

HJR

1

<TARGET><BILL>HJR 1</BILL><SUBJECT>HJR
1</SUBJECT><COMM>HJUD28</COMM></TARGET>

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Interim:

**600 East Railroad Avenue
Wasilla, Alaska 99654
Phone (907) 373-1842
Fax: (907) 373-4729**



Session:

**State Capitol Building
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
Phone: (907) 465-2186
Fax: (907) 465-3818**

REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER DISTRICT 7 SPONSOR STATEMENT

“Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to state aid for education.”

For 50 years the State of Alaska has grown from a vast frontier into an important player in the nation and the world. While this is a fair assessment of us, it does not address a growing need for quality higher education in the state. Recent reports show Alaska’s students failing to graduate from secondary schools at an alarming rate. We have and continue to do everything possible for our university system, but that has, to a point, been at the expense of other private learning institutions.

HJR 1 opens some of these doors for both public and private education by allowing the release of funds to more than just public schools. This Constitutional Amendment will annul, what is commonly known as the Blaine Amendment which was never passed in the U.S. Constitutional Congress. It did however make its way into several states’ Constitutions, including Alaska. This language hampers a quality education for our students by preventing them to excel at a school that meets their needs.

Moving this Resolution from this body to the voters will expand the opportunity for all students to attend a school that challenges them, regardless of family income. It takes into account state sponsored scholarships for all students. It says we support the best possible education for our youth at the best possible school, be that K-12, college, university or vocational program. Alaska has a wealth of educational opportunities that need our support. We do not need another Sheldon Jackson disaster.

Voting for HJR 1 and passing it along to the voters will show Alaskan’s that we are truly concerned that our children receive the best education opportunity available and we are willing to move forward in a positive educational decision process.

E-Mail: Representative.Wes.Keller@akleg.gov
Call Juneau Toll free: (800) 468-2186
Website: www.akrepublicans.org/keller/

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 1

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE KELLER

Introduced: 1/7/13

Referred: Prefiled

A RESOLUTION

1 **Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to state aid for**
2 **education.**

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

4 * **Section 1.** Article VII, sec. 1, Constitution of the State of Alaska, is amended to read:

5 **Section 1. Public Education.** The legislature shall by general law establish
6 and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may
7 provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so
8 established shall be free from sectarian control. [NO MONEY SHALL BE PAID
9 FROM PUBLIC FUNDS FOR THE DIRECT BENEFIT OF ANY RELIGIOUS OR
10 OTHER PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.]

11 * **Sec. 2.** Article IX, sec. 6, Constitution of the State of Alaska, is amended to read:

12 **Section 6. Public Purpose.** No tax shall be levied, or appropriation of public
13 money made, or public property transferred, nor shall the public credit be used, except
14 for a public purpose; however, nothing in this section shall prevent payment from
15 public funds for the direct educational benefit of students as provided by law.

16 * **Sec. 3.** The amendments proposed by this resolution shall be placed before the voters of

- 1 the state at the next general election in conformity with art. XIII, sec. 1, Constitution of the
- 2 State of Alaska, and the election laws of the state.

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REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER

DISTRICT 7

MEMO

To: Members of the Alaska Legislature

Date: January 23, 2013

Re: Sectional for House Joint Resolution 1 (28-LS0057\A)

Section 1: Deletes language from the Alaska Constitution known as Blaine Amendment wording that prevents public funds from being used for the direct benefit of private education.

Section 2: Adds language that permits public fund to be used for the direct benefit of educating students.

Section 3: Places the issue before the voters for their approval or disapproval under the election laws of the state.

Please note that a sectional summary of a bill should not be considered an authoritative interpretation of the bill and the bill itself is the best statement of its contents.

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2014 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HJR 1
Fiscal Note Number: 1
(H) Publish Date: 2/7/14

Identifier: HJR001-OOG-DOE-1-21-14
Title: CONST. AM: EDUCATION FUNDING
Sponsor: KELLER
Requester: House Education Committee

Department: Office of the Governor
Appropriation: Elections
Allocation: Elections
OMB Component Number: 21

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2015 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2015 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
OPERATING EXPENDITURES								
Personal Services								
Travel								
Services	1.5							
Commodities								
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits								
Miscellaneous								
Total Operating	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

1004 Gen Fund	1.5						
Total	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues							
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Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2014) cost: 0.0

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2015) cost: 0.0

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:

Updated for second session to accurately reflect FY2015 and out year costs.

Prepared By: Gail Fenumiai, Director

Division: Division of Elections

Approved By: Guy Bell, Administrative Director

Agency: Division of Administrative Services, Office of the Governor

Phone: (907)465-2644

Date: 09/26/2013 12:57 PM

Date: 09/26/13

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS #1

STATE OF ALASKA
2014 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HJR 1

Analysis

Passage of this resolution would require the constitutional amendment to appear on the 2014 general election ballot. The cost of providing information about the constitutional amendment in the Official Election Pamphlet, as required by AS 15.58, is \$1.5. Should the addition of this resolution require printing an 8-1/2 by 18 inch ballot, the cost will increase to \$22.0.

Background for HJR 1

They're named for James G. Blaine, who proposed such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution while he was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1875. The amendment passed overwhelmingly (180-7) in the House, but failed (by 4 votes) in the Senate. Although the amendment failed narrowly, state-level versions were wildly successful. And in several states, adoption of Blaine Amendments was made an explicit condition for entering the Union.

Thirty-Seven states have provisions placing some form of restriction on government aid to "sectarian" schools and their equivalents that go far beyond any limits in the U.S. Constitution.

“No State shall make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; and no money raised by taxation in any State for the support of public schools, or derived from any public fund therefor, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of any religious sect; nor shall any money so raised or lands so devoted be divided between religious sects or denominations.”

Sheldon Jackson v. State 599 P. 2d 127, 1979

In May of 1976 the attorney general issued an opinion declaring tuition grants to be invalid as a direct benefit to private schools in violation of article VII, section 1. The Department of Administration then stopped paying tuition grants. Appellant Sheldon Jackson College, a private educational institution, filed suit to enjoin the department's termination order, but agreed to dismiss the suit without prejudice when a proposition to amend article VII, section 1, to permit tuition grants was placed on the ballot to be voted on in the general election of November, 1976. *fn2

The ballot proposition was rejected by the voters 64,211 to 54,636. Sheldon Jackson then renewed its lawsuit and another private university, Inupiat University of the Arctic, filed a complaint in intervention. The superior court concluded that the tuition grant program provides direct benefits to private educational institutions and thus violates article VII, section 1. Summary judgment was thereupon granted in favor of the state. We affirm.

Alaska Financial Aid to Students Amendment (1976)

The **Alaska Direct Financial Aid to Students Amendment** ballot question was on the November 2, 1976 statewide general election ballot in Alaska as a proposed legislatively-referred constitutional amendment to the Alaska Constitution, where it was **defeated**.

The ballot summary said, "This is a proposal to amend Article VII, Section 1 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska to allow public funds to be used to provide direct aid such as scholarships and tuition equalization grants to students attending private educational institutions. The Attorney General of the State of Alaska has interpreted Article VII, Section 1 of the Constitution, as it now reads, to prohibit the State from giving tuition equalization grants to students attending private colleges or universities in the State."

Testimony of Richard D. Komer on HJR 1 Before the Alaska House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2014

Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify orally on HJR 1 at the hearing last Wednesday, February 19, 2014. At the conclusion of my testimony Chairman Keller asked me to submit a brief summary in writing, which is what I am submitting today. I apologize I could not get to this sooner but I had a court hearing in North Carolina shortly after my oral testimony and litigation waits for no man.

As I mentioned in my oral testimony, as an attorney at the Institute for Justice I provide legal counsel on drafting school choice programs and help parents who want to use such programs defend them if such programs are enacted and are challenged in court. In the course of the last twenty years I have helped defend almost all such programs that have been challenged. Frequently, one of the claims of opponents is that the program violates state Blaine Amendment language similar to Article VII, Section 1.

In my oral testimony, I addressed two separate legal questions. First, I answered the question of whether it was necessary to amend the Alaska Constitution by means of HJR 1 in order to permit (not require!) the Alaska Legislature to consider bringing various forms of school choice programs to Alaska. My answer was "yes." Second, I answered the question of whether HJR 1 would be a constitutional amendment, which was my tongue in cheek way of addressing whether HJR 1 was properly an "amendment" rather than a "revision" of the Alaska Constitution, because the two types of changes are subject to different constitutional procedures. My answer to this second question was that HJR 1 is unquestionably an amendment and not a revision.

As I mentioned, over the last three or four years I have testified repeatedly before legislative committees in Alaska, including this Committee, on the first question, and I hope that the Committee staff can attach or otherwise circulate that testimony. I will simply summarize my position here.

In our tripartite system of government composed of three co-equal branches of Government, when the Alaska Supreme Court (or any supreme court) has definitively construed the constitution it is charged with interpreting, that decision is final until overruled in a subsequent decision or until the people have changed the underlying constitutional text/language. This is true regardless of whether one thinks the supreme court's decision is wrong or not, because in our system of government the judiciary has the final say on what the constitution means, until the constitution is changed. For a supreme court to overrule itself it must first have a case raising the same interpretational question as before, but the very existence of that prior interpretation renders such a situation unlikely. Legislators very rarely are willing to pass legislation that clearly offends an existing constitutional interpretation, for the very reason that such legislation appears to be unconstitutional. That leaves amending the constitutional language as the most viable route to reversing a constitutional interpretation that a large number of legislators believe to be wrong.

As this Committee has heard repeatedly over the years, from me among others, there is little question that the Alaska Supreme Court has misinterpreted the language of Article VII, Section 1, which says that “No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.” In two cases, *Matthews v. Quinton*, 362 P.2d 932 (Alaska 1961), and *Sheldon Jackson College v. State*, 599 P.2d 127 (Alaska 1979), the Alaska Supreme Court effectively read out the requirement that the state aid be for “the direct benefit” of private educational institutions by equating programs that aid Alaska students with aid to the schools they or their parents choose for them to attend. This interpretation failed to honor the deliberate decision of the delegates to the constitutional convention that proposed this language and of the voters who approved the language to distinguish between direct grants of aid to private schools and colleges and aid that is provided to students. For the Legislature to be able to consider student assistance programs that enhance the ability of Alaska families to choose private schools and colleges thus requires that this misinterpretation be removed, by removing the language it misinterprets. That is precisely what HJR 1 proposes to do. This should not have been necessary, but once a supreme court has gotten an interpretation wrong, it is for the people to overrule it by a constitutional amendment.

HJR 1 overrules this misinterpretation by deleting the sentence that the Alaska Supreme court misconstrued. It also adds language to Article IX, Section 6, which addresses the taxing power, and affirmatively states that nothing in that Section “shall prevent payment from public funds for the direct educational benefit of students as provided by law.” This is necessary because the first of the two cases misinterpreting the Constitution, *Matthews v. Quinton*, also held that providing student assistance was not a legitimate use of the taxing power for a public purpose. This new language overrules that misinterpretation and permits such direct student assistance programs “as provided by law.” This latter phrase makes clear that this amendment itself does not create such student assistance programs—that question is left to the discretion of future legislatures to provide such programs by law.

Nor do I think that there are easy ways to justify or distinguish other programs that Alaska may currently operate despite these decisions. It is not unusual for programs to be enacted that are inconsistent with state constitutional interpretations, because oversights do happen. The danger is that nothing prevents future opponents of such programs from realizing that the program is inconsistent with the logic or interpretation of these two cases that aid to individuals attending private institutions constitutes direct aid to the institutions themselves for purposes of Article VII, Section 1.

Before turning to the second question, I want to assure the Committee that adoption of this amendment does not mean that the Alaska Legislature will now be able to provide unrestricted grants in aid to religious schools and colleges. This amendment cannot amend the federal constitution, whose First Amendment’s Religion Clauses continue to apply to any programs enacted by the Alaska Legislature, and which prohibit unrestricted direct grants to religious institutions, under the standards most recently enunciated in *Mitchell v. Helms*, 530 U.S. 793 (2000), with respect to K-12 education, and *Roemer v. Maryland Board of Public Works*, 425 U.S. 736 (1976), which addressed higher education institutional aid.

The second question, of whether HJR 1 is properly a proposed constitutional amendment as opposed to being a revision of the state constitution, is answered by the Alaska Supreme Court's decision in *Bess v. Ulmer*, 985 p.2d 979 (Alaska 1999). Under the standards enunciated by the Court in that case, this is not a close question: HJR 1 is properly viewed as a constitutional amendment rather than a revision. HJR would effect relatively minor changes to only two related provisions of the Alaska Constitution addressed to the expenditure of public funds, in order to change what is essentially a single misinterpretation of the original language. It does not effect the sort of sweeping changes that a revision containing amendments to many sections does, nor does it change the fundamental structure of the Constitution as a single change could if it affected the structure or relationship between the three co-equal branches. As stated in *Bess v. Ulmer*, "[t]he core determination is always the same: whether the changes are so significant as to create a need to consider the constitution as an organic whole." In considering HJR 1, there is no need to "consider the constitution as an organic whole." The proposed changes have no legal effects beyond the very narrow context of whether the legislature is permitted to provide direct educational assistance to Alaskan families, assistance similar to that already provided in every one of the other 49 states.

Because HJR 1 involves one quite simple idea and minor changes to two closely related provisions, there is no danger of the sort of "horse trading" against which the revision process protects. When an amendment affects multiple changes to the constitution there is a concern that people who care strongly about only one change will vote in favor of a package of changes that would not pass otherwise. No one can doubt that HJR 1 presents voters with one discrete question, and that question is amenable to a simple up or down vote.

In short, the misinterpretation of the original meaning of these provisions of the initial Alaska Constitution is what necessitates this amendment. What is somewhat ironic is that this proposed change is for the purpose of returning to the original, intended effect of the original language, which the Alaska Supreme Court improperly expanded to restrict educational opportunities for Alaskan families.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard D. Komer

Senior Attorney

Institute for Justice

Arlington, Virginia

By FAX

Representative Carl Gatto
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau AK 99801
Dear Chairman Gatto:

April 12, 2011

My name's Richard D. Komer and I'm a senior attorney at the Institute for Justice in Arlington, Virginia, specializing in constitutional law as it pertains to school choice programs. The Institute for Justice is a public interest law firm that assists in the design and defense of school choice programs nationwide. At the request of the Alaska Public Policy Institute I phoned in to the hearing that you chaired yesterday on HJR 16, a proposal to amend two provisions of the Alaska Constitution, one of which is your state's Blaine Amendment, Article VII, section I. Unfortunately, my line seems to have been muted, so that when you had finished receiving testimony from various individuals in Alaska you could not hear me asking to testify. While I was delighted to hear your Committee pass out HJR 16, I write to provide you with the testimony that I would have delivered had I been able to be heard,

I hope that you will forward my testimony to the other members of the Committee because it is important to understand the context in which the need arises to amend your Constitution and to correct a misstatement concerning the U.S. Constitution. The Institute for Justice has been assisting state legislators in designing school choice programs for nearly 20 years now, as well as defending those that pass and are challenged in court. We have represented parties in both of the U.S. Supreme Court's cases involving school choice, its landmark decision of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* from 2002 upholding the Cleveland Ohio scholarship program and last week's decision in *Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization v. Winn*, which allowed Arizona's individual tax credit scholarship program to continue. In short, we consider ourselves the lawyers for the school choice movement and have developed considerable expertise in analyzing the various state constitutions' religion clauses and their relationship to the federal religion clauses found in the First Amendment. On our website at www.ij.org you can find a short biography of me, a booklet a colleague and I wrote entitled "School Choice and State Constitutions: A Guide To Designing School Choice Programs" and an article I wrote for the Journal of School Choice.

As you know, Article VII, section I of the Alaska Constitution is what is known as a state Blaine Amendment, which take their name from a failed federal constitutional amendment introduced in 1876 by James G. Blaine of Maine, who aspired to be the Republican nominee for President to succeed President Ulysses S. Grant and who hoped to ride a wave of anti-Catholic sentiment into the White House. At the time he proposed his Amendment virtually all Catholics

were Democrats, and the Catholics were seeking funding for their parochial schools equal to that provided to the then generically-Protestant public schools. The Catholics had felt compelled to create their parochial school system because of the hostility that they faced in the public schools. In crafting his federal constitutional Amendment, Blaine turned to an amendment made to the Massachusetts Constitution in 1855, when the Know Nothing Party swept the state elections in Massachusetts and enacted a provision prohibiting any public funds from being given to aid the Catholic schools. The Know Nothing Party was viciously anti-Catholic and developed in response to the earliest wave of Catholic immigration into the U.S., at the time of the Irish Potato Famine in the 1840's.

Although the federal Blaine Amendment fell one vote short of passage in the Senate after passing the House with the requisite supermajority, the federal Congress had more than enough votes to pursue an alternate route to their same goal of ensuring no funding for Catholic schools. This alternate route was mentioned by another witness at your hearing, namely to require in enabling legislation that federal territories wishing to become a state include Blaine-like Amendments in their state constitutions. Consequently, every state created after 1876 has a Blaine Amendment in its constitution, including Alaska. Some older states, like New York, also jumped on the Blaine bandwagon, joining Massachusetts and the newer states in having Blaine Amendments.

The misstatement that I would like to correct is Representative Gruenberg's statement that it is easier to amend the federal Constitution than the Alaska Constitution because while the federal charter requires only a majority vote of both houses of Congress the Alaska Constitution requires a two-thirds majority in both houses. This is mistaken - under Article 5 of the U.S. Constitution both houses of Congress must pass an amendment by a two-thirds majority, just as is the case with the Alaska Constitution. Two thirds of the states must then pass the federal amendment, thereby making it substantially harder to pass a federal amendment. Each state, however, passes the amendment by a majority vote of its people, just as Alaska requires of its electorate.

As previously mentioned, the federal Blaine Amendment failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds majority by one vote in the Senate after meeting that mark in the House, which is why it was possible for the substantial majorities in both Houses to put the requirement of a state Blaine Amendment into the enabling legislation with which potential new states had to comply. Enabling legislation, being ordinary legislation, requires only a majority vote in both Houses. If federal constitutional amendments required only a simple majority as Representative Gruenberg believes, the Congress would not have been able to force territories to adopt Blaine Amendments as a condition of becoming a state.

State Blaine Amendments do, however, vary somewhat in their particular language and are, of course, subject to interpretation by their state supreme courts. While Alaska's Blaine language is on its face narrower than many other states', unfortunately the Alaska Supreme Court has interpreted it extremely broadly, which is what creates the need for a constitutional amendment to overturn those negative decisions.

What do I mean by Alaska's Blaine Amendment having narrower language than some other states"? Article VII, section I forbids the paying money from public funds "for the direct benefit of any religious or other private institution." South Carolina's Blaine Amendment used to read similarly but included "for the direct and indirect benefit" of private schools. When the South Carolina Supreme Court interpreted "indirect" to prohibit a student assistance program for college students, South Carolina amended its constitution to drop the indirect language to allow the program, viewing "direct benefit" as allowing student aid but not institutional grants to private colleges.

The Alaska Supreme Court has, however interpreted "direct benefit" extremely broadly. First *Mathews v. Quinton*, 362 pP.2d 932 (Alaska 1961) *cert. denied*, 368U.S. 517 (1962), the Court held that transporting private school students at public expense violated Article VII section 3, as well as Article IX, section 6, which states in part that no appropriation of public money shall be made except for a public purpose. (The use this second provision is what necessitates the second change proposed in HJR 16 which specifies that nothing in section 6 "shall prevent payment from public funds for the direct education benefit of students as provided by law.") Then in 1979 the Alaska Supreme Court held in *Sheldon Jackson College v. State*, 599 .2d 127 (Alaska 1979) that the Blaine Amendment prohibited tuition assistance grants for students attending private colleges in Alaska, finding no distinction between giving money to students and giving money to the schools they choose to attend.

Needless to say, under the federal Establishment Clause the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized precisely this distinction between aiding students and aiding the schools they choose for as long as that Court has the Establishment Clause to the states. In its first such case, *Board of Education v. Everson* (1947) the Court upheld a student transportation program similar to that rejected by the Alaska Supreme Court in *Mathews v. Quinton*. Through many intervening cases and decades, this distinction became the basis for upholding the Cleveland school choice program in *Zelman* in 2002.

