutions to be held to the same standards we require of our public schools, and leaves much opportunity for what I call "educational abuse or neglect," whether intentional or not. The voucher approach discounts and leaves vulnerable those children whose family situation is suboptimal, whose parents or guardians cannot or will not act in their child's best interest.

3) It divides rather than unifies. Mr. Kohring's "delightful range of educational settings" to me is misguided labeling and homogeneous grouping. I believe our children (and indeed, adults too) need to learn the skills of living in a diverse population. This is no small task and cannot be accomplished if we have learning environments that don't embrace a full variety of kids with many kinds of backgrounds and a full array of talents and needs. I think we can offer children and parents adequate choices of programs, teachers, and expectations without sacrificing the benefits of living and learning together. Indeed, I believe kids learn better when they are in a heterogeneous setting, as long as their classmates can demonstrate good learning behavior.

4) It would lead to inequality. I fear that vouchers' drain on the public school resources would negatively affect public school instruction to the point that many of the higher-achieving kids would bail out of public schools, leaving the lower achieving students without role models and high standards, setting off a powerful downward spiral of performance and continued exodus of achieving students. And too, the more skillful teachers would likely become discouraged or be offered a more attractive job in an "alternative" site, and we would experience a drain of teaching talent in the public schools as well.

Why wouldn't it be the "difficult" students that would seek alternatives? Because as I understand the voucher system non-public schools would be free to deny entrance or to expel these students if their performance or behavior was deemed unworthy or if the school was not prepared to address the child's specific needs. And these students can challenge even the best and best intentioned homeschool parent/teacher. Eventually, I believe these students will be back in the public school classrooms. Would their voucher money follow them?

These are my major concerns with the voucher system of education. I believe the motivation to try vouchers as an alternative comes from a true desire to improve our children's education. I appreciate the frustration of friends and acquaintances who have struggled with meeting their children's educational needs. And although our own children are thriving in school, I can't say that we would never determine that they need a different type of schooling. But I think it's wrong to look to the government to pay for it. Vouchers may be good for some kids, but they are not in the best interest of children in general, and they can divert our attention from making the necessary significant reforms in public education.

Thank you for considering my views. I look forward to following this issue as it unfolds in Juneau and our own community.

Sincerely,

Ley Schleich

P.S. I realize that being married to a public school principal makes me vulnerable to having my opinion dismissed as biased or self-serving. Please consider my thoughts on their own merit, and know that I am many things in addition to the wife of a school administrator. My husband and I don't agree on all matters, and I am speaking for myself. I have a long history of speaking out on a variety of public policy concerns and hope you will accept my comments without regard to my association with my husband. In the same vein, I hope you don't dismiss the comments of all public school employees as union-fed self-serving bureaucrats. I think members of both "sides" of this issue have useful insights and valid points to make.



From: Ms Frances Jacobson
POB 874152

Telephone: 376-8239

Wasilla, AK 99687

Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION

Message:

I ENCOURAGE YOU TO VOTE AGAINST HB 5 ON TWO POINTS: 1- VOUCHERS WILL ALLOW PUBLIC MONEY TO SUPPORT PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS, WHICH WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE CONSTITUTION; 2- PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ARE NOT CURRENTLY HELD TO THE SAME STANDARD OF ACCOUNTABILITY AS ARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL DOLLARS SHOULD PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY.

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Message 2 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Ms Carla Takesita
367 N Valley Way

Telephone: 745-3589

Palmer, AK 99645

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION
Message:

I ASK YOU TO VOTE NO ON HB 5.

Entered in MAT on 2/16/99 POMID: 641

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. . . .

Message 12 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Ms Laurel Fortunoff
501 McAdoo Way

Telephone: 376-1298

Wasilla, AK 99654

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: Y

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION
Message:

I AM URGING ALL OF YOU TO VOTE AGAINST HB5. I DON'T FEEL WE CAN AFFORD TO GIVE MONEY TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS AT THIS TIME. I MOST PARTICULARLY DO NOT FEEL WE CAN SUPPORT PRIVATE SCHOOLS WHEN WE CANNOT SUPPORT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SYSTEM. I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY STUDIES REGARDING THIS TYPE OF PILOT PROGRAM SHOWING ANY POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

