

**HB**

**353**

# Representative Mary Kapsner

State Capitol • Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

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House District 38  
Yukon Kuskokwim Delta

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Goodnews Bay  
Kasigluk  
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Kongiganak  
Kwethluk  
Kwigillingok  
Lower Kalskag  
Mekoryuk  
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Newtok  
Nightmute  
Ninapitchuk  
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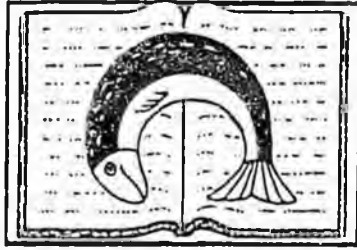
HB 353 provides an exemption from jury duty for teachers in schools that have failed to meet adequate yearly progress under state and federal law.

The role of the classroom teacher has taken on new importance in recent years with the passage of state and federal laws aimed at accountability in education. The ultimate winners or losers of these mandates will be our children. This year high school seniors will be required to pass the high school graduation qualifying exam to receive their diploma. We have added "No Child Left Behind" to our personal vocabulary when we talk about education. NCLB imposes requirements for highly qualified teachers and sanctions on districts that fail to meet "adequate yearly progress."

Jury duty can be lengthy, resulting in a significant impact on classroom learning. When a teacher is absent from the classroom the flow of learning is affected. In many small communities in Alaska, qualified substitute teachers are simply not available, and the person placed in charge of the classroom may be an aide pulled from other responsibilities or an individual who holds a high school diploma. Moreover, ratio of scale in small communities creates an additional burden on the school. For example, five of the eleven certified teachers in one of the schools in my district were called to Bethel for jury duty this year before this school year was half over.

Although jury duty is an important civic responsibility and part of the foundation of our legal system exemptions are appropriate under certain circumstances. HB 353 limits its impact by exempting only those teachers whose school has failed to meet AYP. In a time of so many educational mandates and with a lack of available educational resources in some areas of the state this is a reasonable solution to the problem.

Thank you for your consideration.



# Lower Kuskokwim School District

Personnel and Student Services Department  
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1/23/04

Representative Mary Kapsner  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Kapsner,

This letter is in support of HB 353 dealing with jury duty for teachers in schools that have not met the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. In the Lower Kuskokwim School District we have several schools that are severely impacted by the amount of jury duty that our teachers are required to perform. From September 1 to December 15, 2003, for example, our payroll records show a total of 107.5 days that our teachers were out of the classroom performing jury duty. The negative impact on student learning is further compounded by the fact that certified substitutes are virtually non-existent in our district and in some cases it is not possible to find subs at all.

Quality instruction is the most important component in meeting the high academic standards brought about by legislation at the state and federal levels. The NCLB act recognizes this with its heavy emphasis on "highly qualified" teachers. HB 353 will help ensure that our highly qualified teachers remain in the classroom where they can help our students reach these standards.

Educating our children is the most important responsibility of the State of Alaska. Teachers have the greatest impact on the quality of education, but only when they are in the classroom. Legislators can help to ensure that teachers stay in the classroom by their support of HB 353.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Baldwin". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Gary Baldwin

Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Student Services

**HB 353 – Jury duty exemption for certain teachers  
Email comment in support (emphasis added)**

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*I believe all of our teachers need to be in the classroom to get ready for testing, as none of our substitutes are trained teachers. Out of 11 certified teachers, 5 have already been requested for jury duty, which is close to half, and the year is not over.*

Marie Wierema  
Lower Kuskokwim School District

*Many of my school staff have been called for jury duty, and often, more than one each quarter. I, myself, have been called several times for service in Bethel, and more recently for federal service in Anchorage.*

*My experience with the Bethel jury service is that it is not possible for teachers to make "real" lesson plans for the duration of their service. The system is set so that one cannot know until 4:30 if jury members need to appear in Bethel the following morning. By the time you get notice that you have to go to Bethel in the evening to be present for an 8:30 jury call, there isn't time to alter one's lesson plans for a substitute. Therefore, teachers tend to write plans for easy to follow activities for a non-certified substitute.*

*Village teachers are faced with two problems. First, airplanes must fly in the daylight, and during much of the school year there isn't a great deal of that after school is dismissed. By the time a teacher calls in to Bethel and discovers that s/he must fly to Bethel, there is barely time to grab a change of clothes and run to the airport to catch the mail plane. The second issue is that we don't have any people with teaching certificates sitting around the village waiting to be called in as a substitute. When a teacher is out, the best we can manage is to bring in a recent high school graduate who isn't otherwise employed. The students are the ones who suffer from interruption of their learning.*

*I've always felt that a well-educated population is less likely to commit crimes, and that effective teachers in the classroom contribute to a lower crime rate. Let the teachers teach, and the students learn, and we might not have need for so many trials and juries.*

Felicia Griffith-Kleven  
Lower Kuskokwim School District

*I just finished the three month long stint of jury duty service last month. I can assure you that it did have a negative impact on my students and our school. Partly because I missed many of my classes and partly because of the stress it caused. I never knew until the morning if I would have to fly into Bethel for jury duty or not. Several times the jury was cancelled at the last minute, sometimes before I left the village and sometimes after I arrived in Bethel. Sometimes ice or weather conditions made it impossible to go and all the time I worried that ice or weather conditions would prevent me from returning home if I did make it in. In the end I was never selected to be on a jury.*

Franklin A. Cook  
Nunapitchuk

*I would like to voice my support of the Jury Duty Bill. As the site administrator at Eek School I am very concerned about the impact of having teachers, administrators, and other staff members pulled away from their duties at the school for jury duty. This has a negative impact on our instructional program in terms of student academic growth and achievement.*

*It is almost impossible to find qualified substitute teachers to fill these vacancies. If we are serious about improving student academic growth and achievement we need to seriously consider exempting school staff (teachers, administrators, aides) from jury duty. It is extremely difficult to run an effective educational program with the constant disruption of having our highly qualified staff members pulled away from their duties.*

Daniel Walker  
Eek

*I am the Director of Special Education for LKSD, which includes 21 village schools and four schools in Bethel and have been in this position for 6 years.*

*Jury duty has a tremendous impact when a special education teacher or district office special education specialist is called to serve. As you know, special education services are mandated by law. There are times when a student must, by law, be served by a certified special education teacher, not a sub or an aide. When a certified special education teacher is gone, we are out of compliance on some of our students' IEP's. This means that the parents can file a complaint against us with FED or file for due process. Both of these options are extremely costly to the district and stressful to the people involved.*

*We do the best we can to serve the student appropriately within the law and per their IEP's, but if the certified sp ed teacher or district office specialis is absent for any length of time, then it puts the district into situation of potential liability.*

Linae Sanger  
Special Education Director  
Lower Kuskokwim School District

*Serving for one month instead of three would be a great improvement for the teacher and his/her students, but would not eliminate the impact, and it would not in itself reduce the total burden of missing staff serving jury duty. The burden would just be spread around to more teachers and classrooms.*

Larry Ctibor, Site Administrator  
M.E. Primary School  
Lower Kuskokwim School District