It is also a distinction recognized by many state supreme courts with Blaine Amendments, such as New York and Wisconsin. New York is particularly noteworthy, as its Blaine Amendment uses similar "direct or indirect benefit" language as South Carolina's Blaine used to contain, but New York's highest court held that aid to students provides only "incidental" benefits to private schools chosen by the student beneficiaries of public funds, and neither direct

nor indirect benefits to the schools. *Board of Education v. Allen*, 228 N.E.2d 791 (N.Y. 1967), *affirmed*, 392 U.S. 236 (1968). The benefits to students that the Alaska Supreme Court views as "direct" aid to private schools in the *Sheldon Jackson College* case the New York Court of Appeals (and the U.S. Supreme Court) view as only "incidental" aid to the private schools.

I point this out only to illustrate that there are persuasive reasons for not equating aid to students to aid to the schools that they and their families freely choose and attend. Unfortunately, when the Alaska Supreme Court has spoken and given an authoritative interpretation of a provision of the Alaska Constitution, that interpretation, however wrongheaded, is the law of the land and can only be reversed by a constitutional amendment. That is precisely the purpose of HJR 16. The constitutional changes proposed would bring the language of the Alaska Constitution more in line with the federal Constitution and permit the sorts of programs struck down in the *Mathews* and *Sheldon Jackson College* cases, which were clearly permissible under the federal Constitution.

It is ironic that state Blaine Amendments, originally spawned during several waves of anti-Catholic bigotry to protect the Protestant monopoly over public school spending, and at a time when no one believed the federal religion clauses applied to the states, have become in modern times a vehicle for efforts to prevent programs that allow families in general to access private education, including that provided in religious schools, many of them Protestant. The Alaska Supreme Court through its decision has allowed Alaska's Blaine Amendment to tie the hands of the Legislature in enacting school choice reforms that can increase educational freedom for all of Alaska's students at all levels of education. Passage of HJR 16 would free the Legislature to consider whether greater school choice would benefit Alaska's students.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you and the Committee my views.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Komer
Senior Attorney
Institute for Justice
Arlington, Virginia

**SHELDON JACKSON COLLEGE, Appellant, v. STATE of Alaska, Avrum Gross, Attorney General for the State of Alaska, B. B. Allen, Commissioner of Administration for the State of Alaska, Kerry Romesburg, Executive Director, Post-Secondary Education Commission, Marshall L. Lind, Commissioner of Education for the State of Alaska, Appellees; INUPIAT UNIVERSITY OF the ARCTIC, Appellant, v. STATE of Alaska, Avrum Gross, Attorney General for the State of Alaska, B. B. Allen, Commissioner of Administration for the State of Alaska, Kerry Romesburg, Executive Director, Post-Secondary Education Commission, Marshall L. Lind, Commissioner of Education for the State of Alaska, Appellees
Supreme Court of Alaska
599 P.2d 127;1979 Alas. LEXIS 552
Nos. 3978, 4002
August 28, 1979**

Editorial Information: Prior History

Appeal from the Superior Court of the State of Alaska, First Judicial District, Juneau, Thomas B. Stewart, Judge.

Counsel Monte L. Brice, Ely, Guess & Rudd, Juneau, for Appellant Sheldon Jackson College.
B. Richard Edwards, Mark S. Bledsoe, Law Offices of B. Richard Edwards, Anchorage, for Appellant Inupiat University of the Arctic.
Ronald W. Lorensen, Assistant Attorney General, Avrum M. Gross, Attorney General, Juneau, for Appellee.
Robert C. Erwin, Sanford M. Gibbs, Hagans, Smith, Brown, Erwin & Gibbs, Anchorage, for Amicus Curiae Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska.

Judges: Rabinowitz, Chief Justice, Connor, Boochever, Burke and Matthews, Justices.

CASE SUMMARY

PROCEDURAL POSTURE: Appellant private universities challenged a decision of the Superior Court of the State of Alaska, First Judicial District, Juneau, which granted summary judgment in favor of appellee, the State of Alaska, and held that Alaska's tuition grant program, Alaska Stat. 14.40.751-.806, violated Alaska Const. art. VII, 1. The private universities had filed an action challenging the termination of the program. Tuition grant program that awarded students at private colleges difference between tuition at private and public colleges violated Alaska Constitution, which prohibited payment of public funds for direct benefit of a private educational institution.

OVERVIEW: The grant program awarded Alaska residents attending private colleges in Alaska an amount generally equal to the difference between the tuition charged by the student's private college and that charged by a public college in the same area, not to exceed \$ 2,500 annually. The attorney general found that the grants violated Alaska Const. art. VII, 1, which prohibited the payment of money from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution. The trial court granted summary judgment for the State. On appeal, the court affirmed, holding that the grant program clearly violated 1 because (1) the class primarily benefitted by the tuition grant program consisted only of private colleges and their students; (2) the public funds expended under Alaska Stat. 14.40.776 constituted nothing less than a subsidy of the education received by the student at his private college and thus implicated fully the core concern of the direct benefit provision; (3) the magnitude of benefits bestowed under the program was substantial; and (4) the students to whom benefits were paid were merely conduits for the transmission of state funds to private colleges.

OUTCOME: The summary judgment in favor of the State was affirmed.

LexisNexis Headnotes

Constitutional Law >

Opinion

{599 P.2d 128} The final sentence of article VII, section 1 of our state constitution prohibits the payment of money from public funds "for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution." 1 The question in this case is whether Alaska's tuition grant program, AS 14.40.751-.806, violates this provision.

The tuition grant program awards Alaska residents attending private colleges in Alaska an amount generally equal to the difference between the tuition charged by the student's private college and the tuition charged by a public college in the same area, not to exceed \$2,500.00 annually. The student is required to apply the entire amount of the grant towards his or her tuition. AS 14.40.776 (a).

In May of 1976 the attorney general issued an opinion declaring tuition grants to be invalid as a direct benefit to private schools in violation of article VII, section 1. The Department of Administration then stopped paying tuition grants. Appellant Sheldon Jackson College, a private educational institution, filed suit to enjoin the department's termination order, but agreed to dismiss the suit without prejudice when a proposition to amend article VII, section 1, to permit tuition grants was placed on the ballot to be voted on in the general election of November, 1976. 2

The ballot proposition was rejected by the voters 64,211 to 54,636. Sheldon Jackson then renewed its lawsuit and another private university, Inupiat University of the Arctic, filed a complaint in intervention. The superior court concluded that the tuition grant program provides direct benefits to private educational institutions and thus violates article VII, section 1. Summary judgment was thereupon granted in favor of the state. We affirm.

{599 P.2d 129} 1

The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention show that an unsuccessful motion was made to delete entirely the direct benefit prohibition of article VII, section 1. 3 The proponent of the motion argued that the state constitutional provisions prohibiting the establishment of religion 4 and prohibiting spending public funds for private purposes, 5 were sufficient to accomplish the objectives of the direct benefit clause. By rejecting this proposal the convention made it clear that it wished the constitution to support and protect a strong system of public schools. 6 Other authorities have also suggested that a constitutional provision barring aid to all private schools serves to enforce the separation of church and state without requiring executive or judicial inquiry into the sectarian affiliation of particular schools, 7 and furthermore disengages the state from the undesirable task of withholding benefits solely on the basis of religious affiliation. 8

At the same time, in expressly rejecting alternative language that would have prohibited "direct or indirect benefits," 9 the delegates to Alaska's Constitutional Convention made it abundantly clear that they did not wish to prevent the state from providing for the health and welfare of private

school students, 10 or from focusing on the special needs of individual residents. 11 Article VII, section 1 was thus designed to commit Alaska to the pursuit of public, not private education, without requiring absolute governmental indifference to any student choosing to be educated outside the public school system.

The Alaska Constitution is apparently unique in its express ban only on "direct" benefits. However, in construing state constitutional provisions that prohibit "support" for private schools, 12 or state and federal proscriptions against the establishment of religion, 13 the courts have frequently resorted to a distinction between "direct" and "incidental" benefits. 14 Though the distinction may at times appear more "metaphysical" {599 P.2d 130} than precise, 15 the analyses found in these decisions are helpful in determining generally the type of government action intended to be prohibited by article VII's direct benefit clause. The following generalizations can be drawn from these authorities.

First, constitutional provisions governing aid to private schools have generally been perceived as requiring neutrality rather than hostility from the state; 16 thus the breadth of the class to which statutory benefits are directed is a critical area of judicial scrutiny. 17 For example, though the police and fire protection afforded a private school may provide the school with quite direct benefits, as when a campus fire is extinguished, such benefits are provided without regard to status and affiliation, and have universally been presumed to be constitutional. 18 Conversely, a benefit flowing only to private institutions, or to those served by them, does not reflect the same neutrality and non-selectivity. 19

A second central criterion in determining the constitutionality of a state aid program, is the nature of the use to which the public funds are to be put. As is apparent from the convention debate, the core of the concern expressed in the direct benefit prohibition involves government aid to *Education* conducted outside the public schools. Though any state assistance that relieves the burden on a private school to provide for the health and welfare of its students will free the school to concentrate its funds on its private educational mission, numerous delegates voiced their understanding that the direct benefit clause would not bar such incidental support. 20 An analogous distinction has frequently been drawn in establishment clause cases, where the pertinent inquiry is whether a statute impacts "essentially secular educational functions" that are separable from the school's religious instruction. 21

Third, in determining whether a school is directly benefitted by public funds, a court must consider, though not in isolation, the magnitude of the benefit conferred. A trivial, though direct, benefit may not rise to the level of a constitutional violation, whereas a substantial, though arguably indirect, benefit may. 22

Finally, while a direct transfer of funds from the state to a private school will of course render a program constitutionally suspect, 23 merely channeling the funds through an intermediary will not save an otherwise improper expenditure of public monies. The courts have expressly noted {599 P.2d 131} that the superficial form of a benefit will not suffice to define its substantive character. 24

II

The foregoing observations are readily applicable to the present case. First, the class primarily benefitted 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. Unlike a statute that provides comparable dollar subsidies to all students,

25 Alaska's tuition grant program is not neutral, inasmuch as the only incentive it creates is the incentive to enroll in a private college. Subsidy programs suffering from similar deficiencies have been repeatedly struck down under a variety of state constitutional provisions, 26 as well as under the Federal Constitution. 27

Second, the public funds expended under AS 14.40.776 constitute nothing less than a subsidy of the education received by the student at his or her private college, and thus implicate fully the core concern of the direct benefit provision. While the program may be motivated, as was stated in the preface to the statute as it was originally passed, by the desire to "help retain qualified students in Alaska," 28 such a laudable purpose cannot escape article VII's mandate that Alaska pursue its educational objectives through public educational institutions.

Furthermore, the magnitude of benefits bestowed under the tuition grant program is quite substantial. For the last year in which the tuition grants were paid, 1975-76, Sheldon Jackson received approximately six hundred thousand dollars from the program. The grants were then \$1,850 for each eligible student, 29 and for the 1976-77 school year the grants were to be \$2,500. 30 According to Sheldon Jackson it has suffered {599 P.2d 132} "a substantially diminished capacity" to function as an educational institution as a result of the termination of the tuition grant program, as reflected in a reduction of students, faculty, income and curriculum offerings. Inupiat University claims a similar impairment of function.

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 a 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. While the ingenuity of man is apparently limitless, the court has held with unvarying regularity that one may not do by indirection what is forbidden directly." *Wolman v. Essex*, 342 F. Supp. 399, 415 (S.D. Ohio), *aff'd mem.*, 409 U.S. 808, 93 S. Ct. 61, 34 L. Ed. 2d 69 (1972).

Based on the foregoing we have no difficulty in concluding that the tuition grant program is in its effect a direct benefit to private educational institutions and therefore violates article VII, section 1 of our constitution. Though Sheldon Jackson points out that several courts have upheld tuition grant programs involving college students, 31 and that aid programs involving colleges have more readily been found constitutional than similar programs involving elementary and secondary schools, 32 the cited decisions rely on the *de minimis* degree of church control in the benefitted sectarian colleges. Such reasoning obviously has no application with respect to article VII's direct benefit prohibition, which bans aid to all private educational institutions, including those with no religious affiliation.

Sheldon Jackson also argues that the direct benefit clause was not meant to apply to colleges and universities, but only to primary and secondary private educational institutions. We see no basis for this contention. Both the plain language of the constitution and the minutes of the constitutional debate 33 indicate that all private educational institutions were meant to be included. The judgment is AFFIRMED.

Footnotes

1 Art. VII, 1 of the Alaska Const. provides:

Public Education. The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.

2 The proposition would have appended the following language to art. VII, 1: "however nothing in this section shall prevent direct aid to students in accordance with the law." 1976 House Joint Resolution 73 am S. In addition an explanation of the amendment appeared on the ballot as follows:

This is a proposal to amend Article VII, Section 1 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska to allow public funds to be used to provide direct aid such as scholarships and tuition equalization grants to students attending private educational institutions. The Attorney General of the State of Alaska has interpreted Article VII, Section 1 of the constitution as it now reads, to prohibit the state from giving tuition equalization grants to students attending private colleges or universities in the state.

3 Proceedings of the Alaska Constitutional Convention 1526-28 (hereafter cited as Proceedings).

4 Art. I, 4 provides in part: "No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion"

5 Art. IX, 6 provides: "No tax shall be levied, or appropriation of public money made, or public property transferred, nor shall the public credit be used, except for a public purpose."

6 For example, delegate Armstrong, speaking for the committee which drafted art. VII, 7, stated that it had sought to "provide and protect for the future of our public schools." 2 Proceedings at 1514. Delegate Coghill expressed the thought that the amount of tax dollars available for the support of public schools might be lessened if public funds were used to support a great many private schools. *Id.* at 1520. In *Spears v. Honda*, 51 Haw. 1, 449 P.2d 130, 135 (1968), the need to ensure that public schools would not be neglected is expressed as the reason underlying Hawaii's constitutional bar to public aid of private schools. Hawaii, however, apparently had an elite private school system, a system having no strong parallels in the Territory of Alaska.

7 See *Gaffney v. State Bd. of Educ.*, 192 Neb. 358, 220 N.W.2d 550, 553 (1974).

8 See *Everson v. Bd. of Educ.*, 330 U.S. 1, 16, 91 L. Ed. 711, 724, 67 S. Ct. 504 (1947); *Spears v. Honda*, 51 Haw. 1, 449 P.2d 130, 137 (1968).

9 Proceedings, *supra* note 3 at 1528.

10 *Id.* at 1513-16, 1519-20, 1521-22, 1524.

11 *Id.* at 1514.

12 *E.g.*, Mo. Const. art. IX, 8.

13 U.S. Const. amend. I provides in part: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion"

14 See, e.g., *Wolman v. Walter*, 433 U.S. 229, 250, 254, 53 L. Ed. 2d 714, 733, 97 S. Ct. 2593 (1977); *Meek v. Pittenger*, 421 U.S. 349, 364-65, 44 L. Ed. 2d 217, 231, 95 S. Ct. 1753 (1975); *Comm. for Publ. Educ. v. Nyquist*, 413 U.S. 756, 783 n. 39, 37 L. Ed. 2d 948, 969 n. 39, 93 S. Ct. 2955 (1973); *Americans United v. Rogers*, 538 S.W.2d 711, 719 (Mo.), *cert. denied*, 429 U.S. 1029, 50 L. Ed. 2d 632, 97 S. Ct. 653 (1976). Though the Federal Constitution does not explicitly refer to the relationship between the government and religious schools, the Supreme Court's "direct benefit" standard has been formulated almost exclusively in the context of school aid cases, *supra*, and is thus valuable precedent in construing our own constitutional provision.

15 See L. Tribe, *American Constitutional Law* 840 (1978).

16 See *Roemer v. Bd. of Publ. Works of Md.*, 426 U.S. 736, 747, 49 L. Ed. 2d 179, 188, 96 S. Ct. 2337 (1976); *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602, 614, 29 L. Ed. 2d 745, 756, 91 S. Ct. 2105 (1971); *Everson v. Bd. of Educ.*, 330 U.S. 1, 18, 91 L. Ed. 711, 724-25, 67 S. Ct. 504 (1947).

17 See, e.g., *Comm. for Publ. Educ. v. Nyquist*, 413 U.S. 756, 782 n. 38, 37 L. Ed. 2d 948, 968 n. 38, 93 S. Ct. 2955 (1973); *Springfield Schl. Dist. v. Dept. of Educ.*, 483 Pa. 539, 397 A.2d 1154, 1163 (1979).

18 See citations *supra* notes 16 and 17.

19 See *infra* notes 26 and 27.

20 See *supra* note 10. In *Matthews v. Quinton*, 362 P.2d 932 (Alaska 1961); *cert. denied*, 368 U.S. 517, 7 L. Ed. 2d 522, 82 S. Ct. 530 (1962), a statute enabling private school children living far from their schools to ride public school buses at public expense, was held violative of the direct benefit prohibition. We do not rely on *Matthews* in reaching today's decision, and thus have no occasion to overrule or re-affirm it. A substantial question, however, can be raised as to its continuing vitality in light of the analysis which we employ in the present opinion.

21 *Roemer v. Bd. of Publ. Works of Md.*, 426 U.S. 736, 762, 49 L. Ed. 2d 179, 197, 96 S. Ct. 2337 (1976). See *Meek v. Pittenger*, 421 U.S. 349, 366, 44 L. Ed. 2d 217, 232, 95 S. Ct. 1753 (1975).

22 Compare *Lendall v. Cook*, 432 F. Supp. 971 (E.D. Ark. 1977) (program involving eight scholarships upheld), with *Meek v. Pittenger* (striking down a state loan of nonideological instructional materials, in part on the basis of the substantiality of aid to the overall functioning of the benefitted schools).

23 *Id.*

24 *Wolman v. Walter*, 433 U.S. 229, 250, 53 L. Ed. 2d 714, 733-34, 97 S. Ct. 2593 (1977) (striking down a loan of instructional materials to students after similar loan to schools had been struck down in *Meek*); *Comm. for Publ. Educ. v. Nyquist*, 413 U.S. 756, 785-86, 37 L. Ed. 2d 948, 970, 93 S. Ct. 2955 (1973) (striking down reimbursements to parents for private school tuitions).

25 *Minn. Civ. Lib. U. v. Roemer*, 452 F. Supp. 1316, 1322 (D.Minn. 1978)(tax deduction for parents of all school children upheld); *Americans United for the Sep. of Ch. and State v. Blanton*, 433 F. Supp. 97 (M.D. Tenn.), *aff'd mem.*, 434 U.S. 803, 98 S. Ct. 39, 54 L. Ed. 2d 65 (1977)(public and private college students eligible for grants); *Durham v. McLeod*, 259 S.C. 409, 192 S.E.2d 202 (1972), *appeal dismissed for lack of a substantial federal question*, 413 U.S. 902, 93 S. Ct. 3060, 37 L. Ed. 2d 1020 (1973)(loans to all college students). *But see Miller v. Ayres*, 213 Va. 251, 191 S.E.2d 261 (1972) (conditional grants to public and private college students held unconstitutional); *Weiss v. Bruno*, 82 Wash. 2d 199, 509 P.2d 973 (1973) (grants to needy private school children not saved by summer school grants to needy public school children).

26 See *Klinger v. Howlett*, 56 Ill. 2d 1, 305 N.E.2d 129 (1973); *Opinion of the Justices*, 357 Mass. 846, 259 N.E.2d 564 (1970); *Opinion of the Justices*, 109 N.H. 578, 258 A.2d 343 (1969).

27 *Comm. for Publ. Educ. v. Nyquist*, 413 U.S. 756, 782 n. 38, 37 L. Ed. 2d 948, 968 n. 38, 93 S. Ct. 2955 (1973) (tuition reimbursement to parents of non-public school children); *Sloan v. Lemon*, 413 U.S. 825, 37 L. Ed. 2d 939, 93 S. Ct. 2982 (1973)(tuition reimbursement); *Wolman v. Essex*, 342 F. Supp. 399, 412 (S.D. Ohio), *aff'd mem.*, 409 U.S. 808, 93 S. Ct. 61, 34 L. Ed. 2d 69 (1972)("the reimbursement grant aspects . . . are directed only towards the parents of children who attend non-public schools"). See also *Meek v. Pittenger*, 421 U.S. 349, 44 L. Ed. 2d 217, 95 S. Ct. 1753 (1975)(auxiliary services only provided to non-public school students); *Publ. Funds for Publ. Schools of N.J. v. Marburger*, 358 F. Supp. 29 (D.N.J. 1973), *aff'd mem.*, 417 U.S. 961, 41 L. Ed. 2d 1134, 94 S. Ct. 3163 (1974) (private school students reimbursed for textbooks while public schoolers only loaned books); *Members of Jamestown Schl. Comm. v. Schmidt*, 427 F. Supp. 1338, 1348 (D.R.I.1977)(only private school students bused out of district); *Americans United for Sep. of Ch. and State v. Benton*, 413 F. Supp. 955 (D. Iowa 1976) (same).