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Message 11 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Ms Mary Kay Flynn
POB 1415

Telephone: 745-4588

Palmer, AK 99645

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION

Message:

URGING YOU TO VOTE NO ON HB 5. I AM ADAMATELY OPPOSED,

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Message 10 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Mrs Pattie Haugom
307 N Chugach

Telephone: 000-0000

Palmer, AK 99645

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: Y

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION

Message:

I AM VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED TO THE VOUCHER SYSTEM PROPOSAL SPONSORED BY REP KOHRING. SUCH A SYSTEM WOULD PUT AN END TO PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ALASKA. PUBLIC EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE FEW THINGS THAT DOES WORK WELL IN A STATE AS WIDLY DIVERSIFY AS OURS. IF THIS LEGISLATION WERE TO PASS,ALASKAN CHILDREN WOULD QUICKLY FALL BEHIND THE REST OF THE NATION IN EDUCATION.

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Message 9 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Ms Margaret Kenshalo
PO Box 1586

Telephone: 745-3115

Palmer, AK 99645

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: Y

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION
Message:

I AM VERY MUCH AGAINST THIS LEGISLATION.

Entered in MAT on 2/16/99 POMID: 625

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Message 8 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Ms Susan Blanton
POB 1027

Telephone: 733-2142

Talkeetna, AK 99676

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION
Message:

**URGING YOU TO VOTE NO ON HB 5. I DON'T BELIEVE IN FUNDING PRIVATE
INSTITUTIONS WITH PUBLIC MONEY.**

Entered in MAT on 2/16/99 POMID: 622

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Message 7 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Mr Cary Birdsall
POB 403

Telephone: 733-1032

Talkeetna, AK 99676

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION
Message:

I URGE YOU TO PLEASE VOTE AGAINST HB 5. IT IS DESTRUCTIVE TO FUNNEL PUBLIC EDUCATION MONEY INTO PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.

Entered in MAT on 2/16/99 POMID: 621

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POM for Representative Kohring



From: Mrs Margaret L Egelus
PO Box 162

Telephone: 746-5610

Wasilla, AK 99654

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION

Message:

WE DESPERATELY NEED TO REVIEW ED FUNDING. PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL SOON BE LEFT WITH ONLY SPECIAL ED KIDS WHOSE PARENTS CAN'T TRANSPORT THEM TO CHARTER OR HOME SCH & KIDS WHOSE PARENTS DON'T KNOW HOW BAD IT'S GETTING. PEOPLE MOVING TO THE AREA WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE LARGE CLASS SIZES, LACK OF ACTIVITIES AND INCREASING NEEDS. AS A LONG TIME VOLUNTEER IN PUBLIC SCHLS AND REPUBLICAN VOTER, I ASK THAT YOU RETHINK YOUR POSITION ON ED. & GET MORE FUNDING

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Message 1 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Ms Mary Gunderson
HC 89 Box 621

Telephone: 733-2528

Willow, AK 99688

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION
Message:

I URGE YOUR OPPOSITION TO HB 5.

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POM for Representative Kohring



From: Ms Ruth McMullen
POB 874814

Telephone: 373-2086

Wasilla, AK 99687

NON Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION
Message:

CURRENTLY I AM AGAINST HB 5. IT HASN'T BEEN WELL THOUGHT OUT, IT REALLY DAMAGES ALREADY-SUFFERING PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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Message 4 out of 12.

POM for Representative Kohring



From: Ms Pat Gakin
POB 871304

Telephone: 373-4717

Wasilla, AK 99687

Constituent

Registered Voter: U

Bill: HB 5 Title: VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION
Message:

I AM URGING YOU TO PLEASE VOTE AGAINST HB 5.

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FEB 23 1999

COMMITTEE TESTIMONY Regarding HOUSE BILL NO.5
"Voucher System for Education"

My Name is Helene Antel Brooks. I am a wife, the mother of a student enrolled in the Mat-Su School District, an attorney, and a member of the Mat-Su School Board. I would have liked to present my views on this proposed piece of legislation in person; but, unfortunately other business commitments do not make that possible. These written comments will thus have to suffice.