28 Section 1 ch. 230 SLA 1970.

29 Section 2 ch. 136 SLA 1975.

30 AS 14.40.776(a)(2).

31 *Lendall v. Cook*, 432 F. Supp. 971 (E.D. Ark. 1977); *Americans United for Sep. of Ch. and State v. Bubb*, 379 F. Supp. 872 (D. Kan. 1974)(upheld with respect to most, but not all, church-related schools); *Americans United v. Rogers*, 538 S.W.2d 711 (Mo.), *cert. denied*, 429 U.S. 1029, 50 L. Ed. 2d 632, 97 S. Ct. 653 (1976).

32 See *Roemer v. Bd. of Publ. Works of Md.*, 426 U.S. 736, 49 L. Ed. 2d 179, 96 S. Ct. 2337 (1976)(non-categorical grants to colleges); *Hunt v. McNair*, 413 U.S. 734, 37 L. Ed. 2d 923, 93 S. Ct. 2868 (1973)(state leaseback arrangement with Baptist college); *Tilton v. Richardson*, 403 U.S. 672, 29 L. Ed. 2d 790, 91 S. Ct. 2091 (1971) (construction grants to colleges).

33 The convention delegates were informed by the chairperson of the authoring committee that the committee intended the phrase "other private educational institutions" to include "any educational institution that is not run by the state." 2 Proceedings, *supra* note 3 at 1511. See also *id.* at 1532.

An example of
OREGON COLLEGES THAT BY THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION LANGUAGE
CAN NOT RECEIVE STATE OF ALASKA FUNDS



George Fox University



Gutenberg College



Pacific University



New Hope Christian College



University of Portland



Willamette University

Molly HOOTCH,

v.

ALASKA STATE-OPERATED SCHOOL SYSTEM,

536 P.2d 793;1975 Alas.

May 23, 1975

The named appellants live in the rural western Alaska villages of Emmonak, Kwigillingok and Kongiganak, with populations of 439, 148 and 190 respectively. Each of these villages is inaccessible by automobile. At the time this lawsuit was filed, there were no public secondary schools (encompassing grades 9-12) in these communities. Each appellant had, however, the opportunity to attend school at state expense (including transportation, room and board when away from home) in state-operated regional schools, the state boarding home program or Bureau of Indian Affairs' schools. Participation in state-funded correspondence study was also available. Appellants have attended school in Anchorage, Bethel, Kodiak, Sitka, Unalakleet, Wrangell and Chemawa (Oregon). Since the inception of the suit, the state has established a secondary school in Emmonak as part of its on going program to provide area and local schools.

The state-operated school district is administered by ASOSS, a state corporation. 11 The board of directors of ASOSS is appointed by the governor subject to the requirement of AS 14.08.030 that at least six of the nine members be from rural areas. AS 14.08.090 requires the ASOSS board of directors to establish, maintain, operate, discontinue, and combine state-operated schools where it considers necessary [and to] pay tuition and boarding or transportation costs of secondary school students in cases in which the establishment of state-operated secondary schools is unsound for economic or educational reasons. The discretion of the board of directors in carrying out these duties is limited only by the statutory requirement that all ASOSS plans "relating to the establishment, discontinuance, or combining of schools" be approved by the Department of Education before they can be implemented.

Sec. 14.30.010. When attendance compulsory.

(a) Every child between seven and 16 years of age shall attend school at the public school in the district in which the child resides during each school term. Every parent, guardian or other person having the responsibility for or control of a child between seven and 16 years of age shall maintain the child in attendance at a public school in the district in which the child resides during the entire school term, except as provided in (b) of this section.

(b) This section does not apply if a child

(1) is provided an academic education comparable to that offered by the public schools in the area, either by

(A) attendance at a private school in which the teachers are certificated according to AS 14.20.020;

(B) tutoring by personnel certificated according to AS 14.20.020; or

(C) attendance at an educational program operated in compliance with AS 14.45.100 - 14.45.200 by a religious or other private school;

(2) attends a school operated by the federal government;

(3) has a physical or mental condition that a competent medical authority determines will make attendance impractical;

(4) is in the custody of a court or law enforcement authorities;

(5) is temporarily ill or injured;

(6) has been suspended or expelled under AS 14.03.160 or suspended or denied admittance under AS 14.30.045;

(7) resides more than two miles from either a public school or a route on which transportation is provided by the school authorities, except that this paragraph does not apply if the child resides within two miles of a federal or private school that the child is eligible and able to attend;

(8) is excused by action of the school board of the district at a regular meeting or by the district superintendent subject to approval by the school board of the district at the next regular meeting;

(9) has completed the 12th grade;

(10) is enrolled in

(A) a state boarding school established under AS 14.16; or

(B) a full-time program of correspondence study approved by the department; in those school districts providing an approved correspondence study program, a student may be enrolled either in the district correspondence program or in the centralized correspondence study program;

(11) is equally well-served by an educational experience approved by the school board as serving the child's educational interests despite an absence from school, and the request for excuse is made in writing by the child's parents or guardian and approved by the principal or administrator of the school that the child attends;

(12) is being educated in the child's home by a parent or legal guardian.

(c) If a parent, legal guardian, or other person having the responsibility for or control of the child elects to enroll a child who is six years of age in first grade at a public school, after enrollment, the child is subject to the provisions of (a) and (b) of this section. If the parent or guardian of a child who is six years of age and is enrolled in first grade at a public school determines, within 60 days after the child is enrolled, that the best interests of the child are not being served by enrollment in the first grade, the child may be withdrawn from school, and the provisions of (a) and (b) of this section do not apply to the child until the child is seven years of age.

**Resolution from West High School PTSA:
Requesting the 28th Alaska Legislature
Do Not Pass SJR9 and HJR1**

At a well-attended regular meeting of the West High School Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), an association organized and existing under the laws of the State of Alaska, held on February 6, 2014 at West High School, a quorum being present, the Board unanimously adopted the following Resolution.

WHEREAS two bills SJR9 and HJR1 are currently under consideration by the Alaska Legislature;

And WHEREAS these bills, amend, revoke, and revise wording that had been enacted since statehood in Article VII, sec. 1 and Article IX, sec. 6 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska regarding the prohibition of public funding for private and religious schools;

And WHEREAS if passed, would place these amendments before the voters in the next general election;

And WHEREAS these bills are progressing rapidly through the various committees of the Senate and House;

And WHEREAS the Alaska Legislature has considered these bills with little regard to the impact their passage would cause to public education funding;

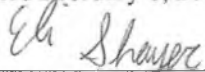
And WHEREAS the West High School PTSA membership highly values public education and recognizes the need for adequate funding for public education;

And WHEREAS those assembled at the West High PTSA unanimously agreed that public money should not fund private or religious schools or their students directly;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the West High School PTSA respectfully requests that the Legislature of the State of Alaska does not pass SJR9 or HJR1.

I, Eli Shayer, the undersigned Secretary of the said West High School PTSA, certify that I am the Secretary of the West High School PTSA, that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct representation of the Resolution passed by the Board on the day specified, and that the Board has never revoked, rescinded, or set aside the Resolution, and that it is now in full force and effect.

Dated February 6, 2014



Eli Shayer, Secretary
West High School PTSA

cc: all members of the Alaska Legislature; all members of the Anchorage School Board

Opposition to HJR1 Amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alaska Relating to State Aid for Private or Religious Schools

I oppose HJR1 for several reasons. First, this resolution seems to have come in part from assertions that public education is failing. However, your actions to date have flat funded public education for a number of years. You expect the same or better educational outcomes with less money, taking into account the ever rising cost of living. This is impossible according to my checkbook.

In addition, private and religious schools have never lived up to the same standard as public education. There are some apparently good schools, but since they do not have to play by the same rules it is hard to compare them. Public schools are required to perform regular testing of students by national standards while private and religious schools are not. Parents may give regular input into public schools and many do, while I'm not sure of such options for other schools.

There are those parents with children in either public, private or religious schools that we are lucky if they get their kids to the school door, much less support the students. Many parents, however, spend many hours in support of their children in school in preparation even before they are old enough to begin Kindergarten.

While I think there should be options, I definitely do not think public funds should be diverted to private or religious schools. Here are two reasons off hand:

- 1 - Public funds should go to public uses.
- 2 - When public money is used, it ultimately means there will be some public control of the funding and curriculum of private or religious schools.

There should be complete separation of church and state. I do not want public officials to have input into any religious organization with which I am affiliated. That is the biggest "no-no" that I can think of, and I'm a very religious person.

My experience is that Alaska's schools have done an excellent job with what they have. I believe if you spent more time with specific schools, teachers and students, you would better understand the needs of those schools and could remedy particular problems.

Personally, my grown children came through the Alaska Public School System and now my granddaughter is coming up through the Fairbanks Public School System. She continues to have great grades, now in the 8th grade, and is thinking of college. They have all excelled! I have two grandsons that are home schooling as their parents' choice and are also doing well.

My children have gone on to have great careers in areas that they have chosen, some in the private sector and some in the public sector. They are all living successful lives and their children are doing well.

There are factors beyond the schools which have much to do with the success of children. Many students which are failing also have other problems. I think that instead of continued decreasing of funding, you should attempt to find out what our local public schools need to improve their success rate.

Sincerely,

Doris Robbins
1281 Overhill Dr.
Fairbanks, AK 99709-6753
(907) [REDACTED]



NAACP

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Anchorage, Alaska Branch – Wanda V. Laws, President

P.O. Box 200089 Anchorage, AK 99520-0089

(907) 272-8717 / Fax (907) 222-0907 naacpanchorage@gmail.com*

February 18, 2013

The Honorable Representative Wes Keller
State Capitol
120 4th Street, Mail Stop 3100
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Keller,

One of the goals of the NAACP is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of all citizens. Therefore it is essential that all students have access to an equal and high-quality public education by eliminating education-related racial and ethnic disparities in our public schools.

I am writing to inform you that the NAACP Anchorage strongly opposes HJR 1 because it would create a dual and unequal education system in Alaska. Public schools accept every child whereas private schools can legally discriminate. Ultimately “choice” would not be in the hands of the parents.

The NAACP Anchorage is also in strong opposition to SJR 9. History has taught us that a Constitution is amended with the goal to enhance society. However, this attempt to change the Alaska Constitution is false and misleading because it would allow subsidies for those who are more fortunate to pay for their kids to attend private school. These same subsidies are pulled from a system for which most of us depend on. This action will divert attention, energy, and resources for efforts to reduce class size, enhance teacher quality, provide every student with books and computers, and provide a safe and orderly environment at all of Alaska’s public schools.

We cannot seriously talk about advancement in Alaska without talking about our young people and education. The simple truth is that preparing young people for success and ‘finding our way back to first’ is about much more than what happens inside the classroom. It takes the interest and investment from all of us. When we meet the needs of the whole child we are one step closer to preserving the promise of Alaska. Taking resources away from public schools ensures that Alaska cannot meet these goals.

The NAACP Anchorage asks that you include this letter in the bill packet.

Respectfully,

Wanda V. Laws

Wanda V. Laws
President, NAACP Anchorage

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And WHEREAS if passed, would place these amendments before the voters in the next general election;

And WHEREAS these bills are progressing rapidly through the various committees of the Senate and House;

And WHEREAS the Alaska Legislature has considered these bills with little regard to the impact their passage would cause to public education funding;

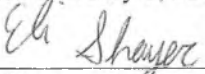
And WHEREAS the West High School PTSA membership highly values public education and recognizes the need for adequate funding for public education;

And WHEREAS those assembled at the West High PTSA unanimously agreed that public money should not fund private or religious schools or their students directly;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the West High School PTSA respectfully requests that the Legislature of the State of Alaska does not pass SJR9 or HJR1.

I, Eli Shayer, the undersigned Secretary of the said West High School PTSA, certify that I am the Secretary of the West High School PTSA, that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct representation of the Resolution passed by the Board on the day specified, and that the Board has never revoked, rescinded, or set aside the Resolution, and that it is now in full force and effect.

Dated February 6, 2014



Eli Shayer, Secretary
West High School PTSA

cc: all members of the Alaska Legislature; all members of the Anchorage School Board

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:34 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR 9 and HJR 1 Vouchers and Quality of Public Schools and Longer Term School Budgeting Process

FYI
*j

From: David Nyman [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 10:26 AM
Subject: SJR 9 and HJR 1 Vouchers and Quality of Public Schools and Longer Term School Budgeting Process

I would like to express my opposition to the recent movement to amend the constitution to distribute public funds to private schools. I have 4 teens in the public school system in Anchorage. They have variously attended Chugach Optional, Central Middle School of Science, Steller and West High. My step daughter attended Girdwood Elementary and now attends South High. It is a challenge to keep up with the scholastic and extracurricular activities but in doing so I have come to the opinion that Anchorage Schools offer a wide range of options and in most cases excellent educational environments. When there is a problem it is up to me the parent to work with the child and school system to identify it and resolve the issue. Thus when I hear others grouse about the public school system I think to myself that perhaps they need to be more involved with the school system.

In my opinion the initiatives identified above as SJR9 and HJR1 are flatly misguided and will detract from continuing to promote and build the best public education system possible. Thus I object to these measures and the constitutional changes they would require. Alaska's constitution has been shown time and time again to be well crafted as it is based on sound principles. What I see in the current efforts is some folks who are in a position of authority believe they should change the current system based on their perception of what is occurring versus the reality of the situation.

With that said, Alaska can always do better in managing the expenses or the quality of the school system. The year to year budgeting process, I believe, detracts from any manager's ability to plan over a longer time frame as proposed by forward funding. The herky jerky nature of our annual budget scramble affects all branches of our government, allows for easy insertion of poorly justified projects into the process. Mega projects that are sexy like the Knik Arm Crossing or the Susitna Hydro siphon capital away from basic services including our schools.

In conclusion I hope everyone has a productive session and works toward the benefit of all Alaskans!

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:33 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR 1; SJR 9

FYI
*j

From: Lisa Rickey [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, [redacted]
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1; SJR 9

Dear Representative Keller

I am writing to urge you to NOT support any constitutional amendment that would allow public funds to benefit religious or other private educational institutions.

I am appalled that HJR 1 and SJR 9 are threatening our constitution and attempting to not only break the boundary of the separation of church and state, but to allow the state, which is facing huge deficits in educational funding for public schools, to fund private and religious schools.

Please vote against these constitutional amendments.

Thank you,

Lisa Rickey

[redacted]
60-year resident of Alaska

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:33 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR9

FYI
*j

From: Danna Grammer [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 1:06 PM
Subject: SJR9

Dear Legislators and Governor,

Thank you for your service. As a voter in Anchorage and a parent of a child in the Anchorage School District, I am writing to you to let you know that I oppose SJR9. I believe the founding members of our constitution had the insight that public funds should not be used to fund private and religious schools. Those funds need to be utilized in our public schools to provide better opportunities for ALL Alaskan children. Whether a parent chooses to send their child to an Alaska public school or find alternative schooling is a personal choice, but I do not believe that is a choice that should be funded by the citizens of Alaska. Instead, our state's money should be used to make this state's public schools the best they can be and something that ALL Alaskans can be proud of.

Furthermore, it seems counterintuitive to a voter like myself that if there is not enough funds to fund our public schools in such a manner that every child is given an opportunity to excel at education rather than just getting by with a mediocre education, that there would be enough funds available to provide vouchers for private and religious schools. My answer is that there shouldn't be.

I feel as a governing body, it should be the position to do what's right for the greater good of the citizens of the state rather than a select few, which is what I believe SJR9 would be doing to the education system of our state.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,
Danna Grammer

[REDACTED]
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907-[REDACTED]

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:32 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

FYI
*j

From: william luttrell [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 4:07 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

I FULLY SUPPORT THIS EDUCATION BILL . IF YOU LISTENED CLOSELY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA'S PRESIDENT, HE SAID (FOR THE 3RD YEAR IN A ROW) I'M HAVING TO PROVIDE REMEDIAL TRAINING/EDUCATION TO AK. HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR'S JUST SO THEY CAN PASS THE ENTRANCE EXAM TO ATTEND COLLEGE. PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND'S SHOULD FOLLOW THE CHILD , WHEREVER THE PARENT'S CHOOSE TO SEND THEM, THEY KNOW WHAT'S BEST. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:31 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: NO on SJR9 / YES on BSA increase

FYI
*j

From: Staci Cox [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, [REDACTED]
To: Sen. Fred Dyson; Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Dennis Egan; Sen. Berta Gardner; Sen. Pete Kelly; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. John Coghill; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Lesli McGuire; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Mike Dunleavy; Sen. Anna Fairclough; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Kevin Meyer; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Hollis French; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Peter Micciche; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Doug Isaacson; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Mark Neuman; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Steve Thompson; Rep. Mike Chenault; Rep. Eric Feige; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Pete Higgins; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Kurt Olson; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Mia Costello; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Bill Stoltze; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Mike Hawker; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Benjamin Nageak; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Geran Tarr; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Cc: sean.parnell@alaska.gov
Subject: NO on SJR9 / YES on BSA increase

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I was pleased to hear Gov. Parnell declare this the "Education Session" during his State of the State address last month, since education is the most important issue for me as a parent of two young children.

I am absolutely opposed to the use of public funding for private schools, and will not vote for any representative who promotes such legislation. I was disturbed to hear that SJR9 moved another step forward today, and urge you not to pass this bill.

Furthermore, I believe the BSA for public education must be increased immediately. Please do not hold today's children hostage to factors outside of their control: the unfunded retirement liability, spiraling health care costs, and increasing energy costs to name a few.

I hope you support Senator Gardner's proposed legislation that would increase the BSA substantially more than Gov. Parnell's proposal. Senator Gardner's proposal takes into account the losses and cuts that have been felt by Alaskan school districts since 2011. As I am sure you are aware, the Anchorage school district requires a BSA increase of \$251 to avoid this year's cuts alone, and \$400 to make up for the past three years of flat funding. I believe inflation proofing the BSA is another essential component of future legislation.

Please don't let education become a partisan issue; our children are worth too much!

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Most sincerely,

Staci Cox

House District 27/Senate District N

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:31 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR 1

FYI
*j

From: John and Kathleen Tappel [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 12:53 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Keller,

As a retired educator of children for 19 years and a concerned parent and grandparent I urge you to support HJR 1, to allow for more choices, more freedoms to Alaska's parents and guardians of children. I support school choice going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion about what's best for our kids this year and vote on it in November.

Competition naturally makes for better products and services. The same has proven true in education.

I urge you to support HJR 1! The Polls show that Alaskans do support it and want the chance to vote on it in November.

Thank you,

Kathleen R Tappel

Anchorage

District 25

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:31 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

FYI
*j

From: william luttrell [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 1:42 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Re: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

[REDACTED]

On Wed, Feb 5, 2014 at 4:07 PM, william luttrell <wm.lut.ir@gmail.com> wrote:
I FULLY SUPPORT THIS EDUCATION BILL . IF YOU LISTENED CLOSELY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA'S PRESIDENT, HE SAID (FOR THE 3RD YEAR IN A ROW) I'M HAVING TO PROVIDE REMEDIAL TRAINING/EDUCATION TO AK. HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR'S JUST SO THEY CAN PASS THE ENTRANCE EXAM TO ATTEND COLLEGE. PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND'S SHOULD FOLLOW THE CHILD , WHEREVER THE PARENT'S CHOOSE TO SEND THEM, THEY KNOW WHAT'S BEST. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:30 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Support SJR 9 and HJR 1

FYI
*j

From: Joseph Kurber [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 2:16 PM
Subject: Support SJR 9 and HJR 1

I'm an Alaskan who cares about my child's education and I support SJR 9 and HJR 1. It is critically important that our children have the best education possible, and these bills would help do that. Alaskans deserve a chance to vote on these issues.

Please vote to move this bill forward.

Joseph Kurber
Chief Executive Officer
Chena Hills LLC
[REDACTED]

Jim Pound

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 11:23 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Opposition to HJR1

FYI
*j

From: Ann Gifford [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 8:51 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Opposition to HJR1

Dear members of the House Judiciary Committee,

This is to express my opposition to HJR1/SJR 9. I am an attorney who has worked with public school districts for many years. I am also the parent of three children who graduated from public schools in Juneau. The comments below reflect my personal opinions as a citizen of our state. I am not writing to you on behalf of any client.

I oppose HJR1/SJR9 because it is not good for kids. Here are a few reasons why:

The amendments open the door to vouchers and other forms of direct public assistance to private schools. Public money should not be used to pay for private school. We have taken on the societal obligation to provide a free public K-12 education for all children in the state because as a society we all benefit from an educated, productive populace and we all pay the price in things like higher crime rates and expensive incarceration when kids grow up without a good education. We expect even residents who have no children to pay taxes to support public schools. No parent or child has a right to a "share" of the state's education money. They are entitled to access the public educational program that we collectively provide. If they want something different, that is their choice, but it should also be their responsibility to pay for it.

One big concern is that vouchers don't generally help the kids who need help the most. The students who use vouchers to attend a private school are those whose parents are able to navigate the admissions process, transport their kids to the schools and provide all the other types of support that are needed to help kids succeed in a private school. Many students who live in poverty don't have parents or other family who can do all those things. This is a particularly big problem in Alaska, where many of our neediest students live in remote bush communities where there aren't any private schools to begin with.

Another concern is that vouchers haven't been shown to produce significant benefits even for the students who are able to use them. Most studies on the voucher programs that have been tried in other states show little or no improvement in educational outcomes. Meanwhile, there have been numerous scandals associated with misuse of public funds by private schools who aren't held to the same standards as the public schools. When we spend public money for education, we're entitled to expect safe schools that don't discriminate, that provide due process before excluding students, that use certified teachers and that teach a curriculum that meets state standards. How would we assure that private schools meet these standards?

I am also puzzled by those who say that "competition will lead to better public schools." That idea imports business concepts into the public arena where they don't fit very well. Competition can lead to better results for consumers of something like auto insurance because the businesses that are competing are driven by a profit motive. What is the motivation that would spur a school to improve in the presence of private competition that isn't there otherwise? School teachers and principals don't get paid any more when more children attend their schools. If personal pride is supposed to be the motivating factor, why do people think it would only be triggered by beating out private competition, or that the State needs to fund that private competition to make that happen? School officials obviously take a lot of pride in their successful programs now. Supt. Paramo of Mat-Su clearly is very proud of the successful choice programs Mat-Su offers its students. If pride is the key, recognizing successful programs seems more likely to get results than bashing the less-successful programs and spending public dollars to increase the amount of private competition on what is already an uneven playing field.

Finally, I disagree with those who say that the proposed amendments to our constitution are necessary to assure that school districts can continue to purchase goods or services from private educational vendors like Sylvan Learning Systems. Our constitution prohibits only direct support to private educational institutions. Even though the Alaska Supreme Court has interpreted our constitution to prohibit some types of support to private institutions that other courts have found to be "indirect", I see nothing in our court's decisions that suggests it would invalidate the purchase of secular services or materials for public school students simply because the vendor of them is a private educational organization.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this. I hope that you and our other legislators will turn your attention and effort to ideas for strengthening our public schools, for the benefit of all our children and the future of our state. Sincerely, Ann Gifford

Ann Gifford • [Redacted Address]

(907) [Redacted Phone Number]

Ernest Prax

From: Jim Pound
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 11:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Oppose HJR1

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 11:07 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Oppose HJR1

FYI*j

From: Denise Koch [mailto:denise_koch@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 16, 2014 6:40 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Cathy Munoz; cifarr@hotmail.com; sean.parnell@alaska.gov
Subject: Oppose HJR1

To Representatives and Governor
Parnell:

I am not a member of the NEA.

I am only representing myself.

I am a mother of two children. One daughter goes to Harborview public school. The other daughter will enter kindergarten at Harborview next year. I am also a proud graduate of public school, from kindergarten through graduate school.

With all the gloom and doom talk about public education, I wanted to say that I'm very happy with my daughter's teachers. However,

the flat funding of education is already leading to increases in classroom size. There is a limit to how many children even a good teacher can reach. This problem has been exacerbated by the decrease in the number of paraeducational aids that assist children with behavioral issues in the classroom.

I want strong public schools. The years of flat funding for education for the past three years followed by this resolution seems like an engineered failure for public school in order to privatize education.

It's fine to foster educational competition with charter schools – as long as they are public. This would be a fair comparison, where schools can't turn low income, low performing, or students with disabilities away.

It's important to preserve strong public schools as a foundation of the common good and of our democracy.

Please oppose HJR1.

Thank you for your consideration.

Denise Koch

924 D Street

Juneau, AK 99801

• • •

Ernest Prax

From: Jim Pound
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 11:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: House Resolution 1

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 11:04 AM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: House Resolution 1

FYI *j

From: Jeff and Gretta Trotter [<mailto:trotter@mtaonline.net>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 8:01 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: House Resolution 1

Dear Representative Keller,

No public dollars should be spent on private or religious schools. There are already numerous choices for students to enroll in classes in our public schools. Please focus on ways to support our kids in the public schools.

I am against House Resolution 1.

Sincerely,

Jeff Trotter

971 S Joanne Drive

Palmer, AK 99645



Amrita Singh
State Legislative Counsel

(202) 466-3234 x226
(202) 898-0955 (fax)
americansunited@au.org

1301 K Street, NW
Suite 850, East Tower
Washington, DC 20005

**Testimony of
Amrita Singh
State Legislative Counsel
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
regarding HJR 1
before the
Alaska House Judiciary Committee
February 18, 2014**

I am offering this testimony on behalf of the Alaska members and the Alaska Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. HJR 1 would strip two provisions in the Alaska Constitution that guarantee that our taxpayer dollars will support public schools—open to all students regardless of race, religion, gender, or disability—rather than private and religious schools. The purpose of HJR 1 is to remove the constitutional protections that stand in the way of a private school voucher program in Alaska. Vouchers, however, violate fundamental principles of religious freedom and are poor education policy. Instead of providing equal access to high quality education or setting high standards and accountability, voucher programs have proven ineffective, lack accountability to taxpayers, and deprive students of rights provided to public school. Accordingly, the drastic measure of repealing fundamental provisions from the Alaska Constitution should be rejected.

The Resolution

This resolution strips a portion of Article VII, Sec. 1 of the Alaska Constitution, which bars the State from using taxpayer money to fund private religious schools. Voucher proponents seek to repeal this constitutional protection because religious schools participate in voucher programs at much greater rates than private secular schools. This is because religious schools are traditionally less expensive than secular private schools and thus a voucher goes further at such schools. In the D.C. voucher program, for example, nearly 82% of the participating schools were faith-based.¹ The result of voucher programs, therefore, is the funneling of taxpayer dollars to religious education.

This resolution also amends Article IX, Sec. 6 of the Alaska Constitution in order to escape the requirement that taxpayer money be spent on a “public purpose.” If passed, HJR 1 would allow taxpayer money to be spent on the non-public purpose of funding private religious schools.

Passage of HJR 1 Would Violate Core Principles of Religious Liberty

Americans United recognizes the value of religious education, and understands that parochial schools can serve an important role in the lives of many children. But, because most parochial schools either cannot or do not wish to separate the religious components of the education they offer from the academic programs, these schools must be funded by voluntary contributions, not taxation. For example, *The Wall Street Journal* published a piece this month by Cardinal Anthony Dolan, the archbishop of New York, in which he explained that Catholic schools “won’t back away

¹ US Dep’t of Educ., Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Final Report at xxvii (June 2010) (U.S. Dep’t of Educ. Final Report).

from insisting that faith formation be part of our curriculum, even for non-Catholic students.”² Such a stance, of course, is unobjectionable when the school is supported by church funds. Our objection is to using taxpayer funding to support such curriculum.

The current Alaska constitutional provisions that bar public funding of religious schools protect religious freedom in various ways. First, they protect taxpayers from being forced to subsidize a religious education that sharply conflicts with their most sincerely held religious beliefs. For those who do not share a particular religious tradition, such taxpayer-supported religious content is an affront. Second, they keep the government out of the business of religion—the government should not be funding religious education but instead funding schools open to all students regardless of their faith. Third, they protect the autonomy of religious schools. Public funding entangles government with religious schools and weakens these schools by making them dependent upon government money. In order to protect religious freedom, therefore, the current Constitution should stand and HJR 1 should be rejected.

Alaska Should Not Adopt a Program that Aids Discrimination

Private schools can limit admission based on religion, gender, economic status, disability, and other criteria. And, religious schools can use religious hiring criteria. Most voucher schemes permit private schools to maintain these admissions and hiring criteria *and* benefit from taxpayer funded tuition. This violates the longstanding principle that government money should never fund discrimination. Taxpayers should not fund programs through tax credits that harm the fundamental civil rights of students and teachers.

Religious schools can limit admissions and hiring not just to co-religionists, but also to only those students—and the parents of students—who follow its teachings and tenets. Religious schools can expel a student for refusing to take a religious oath, for being gay, or for engaging in any other religious teaching the school prohibits. Religious schools can also segregate students or apply different policies based on gender. And, these schools can fire an unwed pregnant teacher or a teacher going through a divorce, if either violates the religious teachings of the school.

Although the State permits these schools to engage in these practices with their own private funds, such discriminatory policies should never be supported and funded with Alaska taxpayer funds.

Vouchers Do Not Improve Student Achievement or Resources

According to multiple studies of the District of Columbia,³ Milwaukee,⁴ and Cleveland⁵ school voucher programs, students offered vouchers do not perform better in reading and math than students in public schools. In 2011, the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau released a five-year longitudinal study, which concluded that students in Milwaukee using vouchers to attend private and religious schools perform no better on standardized tests than their counterparts in public

²Cardinal Anthony Dolan, *The Plan to Save Catholic Schools: How to combat falling enrollment while keeping standards high*, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 1, 2013, A11,

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323701904578275921970228476.html?mod=googlenews_wsj>.

³U.S. Dep't of Educ. *Final Report*; U.S. Dep't of Ed., *Evaluation of the D.C. Scholarship Program: Impact After 3 Years* (Apr. 2009); U.S. Dep't of Ed., *Evaluation of the D.C. Scholarship Program: Impact After 2 Years* (June 2008); U.S. Dep't of Ed., *Evaluation of the D.C. Scholarship Program: Impact After 1 Year* (June 2007).

⁴Witte, Wolf, et al., *MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Third Year Report* (Apr. 2010); Witte, Wolf, et al., *MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Second Year Report* (Mar. 2009); Witte, Wolf, et al., *MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Baseline Report* (Feb. 2008); Witte, *Achievement Effects of Milwaukee Voucher Program* (Feb. 1997); Witte, et al., *Fifth Year Report Milwaukee Parental Choice Program* (Dec. 1995).

⁵Plucker, et al., *Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, Summary Report 1998-2004* (Feb. 2006); *Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, Executive Report 1998-2002* (Feb. 2006).

schools.⁶ Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education studied the D.C. voucher program for five years and found the program produced no statistically significant improvements overall in educational achievement.⁷

Voucher programs also fail to offer participating students greater educational resources. In fact, the Department of Education studies of the D.C. voucher show that students participating in the program are actually *less* likely to have access to programs for English language learners, learning support and special needs programs, tutors, counselors, cafeterias, and nurse's offices than students not in the program.⁸

Vouchers Lack Accountability

Most voucher programs lack sufficient accountability measures. They lack regulation, reporting, monitoring, and transparency. The current administrator of the D.C. voucher program, for example, admitted that quality control is "a dead zone, a blind spot" of the program.⁹ And, a report issued by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) revealed that the D.C. program has failed to meet even basic statutory requirements. For example, the administrator permitted schools to participate—and allowed students to attend schools—even though they lacked a valid D.C. occupancy certificate, failed to submit required financial data, and failed to submit required annual operational reports with basic information on curriculum, teachers' education, and school facilities.¹⁰ Indeed, some participating schools failed to submit information on accreditation or educational soundness, yet voucher students were directed to and attended those schools.¹¹

Similarly, the state of Georgia has given out 170 million dollars in tuition tax credits since 2008, yet it is difficult to determine "how the money was spent and on whom."¹² There is no way to determine whether the private schools funded are successful or failing, whether the program is serving low-income students, or whether the program is supplying tuition to kids who were and would be attending private schools regardless of the tuition tax program.¹³

The State cannot justify using taxpayer dollars on programs that are in no way accountable to the taxpayer.

⁶ Legislative Audit Bureau, *Test Score Data for Pupils in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (Report 4 of 5)*, 17 (Aug. 2011) ("The project's five-year longitudinal study shows no significant difference in the performance of Choice and similar MPS pupils after four years of participation.")

⁷ *U.S. Dep't of Educ. Final Report* at xv, xix and 34.

⁸ *U.S. Dep't of Educ. Final Report* at 56, 57, 60 (June 2010).

⁹ Lyndsey Layton and Emma Brown, "Quality Controls Lacking for D.C. Schools Accepting Federal Vouchers," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 17, 2012, <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-17/local/35507144_1_voucher-program-voucher-dollars-private-schools>.

¹⁰ US Gov't Accountability Office, *District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program: Additional Policies and Procedures Would Improve Internal Controls and Program Operations*, Pub. No. 08-9 at 34-35 (Nov. 2007) (GAO Report).

¹¹ *Id.* at 34.

¹² Maureen Downey, "Private School Tax Credit: A \$170 million tax diversion that Georgia lawmakers cloak in secrecy. Why?" *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Feb. 17, 2012 <http://blogs.ajc.com/get-schooled-blog/2013/02/17/private-school-tax-credit-a-170-million-tax-diversion-that-georgia-lawmakers-cloak-in-secrecy-why/?cxntfid=blogs_get_schooled_blog>.

¹³ *Id.*

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:15 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

FYI*j

From: Gayle Trivette [<mailto:gayletriv@qci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 3:21 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Thank you for your service to our state. I am opposed to HJR1 for the following reasons:

Public Education is a Cornerstone of Democracy.

*Public schools are governed by locally elected school boards. Individual schools have parent/teacher organizations open to All parents and school staff.

*Children from all backgrounds come together to learn the skills need to thrive in our diverse country and world, including how to work in groups, problem-solve and resolve conflicts with people whose life experience maybe very different from their own.

*Public Schools are financially and academically accountable to the governing bodies that finance them.

*Public Schools are mandated to provide appropriate education for All Children regardless of their needs or abilities.

*The Alaska Constitution mandates that the state of Alaska provide funding for all children, recognizing the responsibility of each adult generation to provide education for every member of future generations.

Private Education offers a FALSE CHOICE.

*Private schools are free to choose their own governing body whether it's an individual, sectarian group, or corporate interest.

*Private schools are free to choose which students they will accept or reject making it very unlikely the students will have the opportunity to work, learn and play with the diversity of people they will engage with as adults and that some parents and children will NOT have access to the school they would choose.

*There is not a mechanism designed to hold private schools financially and academically accountable. Developing one would be costly.

***Under funding public education and then accusing it of under performing is disingenuous.**

*Despite several years of declining real dollars in funding public education, our public schools are striving valiantly and making progress toward the goal of success for every student. With adequate funding that progress would be faster, benefiting our state economically and socially.

I urge you to vote NO on JHR 1, support inflation proof funding for PUBLIC Education, and move on to other important state business.

Thank you for your public service to all Alaskans.

Gayle Trivette
Juneau, AK

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:15 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

FYI*j

From: thetaylors [<mailto:thetaylors@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 3:41 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Representative Keller,

I am a concerned parent who lives in Representative Le Doux's district. I support this resolution because I believe we need to eliminate the "Blaine" language in our constitution. Please vote in favor of HJR1 and give Alaskans the opportunity to vote on this issue.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Taylor
1001 Bentree Circle
Anchorage, AK 99504
907-333-1297



This email is free from viruses and malware because [avast! Antivirus](#) protection is active.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 3:00 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Please, use my email as testimony in the hearing of HJR1

FYI*J

From: John & Evie [<mailto:jamstreit2007@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 5:21 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please, use my email as testimony in the hearing of HJR1

Dear Rep. Keller,

I am in favor of passing SJR9/HJR1 so that we the people can vote--to uphold what I believe was the original intent of our constitution. Please pass SJR9/HJR1 so that the people can vote to uphold the original intent of our constitution. There are many exciting possibilities for innovation in education. The founders of our state recognized that future generations needed the flexibility to respond to these possibilities in a way that would benefit all students. Our Alaska Supreme Court has taken away this flexibility. SJR9/HJR1 would restore it. Please let the people vote on this amendment.

Sincerely,
Eva Streit
Anchorage, AK

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 3:00 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: money for education

FYI*j

From: kimbrough mauney [<mailto:kimbroughred@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 12:02 AM
To: Rep. Bob Lynn
Subject: money for education

Thank you all for your hard work in Juneau! I appreciate your thoughtful decision making when it comes to spending money on education. I am currently getting my State Teaching Certification in the MatSu Borough District, and I have hopes to someday have a hand in creating more charter school options, especially for high schoolers. I am also a spiritual person who thinks it is great for people to practice religion of whatever choosing. Thanks to Rep. Feige's newsletter, I learned that BSA has gone up significantly over the past few years. This is a good thing; I prefer to see that number rise than what we spend on military operations. I am NOT ok with spending state money on education that is sponsored by or linked to religious organizations. Please continue to keep State and Religion separate! As for private schools, they too should fund themselves.

The public system in our state works, thanks in part because it includes Charter schools and 'school within a school'. These alternative, yet still public/state funded, learning environments are necessary part of the public system, meeting the needs of various groups, and I'm very thankful that our state supports them.

Please continue to support public schools, including charters, with state funding. Again, religious and private schools know what they got into when they started- grant writing galore :) !

~Kimbrough Mauney, Anchorage and Wasilla, AK

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:58 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: State of the State Speech

FYI*j

From: Pastor Guenther [<mailto:pastorguenther@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 6:16 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Fwd: State of the State Speech

Representative Keller,

I just wanted to send you a quick email to let you know that I believe that school choice is an issue that is crucial to the future of our educational system, our children, and our state. It's an issue I believe in so strongly that I'll back it with my vote and I know that the same is true of many of the members of our church. I'm not sure where you stand on the issue, but I'm convinced that creating a "free market" in education will improve the system all around and will have a rich payoff in a few short decades. Though I'm a pastor, I don't even say this from a religious perspective, but believe that competition among the schools will make for a better education all around. Right now I believe the government has a sort of monopoly on education. Competition will make the public schools better, provide for better jobs, and a better citizenry. I'm thoroughly convinced that it will create more jobs, boost the economy, and keep kids off the streets and out of trouble. School choice will only make the great state of Alaska better. Please, let me know where you stand on this crucial issue and do all you can to help get rid of the Blaine amendment and create a free market in education. Thank you for your time! Your service to our state is greatly appreciated no matter which side you fall on! I will be praying for you and for all the important work you do.

Sincerely,
Pastor Rob Guenther

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
47585 Ciechanski Road, Kenai, AK 99611
www.GraceLutheranKenai.com
pastorguenther@gmail.com
(907) 690-1660

Read sermons online: www.GraceLutheranKenai.com/Sermons
Listen to sermons online: www.GraceLutheranKenai.com/Podcast
Watch services online: www.GraceLutheranKenai.com/Webcast

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:58 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR1

FYI*j

From: john Fleming [<mailto:akflemings@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 6:51 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I have been in Anchorage since 1963 and even taught in Anchorage public schools. I support HJR 1 because I believe that parents should determine where their children should be educated. I support the proposed amendment to the state constitution which would make this freedom of education possible. I urge to pass this resolution out of your Judiciary Committee. John & Diane Fleming, 4701 Cambridge way, Anchorage, AK 99503 907-230-7783

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 3:02 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Please vote YES on HJR1

FYI*j

From: highflytim@gmail.com [<mailto:highflytim@gmail.com>] **On Behalf Of** Robert Timmins
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 3:46 PM
Subject: Please vote YES on HJR1

Dear Representative,

As a parent of 4 ASD school students we are DESPERATE for choice outside of the only public school district we have. PLEASE allow us to vote and let us take control of our destiny and the opportunities for our students! We once had this choice, but due to the BLAINE amendment and judicial activism, choice was eliminated to the detriment of all concerned.

As **originally written** and ratified by Alaska voters, our state constitution allows the Legislature to use public funds to benefit students even when this indirectly benefits private or religious schools. The minutes of the Constitutional Convention show that the delegates voted to uphold this type of funding by an almost two to one margin. Yet the Alaska Supreme Court has consistently ruled that our constitution forbids this kind of indirect funding. SJR9/HJR1 would remove an unnecessary clause in our constitution that has been misinterpreted by the courts. Please pass SJR9/HJR1 so that the **people can vote** to uphold the original intent of our constitution.