It is with the utmost dismay that I find myself witness to intentional efforts by our elected representatives to dismantle the public school system. HB No. 5 is nothing more than a public attempt to validate parochial selfishness. Indeed, the public education system, not only in Alaska but across our great nation, is in need of care and revitalization. The appropriate response to this condition is to accept responsibility for it. The inappropriate response suggested by HB 5, is simply to run away. The temptation to flee public education by such means as a voucher system, is in reality a reflection of our inability to accept that we ourselves have created all of the alleged inadequacies of which we complain. As a society we have egregiously failed to support, nourish or adequately fund public education for several decades. We have diminished the potential success of our system of public education by abandoning it. The fault is not in the system; but, it is ours if public schools can no longer inspire and enable *all* young people to reach for the stars.

America was--and still is, a great experiment. It is based upon the precept that government is not something separate from the people. *Government is not they, it is we the people.* Democracy requires that we endeavor to *give all the same chances.* The weaker must grow strong and the ignorant more wise. The selfish must learn generosity. We must work together--not against each other, to strengthen our most vital public institution: education. If democracy as an institution is to live, we must recommit ourselves to it. We must not break that which binds diversity into a powerful whole by segregating ourselves into small pockets of like mindedness. Only as a diverse people united will we continue to stand.

America's system of public education gives both rich and poor, loved and unloved, the orphaned child and the child well cared for, the same chance to dream of limitless horizons. It is the cornerstone of our great nation. To even consider the voucher system proposed by HB 5, threatens to tear apart the American dream.

I am strongly opposed to HB 5

Subject: school vouchers

Date: Mon, 22 Feb 1999 08:46:47 -0900

From: "Dr. Kevin Tomera" <ktomera@alaska.net>

To: <Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us>

I support school vouchers
kelly tomera
1820 stanford dr
anchorage ak 99508
ktomera@alaska.net

Subject: school voucher

Date: Mon, 22 Feb 1999 17:17:45 -0800

From: Hao <hao@alaska.net>

To: Randy_Lorenz@legis.state.ak.us

From: Rick Hao 521 S Lane Anch Ak 338-1200

I support Rep.Vic Kohring bill to provide a school voucher system for the State of Alaska. This bill will help change the aptitude and attitude of education professionals and what the public demands from our public education system.

Subject: Vouchers

Date: Mon, 22 Feb 1999 12:19:05 -0900

From: David Chapman <chapmand@mtaonline.net>

To: Randy_Lorenz@legis.state.ak.us

Dear Mr. Kohring,

We are a home school family and would like to give our opinion on vouchers.

We would only be in favor of them if there is absolutely no government intervention concerning what or how our children are taught at home. We

are not enrolled in any state supported program, and don't plan to be, and

we don't want to lose the freedoms we enjoy in this wonderful state.

Thank you very much for the fine job you have been doing in the legislature.

God Bless you and your family.

Sincerely,

David and Tina Chapman

PO Box 4088

Palmer, AK 99645

February 19, 1999


RE: School Vouchers

Honorable Vic Kohring
State Capitol Room 421
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Honorable Vic Kohring,

I am glad to see that you are introducing a bill on school vouchers. I definitely do not like some of the things my child comes home from school with. The schools here, for some reason, think that these kids have to learn the native languages and about parents molesting their children. My child is only in first grade. Their being taught all about environmentalism and their being taught to go around to all the stores and ask for money because businesses have deep pockets. When kids come out of the Sitka school system they do not want to touch natural resources and they all look for government type jobs or anything that is not natural resources. We do not really have any private schools here. We had one, but it had to close because they tried to keep the tuition low which made it too hard to obtain a building. The private school was not at all popular with the public schools in town. The private school did try to keep the tuition so low they never had any money. A voucher would make a better opportunity for new schools here. It would be a parents dream for a better education for our children and a better future. We are not going to get the social teachings and the slanted environmental views out of the public schools. Our only way to combat this problem is for more private schools. I hope you get somewhere with school vouchers. Most people are busy working so you probably will not hear from them but they *are* out there. Another reason why you may not hear from people (especially in small towns) is because teachers will find out which parents are causing what they perceive to be trouble and may take it out on their child. For instance, the child may all of a sudden become a trouble-maker or all of a sudden be classified as slow at reading. From the words I have heard teachers say during wage negotiations, I do not trust them. There are some good teachers out there but you don't hear from them so they are of no value.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike A.", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mike Svenson

104 SHARON DRIVE
SITKA, AK 99835

Subject: House Bill No. 5

Date: Thu, 18 Feb 1999 03:50:10 -0900

From: Bill Malchow <m.alchow@alaska.net>

To: Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us

Vic,

I am in full support of this bill you are sponsoring for Education Vouchers!