There are many exciting possibilities for **innovation in education**. The founders of our state recognized that future generations needed the flexibility to respond to these possibilities in a way that **would benefit all students**. Our Alaska Supreme Court has taken away this flexibility. **SJR9/ HJR1 would restore it**. Please **let the people vote** on this amendment.

Thank you for doing the right thing for our kids and families!!

Sincerely,

Robert Timmins

District 14 Chairman ARP, Eagle River, AK

--

"Our *Constitution* was made only for a *moral and religious people*. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." - *John Adams*

"[I hope] to see the time when **education**, and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise and industry, shall **become much more general** than at present." A. Lincoln

"So that the record of history is absolutely crystal clear that there is no alternative way, so far discovered, of **improving the lot of the ordinary people** that can hold a candle to the productive activities that are unleashed by a **free enterprise** system." Milton Friedman

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 3:02 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Proposed Constitutional Amendment

FYI*j

From: Barbara Thurston [mailto:barbara@thurstons.us]

Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 12:11 PM

To: Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Benjamin Nageak; Rep. Beth Kerttula; Rep. Bill Stoltze; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Doug Isaacson; Rep. Eric Feige; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Geran Tarr; Rep. Harriet Drummond; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Kurt Olson; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Mark Neuman; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Mia Costello; Rep. Mike Chenault; Rep. Mike Hawker; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Pete Higgins; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Tammie Wilson; Rep. Wes Keller

Subject: Proposed Constitutional Amendment

To members of the Alaska House of Representatives:

I am writing to express my concern about SJR9 and HJR1, the proposals to amend the Constitution to allow for public money to go to private, parochial, or for-profit schools.

While the concept of "allowing parents to choose their children's school" sounds appealing, I fear that such a move would significantly harm Alaska's ability to develop the well-educated workforce that we need to be competitive in the 21st century.

Public schools in Alaska are subject to many requirements, and have extremely high expectations put on them. Public schools are subject to a number of state and federal requirements, including special education rules, teacher tenure and retirement benefit laws, requirements that teachers be "highly qualified", and testing requirements, all of which were put in place in an attempt to make sure that schools were accountable to the public for the education provided to children. Public schools are also required to provide an education for every child in the community who attends that school, regardless of that child's learning abilities, behavior issues, or home life.

Private schools are not currently subject to any of these requirements. They can accept or deny admission to any child they wish, and select teachers based on any criteria they choose. This often allows them to appear to be more "successful" than public schools simply because of the students they enroll - it's not hard to have a high graduation rate if you only enroll academically strong and motivated students, whose families are heavily involved in their education.

I think it's likely that if SJR9 or HJR1 passes, and a bill is proposed to allow funding for private schools, that an attempt will be made to discourage schools receiving public funds from discriminating against students with particular needs. I don't, however, believe it's realistic to expect that this will result in private schools actually having an enrolled population similar to the neighborhood public schools. The child with special needs who moves mid-year from a village into an urban area because of a family crisis is unlikely to be welcomed into the local private school. The same is true for a child who is emotionally disturbed, or whose parents work odd hours and aren't able to provide transportation to a school across

town, or the student who has limited proficiency in English.

Simply put, some students are more expensive to educate than others. One can't assume that the funding for a local school district can be allocated evenly among the students, and "travel" with the student to whatever school that student attends. In addition to the costs of helping students with special needs or circumstances, there are overhead costs for a local school district (building maintenance, etc) that do not decrease with a modest decrease in enrollment.

Allowing funding to "travel" with a student would undoubtedly be a benefit for private schools and the students currently attending them, and would likely spur the creation of for-profit schools specializing in educating lower-cost students. It would also, however, make it much more difficult for our local public school districts to provide an appropriate education for all students, including those whose situation makes them more expensive to educate, or whose families are unable to navigate the new choices that might be available.

It's important to remember that Alaska already offers a significant amount of choice within our public schools. The larger populated areas (and some smaller ones) offer multiple choices of Charter Schools, all of which provide choices to families while maintaining the high expectations and oversight that apply to all public schools.

A Constitutional change like this would also be inconsistent with other services provided in Alaska. There are a number of situations in which the state or local government provides a service. While citizens may take advantage of that service or not, they are not given the option of taking their "share" of the cost of that service and using it to pay for a private alternative. For example, while many businesses choose to hire security guards, we don't let them use their "share" of the funding that would otherwise go to the local police department or state troopers to help pay for those guards. People who are frustrated with the quality of the snow plowing on their road and choose to plow it themselves don't get a refund of their "share" of the road maintenance funds. Similarly, public schools are a service that is provided by the state and local government to the people of Alaska. Any child in Alaska may attend the public schools and use that service, but they should not be entitled to a "share" of the neighborhood public school's cost to use to pay for a private education.

A constitutional change of this magnitude is significant, and should not be approved without due consideration. I have heard several legislators say things like "I don't personally support it, but I do think that people should have the right to vote on this". Alaska was designed as a representative democracy for a reason - so that legislators, who have spent the time researching an issue can use their best judgement when placing their vote. This issue is too important to bypass the judgement of individual legislators and turn into a contest to see which "side" can do a better job of getting voters to the polls.

I urge you to vote "no" on SJR9 and/or HJR1 when it appears before you.

Thank you.

Barbara Thurston
Juneau, AK
(907) 789-2991

Ernest Prax

From: Jim Pound
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:57 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Regarding HJR1

-----Original Message-----

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:57 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Regarding HJR1

FYI*j

-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Steele [<mailto:steeler@me.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 7:37 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Regarding HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I am upset and dismayed by HJR1. I am opposed to using public money for private and parochial schools. My children graduated from public schools and are now in the University of Alaska. Last year I visited Egypt and saw the difficulties that occur when government mixes with religion. No matter what you say, this is what is being put forth for fast tracking. I do not want to see public schools hurt even further than the legislature's years of flat funding have created.

Richard A. Steele
1507 2nd St.
Douglas, Alaska 99824

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:56 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR1 Testimony

FYI*j

From: Bill Hutchison [<mailto:billhutchison3@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 8:52 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 Testimony

Dear Rep. Keller,
I would like to testify as below, in **favor** of **HJR1**.

I believe that it is very simple, that education funding should go with and to the student, not any institution. Depending on where the parents and student want the student to attend, the funds should be disbursed monthly for home schooled or charter schooled students, or annually if the student will be attending public school. A public school choice should limit the ability of the student to choose a different institution during the school year. Home school, or charter school will enable the student to change schools at an end of month boundary, with the new choice determining where remaining payments or balance of funds go.

I believe it is the student and the student's parents who are being, or should be the ones funded until graduation from 12th grade. If that had been available to my wife and I, and our kids, my wife would have continued to home school

our son and daughter. It is a choice that many additional parents will probably make after passing HJR1.

Sincerely,
William (Bill) H. Hutchison III
Anchorage 99504
907-337-6001

--

Politically Correct is Objectively Wrong.
substitute Insane for Objectively Wrong.
Gun Control: Best achieved using both hands.
Income Inequality? I'll compete for that!

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:55 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR1

FYI*j

-----Original Message-----

From: Carolyn Vermette [<mailto:cmvermette@me.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 9:10 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller:

I am writing to respectfully request that you submit my email to be used as testimony to support HJR1 in order to allow parents the opportunity to choose for their children the best education possible. Our children our of future!

I have two children currently attending Grace Lutheran School in Kenai, AK. We are extremely pleased with the Christ-centered education and loving instruction that my sons are receiving at the school, which would not be possible at their local public school. While I grew up in a family of public school teachers and have nothing but respect and admiration for teachers, both public and private, my husband and I felt that our sons would thrive in a private religious school setting. I feel that all parents should have the opportunity to decide the best available school for their child regardless of race, economic status or place of residency.

In short, please support the HJR1 constitutional amendments and give the voters the voice to vote on School Choice. Thank you for your time and efforts.

Regards,
Carolyn Vermette

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:55 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Please support SJR9

FYI*j

-----Original Message-----

From: akhotrod6874@yahoo.com [mailto:akhotrod6874@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 10:07 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please support SJR9

James Armstrong
P. O. Box 445
Willow, AK 99688

February 18, 2014

The Honorable Wes Keller
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Keller,

I'm writing to urge you to vote for HJR 1, the referendum which gives us Alaskans the right to vote to fix our Constitution. We need to get rid of the flawed Blaine Amendment, which prevents Alaska from implementing parental choice and educational freedom if we so choose.

Studies on School Choice prove that competition leads to improved public schools, millions in taxpayer savings, and more freedom for parents to put their children in the school which is best suited to their child's needs.

But, regardless of how you might feel about Parental Choice, I'm asking you to vote FOR HJR1. Joint Resolution 1 merely gives me and my fellow Alaskans our right to vote to get rid of the flawed Blaine Amendment. Please don't deny us our right to vote on this important issue.

Sincerely,
James Armstrong

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:52 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR9/HJR1

FYI*j

From: Roy N Syren Jr [<mailto:rjr@pmcmalaska.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:29 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: SJR9/HJR1

Rep. Wes Keller,

I'm writing in support of SJR9/HJR1. The state constitution, as originally written, allows the legislature to use public funds to benefit students even when this indirectly benefits private or religious schools. SJR9/HJR1 puts the legislature back in control of lawmaking on the issue of education and removes the State Supreme courts overriding of the legislature. Please let the people vote on SJR9/HJR1.

Sincerely Yours

Roy N. Syren Jr.

*****Notice: Roy Jr. has changed his email address. Please use rjr@pmcmalaska.com. Delete other email addresses.**

Roy Syren Jr.



8507 LaViento Drive, Anchorage, Alaska, 99515
Phone:(907) 349-2107 Fax: (907) 349-2787
website: www.pmcmalaska.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:51 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR1 Testimony

FYI*J

From: Tony Lewkowski [<mailto:tlewkowski@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:09 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 Testimony

Dear Representative Keller,

I and my family enthusiastically support allowing the people to vote on this important issue.

Powerful forces always stand in the way of reform; why be afraid of debate on this issue?

Respectfully,

The Lewkowski Family

Anchorage

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:51 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: HJR1

FYI*j

From: Raymond Pastorino [<mailto:pastorino@aci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:12 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

Thank you if you oppose HJR1, supporting public funds to be used to support private and religious schools. If you don't, however, already oppose the bill, I urge you to please reconsider. In a time when our schools are facing crippling cuts, where will our funding come from if this bill passes? It will just be too costly to absorb these additional costs, and unthinkable that funds will be diverted from our neighborhood schools to fund public schools. Much more research regarding private school admissions and performance must be taken into consideration. Private schools can be selective—can admit or not admit students at their discretion; and they do not have the accommodations special needs students require. They, therefore, may discriminate against special needs and low-socioeconomic students. Research states clearly that students from private schools do no better on standardized tests than students from public schools. So, instead of supporting ideas that cripple the quality our current educational system, please support ideas such as increasing and inflation proofing the Base Student Allocation (BSA) now and for the future. This would allow for proactive planning rather than the current process of cuts and crisis management that our public schools currently endure year after year. Thank you for your commitment to working on the hard issues. This is a big one.

Alexis Pastorino

4935 Wren Drive

Juneau, AK 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:48 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: SJR9 and HJR1

FYI*j

From: Bucket [<mailto:akbucket@alaska.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:44 AM
To: AK Senators; AK House
Subject: SJR9 and HJR1

All,

I should like to encourage all to support the two aforementioned legislations.

Some of you responded to my prior missives concerning this issue in the negative.

Those opposed **did not clarify their opposition** – they were just against parents having a choice in their children's educational choices.

The 2012 Pearson's Report stated:

Recent research indicates that countries with greater choice of schools have better education outcomes. Presumably, allowing parents to choose the best schools rewards higher quality and leads to overall improvement. In practice, however, finding the mechanism to make this happen is difficult. Extensive studies of voucher programmes and charter schools in the United States indicate that, while both can be beneficial, neither is a magic formula. On the other hand, for-profit private education is providing students in some of the least developed areas of the world an alternative to poor state provision and showing the potential benefits of choice and accountability. Ultimately, as in any market or quasi-market, the real value of choice comes from people having the right information to select the option that is truly superior.

America's standing in the world on educational outcomes is abysmal – all manner of study has shown this outcome, or ask anyone hiring new graduates locally.

Those that would deny parents the right to vote for our children's access to a better educational outcome **because of their special interests ties** are unfit for public office.

--

Thomas B. Wood
Eagle River, AK 99577
907.227.8844

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 2:42 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Testimony in the Hearing of HJR1

FYI*j

From: Michelle Turinsky [<mailto:michellet@aci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 1:34 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in the Hearing of HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

Please let this email represent my personal testimony in the hearing of HJR1. **I am opposed to changing the constitution to allow public funds to go to private or religious schools.**

My daughter attended private school kindergarten through eighth grade, so I fully understand why parents would like to have financial help in sending their children to private schools. It's our responsibility, however, to first and foremost provide a quality public education to all. Unfortunately HJR1 would take money away from schools that are already facing a financial shortfall. Please do not support HJR1 and please **INCREASE FUNDING TO THE SBA BY \$404. this year, and inflation proof the SBA for future years.** I also think that it's very important to maintain a separation of church and state, and in my opinion providing state money to private/religious institutions crosses this line.

I completely understand that our state is in financial difficulty and that oil revenues and therefore our income is in steep decline. We must make funding education a priority though—it's truly a bridge to our future! It benefits us all.

Thank you,

Michelle Turinsky
2301 Saint Elias Drive
Anchorage, AK 99517
(907)276-6299

Ernest Prax

From: Jim Pound
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Email to be used in the testimony of HJR 1

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 3:19 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Email to be used in the testimony of HJR 1

FY!*j

From: Charles & Carole Hart [<mailto:prolife@qci.net>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 3:17 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Email to be used in the testimony of HJR 1

Rep. Wes Keller,

Please use this as testimony for HJR 1.

Thank you, Carole Hart

Please pass HJR 1 so that the people can vote to uphold the original intent of the Constitution.

As originally written and ratified by Alaska voters, our state constitution allows the Legislature to use public funds to benefit students even when this indirectly benefits private or religious schools.

SJR9/HJR1 puts the legislature back in the driver's seat of lawmaking on this issue. **Please let the people vote on SJR9/HJR1.**

The following paragraph sums up well, for our family, the need for the passage of this law:

We could lose some programs we like

Currently there are a number of state programs that involve an indirect benefit for private and religious providers. Private courses taken through public homeschool programs, adult vocational training, church-affiliate preschools, college scholarships, and tutoring services are among them. The Legislature has repeatedly indicated its understanding of the original intent of Alaska's constitution in the way it structures the funding of such programs. Yet these programs could be in jeopardy if challenged in court because they are in violation of prior court decisions. SJR9/HJR1 would clear up any ambiguities threatening these programs. Please let the people vote on this amendment.

Regards,

Carole Hart

Ernest Prax

From: Jim Pound
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Testimony on HJR1

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 3:01 PM
To: Jim Pound
Subject: FW: Testimony on HJR1

FYI*j

From: Kristina Johannes [<mailto:AMDG@alaska.net>]
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 2:55 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony on HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I support HJR1 and urge your committee to pass it so that the public can vote on this most important issue.

The legislature should have the freedom and flexibility over the issue of public funding of education that was envisioned when our constitution was written and ratified.

I also believe that over the years, Blaine amendments in state constitutions have given cover to anti-religious prejudice and have obscured the true meaning of the establishment clause in the United States Constitution. It is obvious from reading the minutes of the Alaska constitutional convention that our delegates did not intend to further any such prejudice but unfortunately the Alaska Supreme Court has interpreted it otherwise.

I believe this amendment will remedy that problem.

P

X

Kristina Johannes

Anchorage

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:03 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

FYI *j

From: Sarah and Steve Masterman [<mailto:ssmasterman@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:00 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Click.bishop@akleg.gov
Subject: HJR1

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to express my opposition to public funding for private and parochial schools. I believe that diverting public money toward these schools will do our state and our students a great disservice. These schools are not required to provide the same services and protections that public schools provide. Very few of these schools provide services to students with disabilities. They can pick and choose the students they serve, or can make students who don't fit their agenda feel unwelcome or unwanted. Using public funding to allow students to attend these schools would lead to a fracturing our our school population and thus of our community.

In addition to my practical concerns about the unintended consequences of HJR1, I also have ethical concerns. I believe that all parents should have the right to educate their children about their own religion and to educate their children in the way that they desire. I don't believe that the state government should be funding or subsidizing religious education. There are reasons why our constitution advocates a separation of the functions of the state and of religion. Using public funds for religious schools jeopardize that separation.

Please join my in opposing HJR1.

Sincerely,

Sarah Swift Masterman
PO Box 296
Ester, AK 99725

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:04 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Support for HJR1

FYI*j

-----Original Message-----

From: Dr. K [<mailto:drkrichbaum@alask.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:10 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Support for HJR1

Dear Representative,

My name is Charles Krichbaum, D.C. and I live in Representative Bob Lynn's district. I have lived in the anchorage area for over 32 years. Please support HRJ1 and allow freedom of choice for parents to send their children to the schools that best supports their needs.

Thanks Chuck

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:05 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

*j

From: Margo Waring [<mailto:margowaring@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:44 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR 1

Member of the House Judiciary Committee,

Please do not pass HJR 1 from committee. Our constitution is right to separate church (mosque, temple, synagogue) from state . Public funds should be spent for public education.

Margo Waring

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:06 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: No on SJR9/HJR1

*j

From: lynnette dihle [<mailto:dihles@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: No on SJR9/HJR1

Dear Representatives,

I have been an Alaskan since 1975. Our children have been educated in Alaska, and my grandchildren are now in Alaskan schools. My husband and I and many of our family members are regular church attenders.

Although I understand the difficulties for parents who prefer private schools whether or not it be for religious reasons, **I strongly stand that vouchers are not the choice. As representatives of our remarkable and beloved state, I want you to invest in educational strategies that work and I want you to maintain our esteemed state constitution that separates church and state.**

As I have looked into this issue I have several concerns including but not limited to:

Funding is diminished for public schools and learning is impacted for the majority of students especially those who are already at a disadvantage.

There are already excellent options in the public schools a family can make to meet the educational needs of their children.

Public schools are the cornerstone of American democracy. Parents have an opportunity to voice/vote in parent groups, parent site councils, vote for school board members. Graduation rates in Alaska are improving.

Private schools can choose which students they accept and dismiss. There is NO state or federal oversight of educational standards and safeguards.

Statistics in the lower 48 indicate performance has not improved, nor graduation rates.

There are other ways that private schools can exist as a viable option that do not involve changing the state constitution.

Thank you for your work.

Sincerely,

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:06 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Please let us vote on HJR1. from the Butcher's

*j

From: Joseph Butcher [<mailto:jabutcher@alaska.edu>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please let us vote on HJR1. from the Butcher's

My name is Joseph Allan Butcher, and I would like to be involved as much as I am able in fallowing and supporting THE SCHOOL CHOICE BILL (HJR1). It is my understanding that this comes before THE HOUSE JUDICIAL MEMBERS on the 19th of Feb. I may have called in the past but it is very important to me that you know just how important this matter is to the Butcher's. and even though you may not be the representative of my area on the west side of town, you will be representing the will of our choice. Please vote yes on this HJR1. Simply if you say yes you allow us to vote. Please let us vote. As a father of five and home schooling in partnership with the ASD, it is becoming more and more evident that we do need choices, more choices to make the difference for our kids. Thank you.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:07 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 - Please vote NO

*J

From: Lisa Worl [<mailto:lmworlinu@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:29 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz
Subject: HJR1 - Please vote NO

The primary reason I'm in opposition to HJR1 is it opens the door to allow vouchers and the diversion of valuable state dollars away from public schools. Vouchers cost tax payers money, allow private schools to receive public funds without accountability, and diverts funds from schools that serve all children.

In a time when school districts across the state have been making painful cuts due to flat funding, it is counter-productive for our state to consider spending additional dollars rather than provide more for what we know works in education -- reduce class size, improve the effectiveness of teachers through professional development and provide programs for the struggling students. School districts statewide have been and continue to work diligently. In Juneau, we've made great strides in improving our student's learning and on-time graduation rates from 70 to 79% last year. What we need now is a commitment from our legislature to support our schools that serve all children not constitutional changes that would take away resources from our schools.

Public dollars belong in public schools where there is accountability. Our school board members are elected by our community, our teachers are required to be certified and meet high teaching standards, our school curriculum must meet core standards, and our budgets and meetings are public and open for all to provide input and scrutiny. Our public schools serve all students. In the larger school districts, where most of the private schools are located, they already offer alternative programs such as Montessori, charter, and CHOICE and CARES which offer extra support to students who need more help to graduate.

Research has shown that vouchers cost tax payers money. Alaska is not the first state to consider allowing public dollars to go to private schools. States that have vouchers programs have seen increased costs. They not only cost more but, again, they take public dollars away from public schools.

I oppose HJR1 and I ask that you please vote "No". Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lillian M. Worl
9159 Wolfram Way
Juneau, AK 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:07 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Brenda Riley [<mailto:bendariley81@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:05 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR 1 and urge you to vote NO.

Brenda Riley
PO Box 71618
Fairbanks, AK 99707

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Chris Spears [<mailto:chris.spears204@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:26 AM
Subject: HJR1

My name is Chris Spears and I'm a public school parent and concerned Alaskan who cares about our kids. I support SJR9 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can vote on it. It is an American tradition to have choices and discussion. How could you not support school choice?

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*J

-----Original Message-----

From: LORIE STOOERZA [<mailto:loriestoorza@msn.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:27 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please vote yes. This is an issue that the people of Alaska need to vote since it affects our children.

Thank you

Lories Stoorza
Parent and long time Ak resident

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: BLAINE SISSON [<mailto:nossis4@qci.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:25 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1 and truly hope that you will vote against this measure. Thank you.

Susan Hood Sisson
200 Sunny Hills Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99712
907-457-3840

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:10 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Glenn Clary [<mailto:gclary@ancbt.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:24 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representatives,

Please VOTE YES on HJR1.

First, thank you for continuing to support the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend. My family and I appreciate receiving these state funds every year. These funds are used at our discretion without state mandates. We are free to spend these state funds on items our family chooses. We can purchase a Bible, tithe any portion to our church or purchase additional religious books or magazines. These are our choices and we appreciate your continued support, maintaining our freedom to make these choices.

The same freedom should be granted to parents concerning their children's education. Some are saying that state funds should not be going to private or private religious schools. They say it is unconstitutional and should remain unconstitutional. They maintain that Alaskans should not be giving the opportunity to change Alaska's constitution. They believe only Legislators are allowed to decide where state funds can be used unconstitutionally. You may ask, "Where is this happening?" Let me name a few. Legislators approve major state funds to be spent on a religious Methodist college, APU – Alaska Pacific University. Legislators also allow college tuition funds to follow graduating Alaskan high school seniors to attend BYU, and many other religious institutions.

Just like these legislative exponents', HJR1 (the School Choice Bill) does not fund religious schools; it funds the education of children. If a parent determines that a religious school will provide the best education, then the parent, not the state, is free to make that choice. Appropriating funds to parents and supporting their freedom to make sure their children get an education compatibly matched to their child. This is the role of government. Please provide all children with school choice and VOTE YES on HJR1.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss additional merits of HJR1

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Glenn Clary

907-952-2251

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:10 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Jim Cooney [<mailto:jcooney@btcinc.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:23 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Good morning. I would like to voice my opinion on the upcoming HJR1 vote. To be able to assist with financial assistance for school choice adds an opportunity for parents who would not be able to do so.

I ask that you consider YES on this vote.

James and Pamela Cooney

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:12 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same

*j

-----Original Message-----

From: clover tiffany [<mailto:clovertiffany@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same

Sincerely,
Clover Tiffany

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:13 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HRJ1

*j

From: Jen Foggie [<mailto:JenF@mooreheating.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:18 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Charisse Millett
Subject: HRJ1

Hello. My name is Jen Foggie. I'm an Alaskan who cares about our children.

HJR1 is a wonderful opportunity to further the discussion about what's best for our kids. I support HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion this year and vote on it in November.

There is no purpose in retaining this Blaine language in our constitution. An Alaska Supreme Court decision is squashing the will of the people, contrary to federal Supreme Court decisions. We should be given the opportunity to re-align our state with the USA on this issue.

Please vote yes on HJR1...please let us vote. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jen Foggie

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:13 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Mary Pat Schilly [<mailto:mpschilly@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:11 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Mary Pat Schilly
4435 N Douglas Hwy
Juneau, AK 99801
907-321-4214
mpschilly@gmail.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:14 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: AGAINST HJR1

*j

From: Chris and Tina Bernoski [<mailto:ctbernoski@msn.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 7:40 AM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Wes Keller; Sen. Anna Fairclough
Subject: AGAINST HJR1

Dear Representatives,

My name is Tina Bernoski, I grew up in Anchorage and have always attended our great public schools. I am a school counselor and mother of students who attend public education. I am definitely AGAINST HJR1 and want public funds to ONLY go towards public schools. As a school counselor, who works at a "high risk" high school I will tell you that if we go to a "voucher type system" and allow public money to go towards private schools, we are just deepening the divide. We are now promoting a "haves " and "have not" system. Education has always been the "American dream" and allowing for a level playing field, please do NOT take this away from my students and my kids!

I appreciate the hard work you do, however, I truly believe that if you are invested in the betterment of Alaska's future you would increase the BSA to a meaningful amount and inflation proof it. I know the students I work with daily have connections to educators that help them reach their full potential. And when we continually make cuts to educators(due to lack of funding) we take away opportunities. I truly believe that Alaska can be amongst the best nationally if we make education a priority and fully fund public education!

Thank you for your time and consideration

Tina Bernoski
7030 Apollo Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99504
ctbernoski@msn.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:15 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: ParentChoice

*j

From: Dalia Gonzalez [<mailto:daliacgonzalez@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 7:37 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: ParentChoice

Hello Mr. Keller,

I have been a public school employee for over 15 years and had my children attend public schools. About 2 years ago my daughter had the misfortune of being placed with a very difficult class. Two students in her class had severer behavior and mental issues. They were not a danger to themselves or others, is the reasoning they did not need extra services for their behavior. However, when they did get upset chairs, books, pencils and other school objects would fly across the room. Our family decided that it was not safe to have her in that classroom. We had no other alternative because there was no other 2nd grade classroom to switch her into, and there were no other schools to transfer her into. Parents are only allowed to register for schools inside their boundaries and denied schools outside boundaries. After my daughter watched and learned negative behavior/words we decided to look into a private school. It was expensive and did not know if our family could afford the tuition. Then the inevitable came; my daughter started to stand up to the students' negative behavior and was sexually assaulted, as a 7 year old by another 7 year old. He was suspended for his actions, but we knew that the environment would never change. She was with him since Kindergarten and had faced other issues. The next day we pulled her out of public school and made financial changes to make it work.

Our family pays our taxes to the public school levies, but can not use those funds if we want our children to learn and be safe. We never choose to be out of the public school; however, under those circumstances we had no other choice. Please consider allowing parents to make choices on where their children can receive the best education for their own children. For who knows what is best for each child than the parents of that child.

Thank you,

Dalia González

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:15 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: constitutional amendment

*j

From: Tom Smith [<mailto:thsphoto@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 4:48 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: constitutional amendment

Dear Representative Keller

I am writing to urge you to oppose the amendment that would change the constitution article that currently prevents public funding of private schools. Sorry, I do not know the bill number.

I feel quite strongly that taxes should NOT be used to fund non-public education. Private schools, primarily religious, have existed for decades without tax support---they will continue to do so. I have had limited experience in the Southern US with public education and can assure you that the quality is very often quite poor. As you know, it is in the South that private education is most common (originally as anti-integration); this bigotry has resulted in a two tier education system that has had devastating effect on public education and has limited success in private education. Would you want your children educated in Alabama or Mississippi or ??????. I certainly would not. I would assume there are some quite good primary and secondary schools in the South, but these are the exception, not the rule.

Please vigorously oppose this move.

Thank you for your attention.

Thos. H. Smith "Tom"

2527 N. Leah Circle
Wasilla, AK 99654
thsphoto@gmail.com

(the father of your friend)

February 19, 2014

From
Glenn M. Prax
1015 Meadow Rue
North Pole, AK, 99705

To
Judiciary Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK

Re: HJR1/SJR9 Constitutional Amendment, Education Funding

Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee;

The preamble to our state constitution proclaims: “We the people of Alaska, ... in order to secure and transmit to succeeding generations our heritage of political, civil, and religious liberty within the Union of States, do ordain and establish this constitution for the State of Alaska.” Yet Article VII of that constitution contains a provision that prevents the elected representatives of this generation from funding educational alternatives that thousands of Alaskans say they want to see. Passing HJR1/SJR9 will give this generation of Alaskan voters the opportunity to review that restriction.

You have heard Opponents of allowing citizens to review this restriction express fear of what might happen to Alaska’s public education system. But what they are really expressing is an elitist disrespect for the right of the people to control their own destiny under the rules of our governing system.

HJR1/SJR9 only allows the people to vote on a public policy provision within their constitution. If a majority of Alaskan voters decide to remove the restriction, then actual funding decisions are still controlled by a majority of the legislature – just like any other department of state government.

Speculation about what might happen if our governing system is allowed to work as it was designed is no excuse to vote against these resolutions. No rights are infringed if the legislature passes these resolutions, but the public’s right to review their constitution would be infringed if it does not.

HJR1/SJR9 are about letting the current generation reconsider a policy decision made fifty years ago by a previous generation. If “our heritage of political, civil, and religious liberty” has indeed been transmitted to this generation, then the judiciary committee will unanimously recommend passage of these resolutions to the full house.

Thank you

Glenn M. Prax

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:20 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 - Email testimony In Support

*j

From: daveyrocket@gci.net [mailto:daveyrocket@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 3:09 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 - Email testimony In Support

Please use my email as testimony in the judiciary committee hearing on HJR1. I support HJR1 which is the constitutional amendment to remove the Blaine amendment from our State constitution.

We support school choice for parents and families. The Alaska Supreme Court, through judicial activism, has prevented programs that allow the use of public funds for private and religious schools. Passing HJR1 will honor the intent of the delegates of our state constitution.

As are public and private schools, religious affiliated schools are primarily in the business of educating students in core curriculum and they should not be discriminated against when public funds are dispersed for educational costs.

Parents and students are the best decision makers in choosing an educational institution that will provide a quality education best suited to achieve the students educational goals.

Public testimony on this legislation has been unequally skewed toward public education providers and unions.

Please pass SJR9/HJR1 so that Alaskans can decide, free of judicial and political bias, on the merits of this constitutional amendment to affirm the original intent of our constitution.

Thank you,

David Agosti
14251 Jarvi Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99515

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:22 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

-----Original Message-----

From: Rhonda Bolling [<mailto:rbolling.photos@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:50 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please support HJR1. True school choice should be made possible. We would appreciate our tax dollars reasonably following us for the education of our choice for our children.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Bolling
5878 South Tongass Hwy
Ketchikan, AK 99901
907-617-3588

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:23 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Testimony in Support of HJR1 to Repeal the Blaine Amendment

*j

From: Patrick Travers [mailto:pjtravers@att.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:27 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in Support of HJR1 to Repeal the Blaine Amendment

Dear Representative Keller and Judiciary Committee Members:

I am writing to ask that you vote favorably on HJR1, which would amend Article VII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution to remove the following sentence: "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution." It would also amend Article IX, Section 6 to clarify that it shall not prevent payment from public funds for the direct educational benefit of students as provided by law.

The language that would be removed from Article VII, Section 1 has its infamous origin in the "Blaine Amendment," an attempt in the late Nineteenth Century by anti-immigrant "Nativist" groups to prevent government assistance to religious schools, even when this would be otherwise permitted by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It was intended by supporters of this proposed amendment to the United States Constitution to deprive the children of the largely Catholic immigrant communities coming from Ireland and southern and eastern Europe of their religion and culture by forcing them into public schools. There they would be overtly or covertly encouraged to adopt the beliefs, doctrines, and practices of the "Native" majority having its roots in northern European Protestantism. (For Alaskans, of course, the arrogation to themselves of the "Native" title by people whose northern European ancestors had themselves only recently arrived on this continent is itself full of irony.) This proposed amendment, backed by presidential candidate James G. Blaine, fell one vote short of the qualified majority of both Houses of Congress that would have made possible its submission for ratification by the States. Nevertheless, its supporters continued to further its purposes by imposing the requirement that it be included in the constitutions of new States as a condition for their admission to the Union. We can be confident that the framers of the Alaska Constitution did not share the odious intent of the Blaine Amendment, but found it included in a large number of State constitutions upon which they were relying as sources.

Thus, the original intent and the continued effect of the language that would be removed from the Alaska Constitution by HJR1 has been to place a burden on the free exercise of religion that is guaranteed by Article 1, Section 4 of that Constitution and by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It is important to remember that any funding of religious schools that might take place if HJR1 were to be adopted would still have to meet the stringent requirements of the prohibition of the establishment of religion that is provided for by these same constitutional provisions. It is thus the Blaine Amendment that imposes additional limits on Alaskans' freedom of religion, and not proposed State funding of religious schools meeting the requirements of the establishment clause.

I would hope that everyone on every side of this discussion supports a strong public school system in our State as the powerful foundation of our educational system. One of the most basic purposes of government is to provide for the education of the young, and it is through the public schools that this will be achieved for the great majority of our children. Any measure that would weaken our public schools would necessarily weaken our State and our society, and have catastrophic consequences for our young people. Growing up in a military family, I had the opportunity to attend three wonderful public high schools, and know well the positive impact that they have had on my life. I am also aware, however, that my experience in public high schools was enhanced, and not limited, by my earlier experience of Catholic elementary schools, and that this earlier experience helped me to contribute more fully in the socially, culturally, and spiritually pluralistic public school environment.

In a State like ours which places such emphasis on individual liberty, the freedom of families to have wide discretion in the education of their children should be widely recognized and implemented. Instead, most Alaskan families find themselves confronted with no practical choice except an effective monopoly of their children's educational opportunities by the local public school system. This is largely the result of the presence of Blaine Amendment language in our State Constitution, preventing State financial assistance to families that choose an educational alternative to the public schools. Human experience has repeatedly demonstrated that such monopolies consistently fail to maximize excellence, innovation, and flexibility, while frequently succeeding in maximizing costs and inefficiencies. Apart from the historical and moral considerations discussed above, a powerful argument can be made that the encouragement of religious and other private schools in Alaska will, in the end, greatly strengthen our public schools by breaking their current monopoly and encouraging them, through competitive motivations, to improve the quality of their service to students and families. In addition, collaborative arrangements among public schools, religious and private schools, and home schooling families can lead to innovative approaches to education in the diverse social and cultural circumstances of our communities. It should in no way reflect poorly on the wonderful abilities and dedication of so many of our Alaska public school teachers and staff that the system in which they work--a monopolistic system resistant to needed change and adaptation--has consistently been shown to be wanting in its service to our children and their families. As important as generous funding of our public schools undoubtedly is, I am convinced that spending more money exclusively on the public school monopoly will not produce the results that we all want for our children.

Thank you for your consideration of the points I have presented, and for your service to our State.

Sincerely yours,

Reverend Patrick J. Travers
Pastor
Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Church
9055 Atlin Drive, Juneau, Alaska 99801
Cell phone 907-723-7303
Email pitrovers@att.net

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:23 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Hester Sanders [<mailto:daveandhester@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:14 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

We would like to encourage you to vote for HJR1.

We support HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy discussion this year and vote on it in November.

While we see things like oil taxes and pot go on the ballot, how could you tell us that we don't have the right to have a discussion about the future of our children?

Don't be afraid of the possibilities. That's why we sent you to Juneau to make sure that Alaskans like us are represented.

Please make the right choice and vote in favor of this ballot.

Dave and Hester Sanders

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:23 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: we support SJR1

Importance: Low

*j

From: Dvdgamble [<mailto:dvdgamble@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:39 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: we support SJR1
Importance: Low

and we vote, thank you for listening.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:27 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Debbie Clary [<mailto:debbie.clary@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:36 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I would appreciate a yes vote on this bill. I believe parents should have a choice where their child is educated.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:26 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: SJR9/HJRI

From: Drew and Marcie [<mailto:drewandmarcie@oci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:33 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: SJR9/HJRI

Dear Representative Keller-

We ask that you support **SJR9/HJRI**. **There are many reasons, but one reason is we believe the constitution has not been interpreted correctly by the courts. If it needs to go up for a vote, we believe the people of Alaska should be involved with the process of helping correct this wrong.**

At this time we do believe we have enough information to know if we support vouchers, even though we do send our daughter to a private school. We also understand that the voucher system is a long way off and will face many battles.

Thank you for your time

Respectfully,

Drew and Marcie Koop

_____ Information from ESET Smart Security, version of virus signature database 9440 (20140218)

The message was checked by ESET Smart Security.

<http://www.eset.com>

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:26 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJRI

*j

-----Original Message-----

From: Andy Romanoff [<mailto:andykristen@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:45 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJRI

Dear Representative Keller,

I support public education wholeheartedly, and feel strongly that if passed, HJRI would have lasting negative consequences for Alaska's schools and the quality of education for our children. I do not support diverting public funds to private schools. I believe in providing the opportunity for a quality education for all students and do not believe that diverting funds to the private sector will result in this.

Please do not vote to move HJRI out of the Judiciary Committee. It's a dead end for equity in education!

Sincerely,

Kristen Romanoff
Parent of two children in the Juneau School District

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:26 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Phil Campbell [<mailto:nlucpastor@ak.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to HJR1. Public funding for private schools is a bad idea. Voting to put a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot allowing this will extend a discussion that diverts attention from adequately funding public education. I urge you to vote against this resolution in committee. You can put a stop to this divisive proposal before further time and energy is expended on this ill-conceived idea. We need to come together and focus on solutions that strengthen public education rather than spending time on matters that further separate us.

I oppose public funding for private education because I believe in the common good. Money for education should not be divided up into private, individual pots. We all have a responsibility to care for all children, not just those in a particular segment of the population. We all benefit when public schools are strong. Public schools have the right and the obligation to educate all students. Private schools can choose who they educate. We can't afford to siphon off public resources for narrow interests.

As a pastor, I respect the right of religious and other private entities to establish schools, but the responsibility of funding such endeavors rests with the religious communities and private sector. I am involved in religious education, but I do not expect the state to subsidize it. What I do expect is for all of us to join together to strengthen public education that is accessible to all children in our state. HJR1 does not do this.

Thank you for considering my views, and thank you for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Phil Campbell

Pastor

Northern Light United Church

400 W. 11th St.

Juneau, AK 99801

907-586-3131

www.northernlightchurch.org

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

-----Original Message-----

From: Ashley Nohr [<mailto:ashleynohr@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:10 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Yes yes yes
Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

From: Craig Wood [<mailto:cwood1776@outlook.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:29 PM
To: Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Wes Keller
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: HJR1

Greetings Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am a concerned parent of four children and two grandchildren who desires to improve the educational system for *all Alaskans*. I live in Representative Josephson's district. I have read the language and the intent behind HJR1 and support it with all my heart and mind! This is a special opportunity to introduce innovation and accountability in our educational system. I especially envision the empowerment of those parents with limited resources.

It's part of our American and Alaskan tradition to have choices and to have a discussion. All of Alaska's children are affected by this, so all Alaskans should have the opportunity to vote on it.

I urge you to vote yes on HJR1.

Respectfully,
Craig Wood

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: School choice editorial

*j

From: Jess T Ellis [<mailto:iesstellis@aol.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: School choice editorial

Rep. Keller,

Thank you for your efforts in support of school choice legislation. I think it is the most important issue of our day. The potential for improving education is limitless. Attached is a copy of an editorial I authored on the subject:

SCHOOL CHOICE WOULD BENEFIT EDUCATION IN THE VILLAGES AS WELL AS CITIES

Most parents want what's best for their child. They want them to be successful in life and to receive the education needed to qualify for a well-paying job or occupation.

Education--the gaining or transfer of knowledge--is really one of the basic functions of life. It's why we have a brain with a nervous system feeding it information from our five senses. Much of human activity in this world is intended to affect how well education is accomplished. Attentive parents spend much of their time teaching and nurturing their children.

Education is big business. We spend vast amounts of money on schools where educators add to the effort. Education is a major part of the state budget. Education doesn't start with pre-school, nor end with a college degree, or even a PhD.

Then there is "the media".

Ours is called the "Information Age". People with a good idea of how to convey information better have founded new schools, started news networks, created the internet or improvements to it, and invented computers, "Smart phones," fax machines, and other gadgets. With these aids to communication information is literally flying everywhere at the speed of light.

When it comes to formal education, all this has rendered the education model of one teacher at a chalk board in front of a class of fifteen to forty students expounding on some chapter in a text book as obsolete as a Princess phone.