Thanks,

William K. Malchow
17824 Sanctuary Dr.
E.R. AK 99577

(907) 696-1866

Subject: School Voucher System

Date: Thu, 18 Feb 1999 11:01:48 -1000

From: "Andrew J Bond" <ABOND@mail.aai.arco.com>

**To: Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us, Representative_Joe_Green@legis.state.ak.us,
Senator_Jerry_Ward@legis.state.ak.us**

Representative Kohring,

I was very happy to see you had proposed HB-5 to offer school vouchers. Unfortunately when I read the fine print I see that I have no chance to qualify. I can understand trying to base the payment on income level. But I think that will also cause some problems. It is still a huge burden for a family with several kids in private school making as much money as I do. I think a better system would be phase out the voucher amount as income increases. Starting at 200% of the poverty level and maybe phasing out at \$100,000 of taxable income. Those are just rough figures off the top of my head.

I can see a situation developing where families at 200% of the poverty level or below would begin to fill the private schools and force out middle income families who get no benefit. I think you need a system where everyone benefits to a certain level. Your plan might remove a large section of the "trouble makers" from the public schools and send them to private schools. I also think that even those at the low end of the income scale should have to pay some portion of the tuition rather than receiving a full payment voucher. Then they will also be making a sacrifice for their children's education rather than just taking advantage of the system.

The public schools need some competition to bring down soaring education costs and teachers salaries. This will be a great way to start getting the K-12 education budget more under control. As you well know, private schools generally provide better education at half the cost of the public schools on a per student basis.

So in closing, I sure like the voucher plan. I just think it needs modification to benefit more than just the lower income section of the population.

Andy Bond
House 10, Senate E
12100 Woodway Circle
Anchorage, AK 99516
(907) 263-4623

Subject: HB 5, education voucher

Date: Sat, 20 Feb 1999 10:35:23 -0900

From: Peter Brautigam <peter@hartig.com>

To: Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us

I would like to express my support for education vouchers as presented in HB 5. Although private education is a choice, we should all have the same opportunity for our children to have a choice between public and private education. This would provide us all an equal opportunity.

Peter Brautigam
Anchorage, Alaska
peter@hartig.com

Subject: vouchers

Date: Thu, 7 Jan 1999 23:55:15 -0900

From: "JACKSON 6 FAMILY" <mjackson1@ideafamilies.org>

To: <Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us>

DEAR REP. VIC KOHRING,

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THE STEP YOU ARE TAKING IN THE AREA OF THE VOUCHER SYSTEM. I KNOW YOU ARE STANDING UPON A CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT. JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT WE ARE SUPPORTING YOU IN PRAYER. LOTS OF ATTACKS HAPPEN WHEN YOU ROCK THE BOAT. I HAVE HOMESCHOOLED ALL 4 OF MY CHILDREN. 2 ARE NOW IN PRIVATE SCHOOL AND 2 ARE STILL HOME SCHOOLED AND ARE IN THE IDEA PROGRAM. WHAT A TREMENDOUS BLESSING THIS GALENA PROGRAM IS. ALL THOSE YEARS OF BEING ALL ALONE SO TO SPEAK AND TO THOINK THAT I NOW HAVE HELP THAT DOESN'T CONTROL ME IS WONDERFUL. I TRY TO IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO HAVE ASSISTANCE IN PRIVATE SCHOOL, WHICH IS WHERE MY 2 OLDEST NOW ARE AND IT WOULD BE A BIT OF HEAVEN. I ALWAYS WONDERED WHY WE PAY SCHOOL TAXES AND OUR CHILDREN DID NOT ATTENDSCHOOL. I WONDER ALOT OF THINGS. I JUST WANTED TO TAKE THE TIME TO THANK YOU AND LET YOU KNOW WE AS A FAMILY ARE BEHIND YOU. STAY STRONG. REMEMBER TO KEEP FRESH AND TAKE A WALK IF YOU H AVE TO AS THE PRESSURE MOUNTS.