Our standings in national test scores witness to the need for improvements in Alaskan education. For example our fourth grade reading scores for low income students were dead last; reading scores for fourth grade middle/upper income students were 49th out of 51.

Parental interest in improved ways of schooling has given rise to home schooling, charter schools, and a demand for other educational options.

In many cases the private sector is stepping up to the plate and providing solutions. In Alaska, there are more than 2200 students paying tuition to attend the top 5 (by attendance) private K-12 schools.

The Constitution of the State of Alaska needs to be amended to allow the Legislature to provide more families the option of choosing the schools their children attend. A sentence in Article VII of the state constitution, sometimes referred to as the Blaine amendment, has been interpreted by the Court as prohibiting the Legislature from directly or indirectly funding parental choices of alternative schools.

Many Alaskans are content with the offerings of their neighborhood public school. For those who are not satisfied, the Blaine Amendment needs to go. In education, one size doesn't fit all. There are too many different needs for one giant bureaucracy to effectively meet.

Some have expressed skepticism that "school choice" could work in the bush. Such a view suggests a lack of vision or a lack of knowledge of the many innovations in distant learning currently available to anyone, especially those with a computer and access to the internet. These offerings from the private sector are made to order for the bush, particularly those villages with too few students to qualify for a school.

Educational achievement in Alaska could take a giant leap forward were parents free to use their child's government provided educational allotment on the school of their choice, whether it be a public or private sector developed program.

Passage of SJR 9 and HJR1 which are ready to be voted upon by the Legislature, are required to put the question on the 2014 ballot so Alaskan voters could decide this issue. If you haven't expressed your views on this issue to your state senator and representative, now is the time to do so.

Submitted by:

Jess T Ellis, DDS, MS
11741 Barr Road
Anchorage, AK 99516
Cell: (907)947-0298

Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:24 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

*j

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Spalding [<mailto:mspalding@pci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:28 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please do not let this bill go any further. Listen to the reasons of those who oppose public spending for private institutions. The state cannot afford to divert funds away from the important task of educating all children no matter their income level or abilities.

Mary Spalding
5406 W Dimond Blvd
Anchorage, Ak 99502

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:24 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Choice education

*J

From: norma [<mailto:latinotour@kpunet.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:38 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Choice education

Hello Mr Keller.

We support HJR1 . We hope the possible elimination of the onerous Blaine Amendment from the State constitution to permit State financial assistance to families to make true school choice possible.

Sincerely.

Mick & Norma McGinnes

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:24 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 Vote

*j

-----Original Message-----

From: Ted Kuehn [mailto:kuehn@gci.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:37 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; representative.neil.foster@akleg.gov; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1 Vote

Good Morning:

My name is Karl Kuehn and I have Grandchildren in the school system.

I live in Anchorage and my Representative is Representative Pruitt.

I'm sending this e-mail to share my opinion regarding HJR1 and why I believe you should vote for it to be put on the Nov. ballot.

HJR1 has become such an important topic in the media as well as personal opinion, that it appears people need to voice their choice

(yes/no) on school choice at the ballot box.

If oil taxes and pot were important enough to be put on the ballot, it would seem to me children's education should be of a higher importance and the voting public should be allowed to make that decision.

Somewhere I heard that three polls have been taken over the last three years and each were in favor of school choice. If this is the case it would seem to be a "No Brainer" Let the people decide this issue.

I believe if the parents have the right to choose which school they want their kids to attend, they would be more involved in their education and more apt to make sure their kids are up on time and get to school.

Thank you and please make the right decision and vote for HJR1 to be put on the ballot in Nov.

Best Regards

Karl Kuehn

-----Original Message-----

From: jack.newell@acsalaska.net [mailto:jack.newell@acsalaska.net]

Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 12:56 PM

To: Rep. Wes Keller

Cc: Rep. Wes Keller

Subject: Constitutional Amendment

To the
Honorable Wes Keller,

This is an email to be used as testimony in the hearing of HJR1. There are many proposals and opportunities that are presented every year. I would like to present my support for the opportunity we have as Alaskans to improve the state of educating. Many parents are questioning why their privilege as parents and providers are not allowed choice in the development of their children. Some may think that an upgrade to a structure is enhancing education, but I think there is a deeper possibility to improve the opportunities for a family and their children, thus to the benefit of our greatland, the State of Alaska.

The thought of allowing parents to select a school, public or private, for their children should be forefront on the minds of those who govern this state. I believe the merits to promote a choice in parenting, mainly how our young minds are formed is a parent's choice, not a state provided only, thus no choice. This opportunity will benefit when if we are bold and sincere towards providing a quality non-biased education for our young minds and future leaders.

I ask for you to allow a vote of people on this to provide a father and a mother a choice in the future of our children. Please support a citizen vote on SJR9 and HJR1. The founders of our state recognized that future generations needed the flexibility to respond to possibilities in a way that would benefit the minds of many. SJR9/ HJR1 would restore it. Please let the people vote on this amendment.

The opportunities for the future are best when we allow for our principles that were strong when we were a territory to continue as a state. We should be a leader for our children benefit to encourage them - for a mind is a great strength not to be wasted by deceit of a few.

Wishing you the best in health and prosperity in this great time in our lives,

Respectfully
submitted,

Jack R
Newell
Anchorage, Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: I Support School Choice

From: chuck kaucic [<mailto:studefan1@email.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:38 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: I Support School Choice

Rep Keller,

I am a Palmer resident who works in Wasilla & strongly supports School Choice & urges the passage of HJR1.

TX for standing strong.

CK

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: the Blaine Amendment

From: Judy Henley-berg [<mailto:henleyse1@kpunet.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:49 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: re: the Blaine Amendment

Sir, as a product of Catholic school here in Ketchikan, I strongly urge you to consider changing the constitution that would allow funds to be distributed to school of the familie's choice. We all know that we need a little or sometimes a lot of God in our lives in this scary world we are living in now. Not all children fit in the public school systems and the parents that decided that their school district is not working for their child, should be able to choose another method of schooling, without it financially draining their funds. I do think if it was changed, we would have a much better product in education as it would, number #1, make the schools more competitive in getting students to go to their school and number #2, teachers would be able to teach in the schools that work better with their methods of teaching. I hope you will seriously consider changing this law. Thanks you Judy Berg 1-907-247-4369.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: School Choice HJR1

From: SHERI PANKION [<mailto:paslp@aci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:57 PM
Subject: School Choice HJR1

By the time school begins this fall, I will be the parent of four children ages 5 - 11. I would like to ask you to support the movement of the school choice concept to the voters so that we have the opportunity to speak on this issue. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to public policy and legislation in our state.

Sheri Pankion, District 25

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:31 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: hjr1 testimony

-----Original Message-----

From: Allen Hippler [<mailto:allen@faulknerwalsh.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 5:49 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: hjr1 testimony

Dear Representative Keller,

Please accept the following as my testimony on HJR1.

Given the reality in our society that education of young people is a collective responsibility, the question becomes, 'What is the most efficient and best method of delivering education to students?' It is my belief that private enterprise provides the best and most efficient use of society's resources. One has to look no farther than poor results in school districts, and overwhelming costs relative to existing private education. I encourage you and all legislators to get the most value for our money by using the most efficient schools available.

Allen Hippler
CFO
Faulkner Walsh Constructors
Rivercity Development, LLC
Top Fuel Co, LLC
Suite 881, LLC

(907)344-2522 tel
(907)344-2836 fax

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:31 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

-----Original Message-----

From: Judith.mcquerry@yahoo.com [<mailto:Judith.mcquerry@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 5:05 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

Please do not support this bill! the last thing our education system needs is the loss of funding that could happen with the passage of this bill. We NEED to support education for all. the parents who really want religious education for their children will find a way to pay for it and NOTHING is stopping benefactors from contributing extra money to schools which emphasize whatever they especially value.

Passage of this bill would support Yeshivas and Madrasas,as well as Protestant and Catholic religious schools.

Judith McQuerry

Sent from my iPad

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:30 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: James Connelly [<mailto:icon53@kpunet.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 6:32 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Representative Keller,

This email is my testimony in support of HJR1. It's time to stop discrimination against the children of Alaska because of their freedom of choice regarding religion and the freedom of speech. In their pursuit of an education which guarantees those constitutional freedoms, they are denied the financial assistance that is given to public school children. It is time to right this wrong, and I ask for your support of HJR1 so all of Alaska's children have an education which is consistent with their constitutional freedoms and those benefits which should be afforded to all.

James R Connelly
PO Box 5681
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:30 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Please Vote yes on HJR1

From: LeighSteele-Ross [<mailto:lsteele1234@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 6:56 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please Vote yes on HJR1

In RE: School Choice Bill HJR1

My name is Leigh Johnson-Steele and I'm a grandparent, who cares about my grandchildren as well as all Alaskan Children.

Representative Bob Lynn is my Representative.

I support HJR1. Although HJR1 doesn't have any programs attached, it could open the door to benefiting many children so I urge you to put this on the ballot for Alaska's voters.

I believe it is part of our American and Alaskan tradition to have choices and to have a discussion. All of Alaska's children are affected by this, so all Alaskans should have the opportunity to vote on it.

Please vote yes on this bill.

Thank you.

Leigh Johnson-Steele
6641 Crooked Tree Dr
Anchorage AK 99507

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:30 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: vote yes onHJR1

-----Original Message-----

From: Michele Faison [<mailto:mmfaison@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:31 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: vote yes onHJR1

please vote yes on HJR1

I could use the financial help to continue my son in private his Christian school

Sent from my iPhone. Michele

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:34 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Susan T. Heinrichs [<mailto:susan.heinrichs@k12northstar.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:44 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1. Our public schools are desperately underfunded.

Here in Fairbanks, Denali Elementary School has 30 children in each first grade classroom. Small class sizes are imperative to decent education.

Public education is a right. Private and religious schools are a luxury. Please represent our children by supporting their right to great public education.

Thank you.

Susan Heinrichs

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Mark Runkle [<mailto:mrunkle@ancbt.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:49 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

As a parent of a school age child, please give us the opportunity to vote on the proposed changes regarding school choice. Our children deserve the very best educational opportunities that we can give them. It sounds like we the people of AK will have the chance to vote on legalizing marijuana usage. Shouldn't our children's education get at least the equal time on the ballot?
Thanks for your time and consideration.

Mark Runkle
Assistant Pastor/Executive Assistant
Anchorage Baptist Temple
6401 East Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99504
(907)333-6535
mrunkle@ancbt.org

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Barbara Eaton [mailto:drb@drbarbaraeaton.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:53 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Hello!

I was unable to call in to testify this morning; however, I do want my voice and that of my family's heard!!! We are FULLY in favor of HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion this year and vote on it in November.

School Choice is FOR PARENTS and STUDENTS and thus needs a statewide discussion because it is so important in allowing parents to have a say in their child's education. Polls show that the general public is in favor of parents having school choice. Unfortunately, some groups like the NEA want to dictate to parents where and how their children are to be educated. THAT'S NOT FAIR and it's NOT AMERICAN!!! We the PARENTS deserve the right to say what's best for OUR children, not the NEA!!! Much of their agenda runs in opposition to what we stand for in our home so why in the world should we be forced to PAY for that kind of indoctrination of our children????? It would be like the government forcing kids to go to a private, religious school....no one would think THAT was fair so why is it fair that the liberal NEA gets to exercise its influence on MY kids???

It is time for parents to have a choice.

I am sure that you're well aware that this is a VERY crucial issue that carries a lot of weight as we head into the voting booth. Your decision regarding HJR1 will have a dramatic affect on votes that are cast for YOU or your opponent.

Will you give parents their RIGHT to choose or will you act like Washington big government and force us to abide by what you, and the NEA, determine is best for our kids?

Thank you for your attention and service.

Ben and Barbara Eaton

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Joann Mitchell [mailto:joann.mitchellak@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:07 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Sen. Hollis French
Subject: HJR1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to ask you to NOT support HJR-1--the "school voucher" bill. I simply do not understand how diverting dollars from public schools to private schools will help improve the quality of education in our state. What exactly are the problems that are trying to be solved and how will private schools solve them? How does a voucher system help improve a student's chance for success in Little Diomedes or other remote locations?

I grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Milwaukee was one of the first school districts to implement a voucher system. But as I understand it, parents could only use the vouchers if their neighborhood school was considered a "failing school". And, in Milwaukee there is a large number of private schools already established and ready to accept the kids (heck, in my suburb there literally was a Catholic grade school within 2 blocks of every public elementary school). While in principle I am vehemently opposed to vouchers, at least in Milwaukee there was some reasoning behind the program. I have yet to hear any logical reasoning to go to vouchers in Alaska.

My children went to a private preschool and I was on the board of directors there. In addition to its preschool program, they also has a struggling elementary school. At the time I was on the board, there were about 20 kids in grades k-3 and 6 in grades 4-6 (3 of the 6 were brothers). The reason the elementary program struggled is not because it was too expensive for the families that attended the school but rather because there are so many outstanding options in the public school system! The key is to find ways to expand those great options within the public schools and not send the money to private schools.

And for those that argue that parents who send their children to private schools should be "reimbursed" because the public system does not have to educate their child, well, we don't reimburse residents without children because the belief is everyone needs to contribute to public education because everyone benefits from a well-educated society. We don't reimburse citizens that never have a fire at their home, never have a need to call the police, etc. Let's not make education an exception to this!

Please vote NO on this. Let's focus on improving our public education system and that is not going to happen if public funds are diverted to private schools.

Joann Mitchell
2521 St. Elias Drive

Anchorage, AK 99517
(907) 248-9565
joann.mitchellak@gmail.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

From: llolmb [<mailto:lindablefgen@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Greetings,

I am very concerned about and opposed to HJR1 funding private and religious schools.

I understand the desire to move this forward without a fiscal note, however, the implications are irresponsible to the needs of public education and the separation of church and state.

Per a Juneau Empire news article:

"Meyer said he did not see moving forward this session with companion legislation that would spell out how the change could be implemented. The proposed constitutional change would be the first step, he said."

We do not buy homes without a long term financial plan. Why would we even consider passing this resolution without knowing the financial impact on our public school system?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Linda M. Blefgen

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Bill Leight [<mailto:bleight@ancbt.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Good Morning:

I am sending this email to encourage you to vote YES on HJR1. Thank you for listening and serving our great State of Alaska.

William Leight

2400 Scarborough Drive

Anchorage, Alaska 99504

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Vote No on HJR1

From: Nancy Courtney [<mailto:cabowabo1@gci.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:18 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz
Subject: Vote No on HJR1

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am a lifelong resident of Juneau. I was well educated in our Juneau public schools and have two daughters who have also been well educated in our public schools. I respectfully urge you to vote No on HJR1.

Public school education is the foundation for ALL Alaskans to get a good education, no matter their race, religion, or financial class. Private and religious schools, many of which also provide Alaskans a good education, are not required to follow the same rules as far as accepting all students, no matter their race, religion, or financial class. Also, some are for-profit institutions. I do not believe Alaska's public funds should be put into educational systems that do not include ALL Alaskans, no questions asked.

By voting against HJR1, you are not limiting school choice, you are confirming to every Alaskan child that he or she has the right to receive a good public education and that their State government and legislative representative supports public education.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Courtney
5001 Pond Vista Drive
Juneau, AK 99801
907-321-2285
cabowabo1@gci.net

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:31 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

From: Donna Matthews [mailto:dwmattthews@qci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Keller,
I realize that as the primary sponsor of HJR 1, you are not likely to consider rejecting it in your committee hearing today. But I wanted you to know that there are opposing views.

You are a steward of our constitution. You vowed to “support and defend the Constitution of the State of Alaska.” The authors wrote a constitution that would not invite or require the frequent tampering that has made monsters of many state constitutions. You should not recommend changing it without **dire need** or **grave injustice needing remedy**. Constitutional matters are of a fundamental importance.

Does the issue of funding private schools meet either of those standards?

Is the need dire?

Public schools are doing amazing work in Alaska. Schools of choice exist wherever the population permits. Mat Su Superintendent Dr Deena Paramo testified to the Senate Finance Committee on Feb 3 about the extensive options available in her district. Other districts also give choices that that meet diverse student needs.

Is there a grave injustice that needs remedy through constitutional change?

Are public schools perfect? Do they have all the tools they need to educate our Alaska children? No! *A major path to good education is appropriate funding. If this were not true, then why would supporters of SJR 9 and HJR 1 want a funding route for private education?*

And I ask you to consider what is popularly known as the “law of unintended consequences.” If the constitution is amended as proposed:

- Will all that follows this amendment be to the benefit of the education of the children of Alaska?
- How will you know giving public money to a private school has improved an Alaska child’s education?
- Will you establish and fund standards the schools must meet with oversight of operations?
- How will you guarantee that public funds do not also become support for private school construction and transportation?
- Will changing the constitution lead to abuses or scandals as other states have experienced when profit-making private education companies divert public funds to themselves or their stock-holders?

Is our State Constitution now inadequate for the task of supporting education?

Consider the minutes of its founders.

The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention show that an unsuccessful motion was made to delete entirely the direct benefit prohibition of article VII, section 1. By rejecting this proposal the convention *made it clear that it wished the constitution to support and protect a strong system of public schools*. Other authorities have also suggested that a constitutional provision barring aid to all private schools serves to enforce the separation of church and state without requiring executive or judicial inquiry into the sectarian affiliation of particular schools, and furthermore disengages the state from the undesirable task of withholding benefits solely on the basis of religious affiliation.

Delegate John B Coghill, supporter of article VII, Section 1, specifically expressed the thought that the amount of tax dollars available for the support of public schools might be lessened if public funds were used to support private schools.

Please reject HJR 1 and SJR 9. The need for this drastic change does not exist except in the hyperbole of its sponsors. The reasons to make this drastic change lack substance and assurances. Please support public education.

Sincerely,
Donna Matthews
Anchorage and Halibut Cove

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:59 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: House Bill JHR1

From: Barbara J Struble [<mailto:barbist@cci.net>]
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 7:57 AM
To: Barbara J Struble
Subject: House Bill JHR1

Please support House Bill JHR1

If passed, this bill would allow the citizens of Alaska the opportunity to amend the constitution so that the legislature can consider allowing educational funds for "Parental Choice" in education instead of the monopoly of public education.

Also, get education out of the "public" arena and privatize education in Alaska. Two great benefits to privatizing education:

1. This would stop federal the encroachment of common core into our educational system and
2. No more taxpayer support for obamatax. Teachers' unions could pay for their benefits.

Educational excellence through diversity and free enterprise and financial responsibility is the goal.

Thank you,

Peace,
Barbara J Struble
Maranatha

Learning for Life

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:44 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: No on HJR1

From: Gene Randall [<mailto:gene.randall2014@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:19 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep.kathy.munoz@akleg.gov; Sen. Dennis Egan
Subject: No on HJR1

Honorable House Judiciary Members,

If we truly honor our governmental forefathers, we will recognize their wisdom in crafting a state constitution designed to provide protections for the public, meaning all Alaskans. An amendment to subsidize private or religious organizations just flies in the face of the letter and spirit of the Alaska Constitution.

I strongly urge a "NO" vote on HJR1.

Eugene "Gene" Randall
11346 N. Douglas Hwy
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:25 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: School choice editorial

*j

From: Jess T Ellis [<mailto:jesstellis@aol.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: School choice editorial

Rep. Keller,

Thank you for your efforts in support of school choice legislation. I think it is the most important issue of our day. The potential for improving education is limitless.

Attached is a copy of an editorial I authored on the subject:

SCHOOL CHOICE WOULD BENEFIT EDUCATION IN THE VILLAGES AS WELL AS CITIES

Most parents want what's best for their child. They want them to be successful in life and to receive the education needed to qualify for a well-paying job or occupation.

Education--the gaining or transfer of knowledge--is really one of the basic functions of life. It's why we have a brain with a nervous system feeding it information from our five senses. Much of human activity in this world is intended to affect how well education is accomplished. Attentive parents spend much of their time teaching and nurturing their children.

Education is big business. We spend vast amounts of money on schools where educators add to the effort. Education is a major part of the state budget. Education doesn't start with pre-school, nor end with a college degree, or even a PhD.

Then there is "the media".

Ours is called the "Information Age". People with a good idea of how to convey information better have founded new schools, started news networks, created the internet or improvements to it, and invented computers, "Smart phones," fax machines, and other gadgets. With these aids to communication information is literally flying everywhere at the speed of light.

When it comes to formal education, all this has rendered the education model of one teacher at a chalk board in front of a class of fifteen to forty students expounding on some chapter in a text book as obsolete as a Princess phone.