OUR LOVE AND PRAYERS,
SHERRI JACKSON AND FAMILY
907-248-0995

Subject: Thanks for your hard work!

Date: Sat, 20 Feb 1999 20:33:42 -0900

From: vicki hoyman <hoyhouse@mtaonline.net>

To: Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us

Dear Mr. Kohring,

I want to take time to sincerely thank you for the stands you take on several issues that mean alot to me. We are a family of 6 in Palmer enjoying our 14th year of home schooling. It has been one of the greatest joys and challenges of my life. I never would have dreamed, growing up in the home of a public school teacher, that I would one day home school all my children! I thank the Lord daily for the privilege and also that I live in a state that is very "home school friendly". This year we hesitantly signed up for Cyber Lynx out of the Nenana school district, I say hesitantly because the whole program seemed to good to be true! We have found it most helpful and it has been so awesome to have some money to purchase materials, lessons etc. I know the Matsu-school district thinks all of us who signed up for these cyb- schools are taking money out of their pockets but I don't know of one family that took their kids out of public school this year to join a cyber school like Cyber Lynx or IDEA. Everyone I know has been doing home school all along. I have 4 children and we have given them a quality education for an incredibly low price. Everyone in the public school fusses about lack of funding, all the money in the world can't promise a good education, it requires a healthy environment, a teacher who really loves the kids, and a contagious love for learning! You are welcome at our home school anyday! I could write volumes about the fun things we have done together, places we've went, projects we've accomplished! Thank you for supporting home schoolers! We truly do appreciate you!

Warmly,

Vicki Hoyman

Subject: Thanks for the call

Date: Sat, 20 Feb 1999 22:09:48 -0900

From: Steve Unfreid <unfreids@alaska.net>

Organization: Self

To: Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us

Thanks for the call Saturday night reference my article in the Anchorage paper. After reading today's paper and reading Charles Reynolds' piece, my wife (a stay-at-home/home school mom) sent in the following (even if it doesn't get printed, it may give you another angle on which to address this issue).

Steve Unfreid

I applaud Charles Reynolds (Letters Feb 20) for his clear grasp of our state constitution--understanding that no funding should go to support "...any religious or other private educational institution."

In fact, maybe we could get together and take every public school district in Alaska to court for their teaching of secular humanism. In the Humanist Manifesto #1, it clearly states that humanism is a religion. This is seen and taught every day in subjects like biology, where the theory and scientifically unprovable belief of evolution is the only thought presented for the origin of life. This belief that man is here by chance and is thus the only entity that can save us, is a religious, not scientific viewpoint.

You can't have it both ways. Either you do as Lawrence J. Freidberger advocated in his February 18 letter, and amend our constitution to allow funding for all (and thus break the religious monopoly held by our public schools), or you have our public schools cease their religious instruction. My guess is that Rep Vic Kohring's amendment is the most fair approach.

Kathe Unfreid
Wasilla AK
PO Box 672518
Chugiak AK 99567
745-4092

Subject: House Bill No. 5

Date: Mon, 22 Feb 1999 01:19:28 -0500

From: "Stuart W. Holland" <swholland@compuserve.com>

To: "Rep. Vic Kohring" <Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us>

Dear Representative Kohring,

Thank you for sponsoring the subject bill to administer a pilot program of education vouchers. I have two children who are currently enrolled in a private school, of which I am a school board member. I am thoroughly convinced that private school education would be the choice for many more families if they could afford it. Your proposed bill would allow more families to afford this choice.

A secondary benefit of this program would be to improve the quality of the public education system. If more families are leaving the current system, then pressure would naturally be placed on the public educators and their governing bodies to provide the quality education that parents are seeking.

Again, thank you for sponsoring this vital legislation! May God bless your efforts to improve the overall quality of our education system.

Sincerely,

Stuart Holland

home phone: 907-272-4460

email address: "swholland@compuserve.com"

Subject: Independent Board for Charter Schools

Date: Mon, 22 Feb 1999 05:14:43 -0900

From: Linda Sharp <lsharp@alaska.net>

**To: Representative_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us, lsharp@alaska.net,
no_spam_allowed@ibm.net, rsaur@alaska.net**

Dear Representative Kohring,

Have you introduced a bill for vouchers? If so, I would like to help you on it any way I can. Please send me a copy (fax 907-245-5502, mail 2710 West 34th Ave. Anchorage, 99517), if you have a bill.

Would you consider introducing a bill to change current charter school law to establish a Board for Charter Schools? I envision that the Board would be 7 to 9 people, all volunteers, equally representing our state's population. In other words, about half from Anchorage, one from Fairbanks, one from Southeast, one from Mat Su, one from Kenai and a 2 or 3 from the balance of state.

They would meet 4 to 6 times a year in Anchorage, so there would be flight and lodging expense. They would need an administrative person to handle papers and coordinate meetings and take minutes, so that would be about \$100K for wages, benefits and office operations. That could be subtracted from the DOE's allotment, as they would be replacing some DOE functions.

This Board would be a CHOICE for both existing charters and for newly proposing charters. This would replace the school districts as the sole authorizing authority, but of course, those preferring the districts could always stay or go with them also.

This is essential for our small charter to survive. We presently have to comply with all ASD Administrative procedures, and it would take us about \$150,000 a year to properly comply with all the reports, forms, procedures and meetings required to know and do that work. Our total funding is less than \$100. Education should be our mission, not administrative fulfillment.

In addition, for example, we needed a waiver to be able to consider using Viking Hall, where about 10 times a year in the evenings, for Sons of Norway social events, a liquor cabinet is unlocked to serve members up to 2 drinks per evening. ASD procedures said "no liquor on the premise." We were required to apply for a waiver to the policy.

The superintendent first decided to get a legal opinion. Then he wrote a memo to the School Board opposing it, although his legal opinion said it should be fine. Then we had to wait for the agenda to clear to allow us to appear and be heard before the School Board. This simple delay took more than two months.

You can't imagine the hours and expertise that have gone into simply finding a facility to please ASD. We were told recently by MOA Planning Officials that the ASD spends hundreds of thousands of dollars hiring MOA Planning Dept. to do what we are doing find a site. Then they spend \$1,000,000 to design. Then they spend \$10, \$20, \$30 million

or more to construct. We have only a few thousand dollars to accomplish it all. This is a ridiculous Catch 22.

Other people who I think would support / co-sign your bill, if you'd do it, include Reps. Dyson, James, Mulder, Ogan, Kott, Coghill, Halcro and maybe Kelly. Senators Miller, Taylor, Donley, Torgerson. There may be many others.

Please let me know if this is possible to get going and passed this year. I would do anything I could to help.

Many thanks for all you do.

Linda Sharp
Tel. 245-5501

Subject: Alaska PTA position on Vouchers

Date: Tue, 16 Feb 1999 13:12:21 -0900

From: Bogrens <bogren@alaska.net>

To: Representative_John_Coghill@legis.state.ak.us

CC: Representative_Fred_Dyson@legis.state.ak.us

Testimony

To: Alaska House of Representatives Health, Education and Social Services Committee
By: Betsy Turner-Bogren; Alaska PTA, Vice President, Legislative Affairs
Date: February 16, 1999
Re: House Bill 5, Voucher System for Education

The Alaska PTA has an annual membership of over 15,000. Our association is organized to include representation from six geographic regions covering the entire state and four active councils representing Ketchikan, the Mat/Su Borough, Fairbanks and Anchorage. Delegates from across Alaska meet annually to review our Legislative Program and adopt legislative priorities.

Last November delegates to the Alaska PTA Issues Conference adopted five legislative priorities including a statement opposing the creation of education vouchers. Our Association's statement is:

"Alaska PTA believes that public funds should be dedicated to public education. Alaska PTA opposes legislation, including the creation of vouchers or tax credits for private education, that would direct State funding away from public schools."

This statement was adopted by unanimous consent. It was the only priority adopted without discussion.

Support for public education had always been a priority for the Alaska PTA. Our members recognize that the creation of an educational voucher system would undermine State support by diverting funding resources to non-public institutions. We believe that every child in Alaska deserves access to high quality public education and that it is the State's responsibility to support public education with adequate funding.

On behalf of the Alaska PTA I would like to thank members of this Committee for your work to improve the quality of public education in Alaska. We encourage you to continue your efforts to find solutions that address the concerns of the Alaska PTA.