Our standings in national test scores witness to the need for improvements in Alaskan education. For example our fourth grade reading scores for low income students were dead last; reading scores for fourth grade middle/upper income students were 49th out of 51.

Parental interest in improved ways of schooling has given rise to home schooling, charter schools, and a demand for other educational options.

In many cases the private sector is stepping up to the plate and providing solutions. In Alaska, there are more than 2200 students paying tuition to attend the top 5 (by attendance) private K-12 schools.

The Constitution of the State of Alaska needs to be amended to allow the Legislature to provide more families the option of choosing the schools their children attend. A sentence in Article VII of the state constitution, sometimes referred to as the Blaine amendment, has been interpreted by the Court as prohibiting the Legislature from directly or indirectly funding parental choices of alternative schools.

Many Alaskans are content with the offerings of their neighborhood public school. For those who are not satisfied, the Blaine Amendment needs to go. In education, one size doesn't fit all. There are too many different needs for one giant bureaucracy to effectively meet.

Some have expressed skepticism that "school choice" could work in the bush. Such a view suggests a lack of vision or a lack of knowledge of the many innovations in distant learning currently available to anyone, especially those with a computer and access to the internet. These offerings from the private sector are made to order for the bush, particularly those villages with too few students to qualify for a school.

Educational achievement in Alaska could take a giant leap forward were parents free to use their child's government provided educational allotment on the school of their choice, whether it be a public or private sector developed program.

Passage of SJR 9 and HJR1 which are ready to be voted upon by the Legislature, are required to put the question on the 2014 ballot so Alaskan voters could decide this issue. If you haven't expressed your views on this issue to your state senator and representative, now is the time to do so.

Submitted by:

Jess T Ellis, DDS, MS
11741 Barr Road
Anchorage, AK 99516
Cell: (907)947-0298

Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:44 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: No on HJR1

From: Gene Randall [<mailto:gene.randall2014@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:19 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep.kathy.munoz@akleg.gov; Sen. Dennis Egan
Subject: No on HJR1

Honorable House Judiciary Members,

If we truly honor our governmental forefathers, we will recognize their wisdom in crafting a state constitution designed to provide protections for the public, meaning all Alaskans. An amendment to subsidize private or religious organizations just flies in the face of the letter and spirit of the Alaska Constitution.

I strongly urge a "NO" vote on HJR1.

Eugene "Gene" Randall
11346 N. Douglas Hwy
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:35 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: please vote against vouchers

-----Original Message-----

From: Sally Kieper [<mailto:sally.kieper@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:40 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Subject: please vote against vouchers

Dear Legislators,
I oppose HJR1 and urge you to do the same. I want my tax dollars to go for PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sally Kieper
1055 Chickadee Loop
Fairbanks, AK 99712

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:34 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Testimony in favor of HJR1

From: EDWARD BURNS [mailto:bpburns@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:45 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in favor of HJR1

Dear Representative Keller and Judiciary Committee Members:<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

I'd like to offer this testimony in support of HJR1 and ask that you vote in favor of this bill. As the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Juneau, it is my moral obligation to raise with you the grave concern about having language in our Alaska Constitution that is based on bigotry of years past. Allow me to present to you what I wrote in my article in the Juneau Empire on February 2, 2014 (which can be found here: <http://juneauempire.com/opinion/2014-02-02/moving-forward-education>):

The Blaine amendment, which was unfortunately included in the Alaska Constitution, is rooted in 19th century anti-Catholic bigotry and discrimination. Initially proposed in 1875 by Speaker of the House James Blaine as an amendment to the United States Constitution, it was intended, under the rhetoric of “separation of church and state”, to block any public funding of “sectarian” (meaning Catholic) schools, even when this would have been permitted under the First Amendment. Tellingly, Blaine and his supporters had no objection to prayer, Bible reading or religious instruction in the public schools, as long as it was non-denominational and Protestant.

The Blaine amendment and other national and state laws ostensibly intended to separate church and state grew out of a pervasive prejudice that many Americans held regarding Roman Catholicism, which they believed was incompatible with democracy and freedom. Many 19th century native-born Americans were openly suspicious of the loyalty and patriotism of the millions of Catholic immigrants (mostly Irish) entering the country, fearing that their first and most important allegiance was to the Pope, who they considered an authoritarian and anti-democratic foreign ruler.

Although this attempt to amend the national constitution narrowly failed in the Senate, Congress did require that all states admitted to the Union after 1876 must include a version of the Blaine amendment prohibiting the use of public funds to wholly or in part support religious schools. This is how it came to be included, almost 100 years later, in the Alaska Constitution.

Repeal of the Blaine amendment would, for the first time since territorial days, allow public per pupil funds to be used by parents to send their children to the school of their choice, including religious and other private schools. Such funding would still have to satisfy the stringent requirements of the First Amendment and the corresponding provision of the Alaskan Constitution.

As a citizen and as a Catholic leader, I believe that in the 21st century, the Blaine amendment should be removed from our State's Constitution. I welcome legislation that would allow the citizens of this State to repeal its provisions.

Why? Not only because this amendment, motivated by sectarian prejudice, has no place in our State Constitution, but because I believe that parents should have the freedom and the resources necessary to send their children to the school which best meets their needs. They should be able to do so using their child's share of public education funding through programs of parental choice such as tuition tax credits, educational savings accounts, scholarship tax credits or opportunity scholarships.

Growing up as I did in Pittsburgh, I am grateful that my parents were able to choose the schools that I attended as a child and as a teenager. In my early childhood I attended two Catholic schools where I was taught by dedicated and committed religious sisters. For high school I attended Lincoln High School, a public institution. In choosing these schools, religious and public, my mother and father exercised their right and responsibility to choose the school best suited for their children. I am grateful to them for the education I received, an education reflecting the value they placed on academic faith formation, excellence, high moral and ethical standards and religious instruction.

However, in our State and across our Nation there are many families, especially those in poverty, who do not have the financial resources to choose the best school for their children. All of our families in Alaska should have access to the resources needed in order to attend the school of their choice, including traditional public schools, public charter schools, secular and religious private schools and homeschooling.

In addressing parental choice, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has said, "For nearly 150 years, the Church has unequivocally taught that parents have the right and responsibility to serve as the primary educators of their children. To assist them in this sacred duty, the Church has articulated clearly that children have the universal right to an education in faith, and the state has the fundamental obligation to enable such a right. In both written word and lived witness, the Church has advanced parental choice as a fundamental part of its mission to protect the equality of educational opportunity that is the birthright of all children."

Thank you for your time and for your consideration on this important matter. Blessings to you for all you do in service to the people of Alaska.

Respectfully yours,

Bishop Edward J. Burns

Diocese of Juneau, Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Letter and Attachment regarding HJR 1
Attachments: OppositiontoSchoolVoucherlegislation02-19-14.pdf;
2-19-14SelectedPublicSchoolDistrictSponsoredAlternatives.docx

-----Original Message-----

From: hommek [<mailto:kimberlyhomme@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:13 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn
Cc: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Letter and Attachment regarding HJR 1

Dear Representatives Keller and Lynn,
I understand that HJR 1 will be heard in the House Judiciary Committee today. I am submitting testimony and an attachment in opposition to HJR 1. Please do not pass this resolution from your committee because of the negative effect of reduced funding for public schools, already at the bare-bones minimum. Regards, Kimberly Homme

February 19, 2014

Representatives Wes Keller and Representative Bob Lynn, Chairs
House Judiciary Committee, Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Keller and Representative Lynn:

I hope the session is going well for you in Juneau. I am writing to express opposition to House Joint Resolution 1 under consideration by the House Judiciary Committee. As you know, HJR 1 seeks to change the constitution to allow public funds be used for private, for-profit religious and secular schools. I think that the most important responsibility of the members of the Alaska State Legislature is to accept responsibility for providing for an educated and strong Alaskan community, and provide adequate funding to support that ideal by sufficiently managing our plentiful resources. The voucher legislation is in direct conflict with that goal. It will deplete limited resources and provide more resources to students whose families have demonstrated that they are able to afford the religious alternatives in which they have enrolled their children.

Providing an adequate education within the public education system for children of our Great State is of utmost importance. When you travel throughout the regions of our state, you will find schools that have failed to provide an adequate, minimal level of education for a lot of complicated reasons. As policy makers, there needs to be great attention to what must be done to support those schools in crisis and help their students make adequate academic growth. Instead of providing more resources to the families that have demonstrated they can afford options, we need to find ways of better supporting those school districts with the lowest student achievement performance. The effect of HJR 1 is to divert potentially over \$100 million for a purpose that does not benefit the ideal goal of government providing basic needs.

Another important point is that when families want to exercise their right to choose, they have many choices. Families can choose to have options within our public education system or they can choose private education. Private education is often subsidized by the primarily religious organizations which provide the private education system. Private education, more often than not, experiences low taxes as non-profit organizations or are tax-free. Private education choices can be provided at a low cost to the consumers. When I was growing up, my parents enrolled my two sisters and me in a religious school in Anchorage. There was only one wage earner in the family. There was a lot of financial support opportunities for those who wanted the assistance.

The fact of the matter is that within public education, there are choices. It is not a one size fits all type of education program. School districts have encouraged options within public education by providing choices, outside of the typical charter school model.

I've worked as a professional educator for over 20 years in three school districts, which include the Juneau School District, the Anchorage School District, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. I own property in each of those school district boundaries and continue to have connection to those communities. During my years of public service, I've witnessed a number of education options become more available to parents. Parents have wanted options and districts have provided many options, as long as they could be options provided to the all. Please find the enclosure an overview of options available within the largest five school districts in the state. The information is from the school districts' webpages.

Best wishes,

Kimberly Homme

Attachment: The Big Five Alaska School Districts' School Alternatives

Examples of Public Education Program Alternatives

The "Big Five" Alaska School Districts' School Alternatives

Anchorage School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 48,492

Elementary Alternatives

Anchorage Basic Curriculum (ABC):

- Birchwood ABC
- Northern Lights ABC
- Northwood ABC

Montessori:

- Denali Montessori

Open Optional:

- Bowman Elementary
- Chinook Elementary
- Chugach Optional
- Eagle River Elementary
- Polaris K-12
- Susitna Elementary

At-risk teens:

Note: These programs are for students who have fallen behind in credit and are more likely than others to drop out of high school and not attain a high school diploma.

- AVAIL, Ages 16-19
- Benny Benson/SEARCH, 7-12
- SAVE, 11-12

International Baccalaureate:

- Romig Middle School, 7-8
- West High School, 9-12

Online:

- ASD iSchool, 9-12

Open Optional:

- Polaris K-12
- Steller Secondary

School-within-a-school:

- East High School, 9-12
- School through the Arts
- West High School, 9-12

Continued

Page Two of Four

Anchorage Public Charter School/Choice Programs, grade group served (continued):

Seminar:

- Service High School, 9-12

Science focus:

- Central Middle School of Science, 7-8

World Discovery Seminar:

- Chugiak High School, 9-12

Charter schools:

Cultural & language charters:

- Alaska Native Cultural Charter School
- Rilke Schule Charter School

Homeschool charters:

Note: these charter schools provide resources and support to families interested in home schooling their children:

- Home-school
- Family Partnership Charter School
- Frontier Charter School

Open optional charter:

- Aquarian Charter School

Structured charter:

- Eagle Academy Charter School

Technology-focused charter:

- Highland Tech Charter School

Waldorf-inspired charter:

- Winterberry Charter School

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student population: 14,273

Charter Schools:

Chinook Charter, K-8

Effie Kokrine Early College Charter, 7-12

Watershed Charter, K-8

Star of the North Secondary Charter School: Career Education Center (grades 11-12) & North Pole Campus (grades 7-12)

Continued

Page Three of Four

Other Fairbanks Schools of Choice:

Barnette Magnet, K-8

Fairbanks B.E.S.T., K-12 (correspondence: home school or online classes)

Hutchison High School 9-12

At-risk/Other Alternative Schools or Programs:

SMART/DW PASS (district's program for suspended/expelled students)

BRIDGE (special education - formerly known as the HIRE Program, helps students learn skills to help them transition from school to adult living.

OPTIONS (program located at Hutchison - pregnant/parenting students)

Juneau School District charter school and other schools of choice

Student Population: 4,957

Public Charter School/Choice Program(s), grade group served:

School Programs:

Tlingit Culture, Language and Literacy, K-5

Montessori Borealis 1-8

Charter School:

Juneau Community Charter School, K-8

Online School Program:

HomeBRIDGE, K-12

At-risk Teens:

Yaakoosge Daakahidi Alternative High School, 9-12

C.A.R.E.S., a credit recovery program, 9-12

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 8,892

Charter Schools

Aurora Borealis, K-8

Fireweed Academy, K-6

Soldotna Montessori, K-6

Kaleidoscope School of Arts and Sciences, K-6

Continued

Page Four of Four

Other Kenai schools of choice:

River City Academy, 7-12

Connections, K-12 (home school program)

Distance education program, 9-12 online (also, as needed, video-conferenced classes from Kenai Central HS to smaller schools)

Homer Flex, 9-12

Kenai Alternative High, 9-12 & PK

Mat-Su Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 17,247

Public Charter School/Choice Program(s), grade group served

Charter Schools

Academy Charter, K-8

American Charter Academy, K-12

Birchtree Charter, K-8

Fronteras Spanish Immersion, K-8

Midnight Sun Charter, K-8

Twindly Bridge Charter, K-12

Schools with a Specific Mission

Beryozova (Russian-speaking school), K-12

Mat-Su Central School (homeschool), K-12

Mat-Su Day School (students experiencing behavioral issues), 6-12

Mat-Su Career & Technical High School, 9-12

Burchell High School (opportunity for credit recovery), 9-12

Valley Pathways (opportunity for credit recovery), 9-12

District Choice Programs/Alternatives

Alaska Middle College School, 11-12

Palmer High School's International Baccalaureate (IB) program, 11-12

Note: urban Alaskan school districts also have policies that allow students to attend schools outside of their attendance area if there is space at the receiving school and the parents provide transportation.

Ernest Prax

From: Janet Ogan
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:09 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Nothing came thru #2

From: Dennis Fradley [mailto:denfrad@gci.net]
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 12:24 PM
To: Janet Ogan
Subject: Fwd: Nothing came thru #2

March 20, 2013

Sen. John Coghill, Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

Please include my comments in the record for the hearings on SJR9

Thank you
Dennis Fradley

Time to end discrimination in education

After the end of the American Civil War, the country added the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment guarantees fair and equal treatment for all Americans.

However, the ink barely had time to dry before two discrimination policies were adopted that penalize certain children because of their race or their religion.

Many states didn't want black boys and girls attending their all-white schools. They came up with a "separate but equal" policy that in theory provided an identical quality of education -- in segregated schools. In reality the education in black schools was inferior.

Racial discrimination in education lasted about 75 years -- until 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the end of the separate but equal practice in its landmark decision on *Brown vs. Board of Education*.

Then there was religious discrimination.

It began about the same time period, following a large immigration of Catholics to the United States in the mid-1800s, a result of the potato famine in Ireland.

Over the years these new American families began voicing objection to the religion being taught in the public school system. Schools were teaching a generic form of Protestant religion, using the King James version of the Bible, and prayers and teachings that were different than Catholic teachings.

There were reports of harassment and bullying of the Catholic children. Parents began requesting government support for their children to be taught their own religion.

The nativists (we call them sourdoughs in Alaska) strongly opposed that idea. They called on government to prevent it. The complaints caught the attention of President Ulysses Grant. According to a history professor from Maine with whom I spoke, the President was up for reelection and happened to be looking for an issue to draw voters attention away from scandals of his first administration.

Grant's campaign encouraged then Speaker of the House, James Blaine of Maine, to sponsor a constitutional amendment to prohibit government spending from benefitting sectarian (meaning Catholic) institutions. The amendment got the necessary two-thirds majority vote in the House but failed in the Senate.

Advocates then moved to individual states, which were urged to amend their constitutions with a Blaine-like clause. Congress also passed a statute requiring territories to have such a clause in their Constitutions in order to be accepted into the Union.

Alaska and Hawaii, the last two to enter the Union, include it as the law required. Ours, confirmed by voters in 1956, is in Article VII.

Thirty-seven states at one time had some form of a Blaine-like clause in their constitutions. In some states, their courts dismissed the significance of the provision while in others the courts called for it to be strictly enforced. Alaska's court is in the latter category.

It's a little ironic that at the time Alaskans voted to ratify their constitution the nation was preparing to elect a Catholic as U.S. President. That's a fairly good indicator that the anti-Catholic sentiment that had swept the nation a century earlier was disappearing. By this time, however, the "Blaine-like" amendment was serving another purpose -- it was helping to ensure a reliable revenue stream for the collective bargaining units that represent school employees.

Unlike the separate but equal racial discrimination policy which kept black children out of the white public school system, the religious discrimination laws in the early half of the 20th Century kept non-Protestant families from receiving educational assistance to enroll their children in other than government-run public schools. The option of a private school education was not economically feasible for most of these families, especially those with a large number of school-age children.

Religious discrimination in the United States has gone on for more than century. In Alaska it's been practiced since statehood. Families that contribute their share of taxes for education are denied the benefit for education unless they put their child in the assigned government-run school.

In 2002, 50 years after *Brown vs. Board of Education* put an end to "separate but equal" racial discrimination, the court issued another landmark decision.

It declared that the U.S. Constitution does not necessarily bar states from providing voucher or other educational assistance to families to allow them a choice between government and non-government schools.

The Zelman decision, which upheld the legality of a voucher program in Cleveland, identifies specific guidelines available for all states to follow if states want to provide school choice for their residents.

The Establishment clause is part of the first amendment of the Constitution. It says "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." A number of years ago the court said this clause applies to state and local governments as well as to Congress.

According to Zelman, for a state education assistance program to not offend the establishment clause, the program must be neutral with respect to religion and provide assistance directly to a broad class of citizens. The recipients of the assistance in turn direct government aid to non-government schools wholly as a result of their own genuine and independent private choice.

State and local governments, under the Zelman ruling, cannot determine which non-government schools can be chosen by a parent, nor can a state or local government provide funding or property directly to a religious institution.

Bottom line -- the high court says school choice is possible under the U.S. constitution. Unfortunately, our own constitution stops us. Article VII in Alaska states "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution."

Today, more than 20 states offer parents some form of education choice. According to a number of studies, students in these areas where choice is provided are doing much better in both the private and in the government-run public schools. Competition is working.

A few weeks ago the Senate Judiciary committee heard from the lawyer from the Institute of Justice, Richard Komer,. He reported that 12 states so far have amended or repealed their Blaine provisions. Alaska should be among them.

The resolution now before the committee would give Alaska voters the opportunity to repeal the Article VII, Section 1 clause and give the Legislature and Governor the go-ahead to consider school choice for Alaska.

Alaskans look to their representatives in Juneau to provide them this opportunity.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:43 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: NO on HJR1

From: SueAnn [<mailto:porcupinewoman@hotmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:51 AM

To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg

Subject: NO on HJR1

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

I am a Mother of four adult children who attended Juneau School District public schools and excelled in their studies. They went out of state to attend to their university studies but returned to Alaska to raise their families. A major factor in their return was the GREAT public education they had received.

I now have eight grandchildren, five of them attend elementary school through high school- all of whom are excelling in public schools.

The best education for anyone is one which provides diversity coupled with opportunity. Public schools are excellent venues for learning. A public school education encourages and provides students the perfect opportunity to look, think and question . . . and recognize that THEY are the masters of their dreams.

Public education has the potential to enable the potential in *all* students.

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

SueAnn Randall
11346 North Douglas Highway
Juneau Alaska, 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:43 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 Testimony

From: James K. Johnson [<mailto:freetochoosealaska@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:41 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 Testimony

Greetings Rep. Keller:

You may use my testimony at the hearings for HJR1:

I support HJR1 because it will remove the Blaine admendment from our State Constitution. Alaskans need the opportunity

to vote on whether public funds can be used to benefit students that attend private or religious schools. The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention reveal that the delegates voted two to one to uphold this type of funding. Real competition amongst Alaska schools will benefit Alaskan families, our state, and ultimately our nation. The NEA opposes real school choice because competition will mean they will have to compete for the educational dollars; they believe their personal lives are much more secure when they enjoy a virtual monopoly on K-12 education in America. Unfortunately, our educational and behavioral standards in our nation have taken a steep decline because of the lack of accountability in our public schools.

Please support HJR1 so many Alaskans can have a real choice in their children's education.

James K. Johnson, Owner
Alaska's Kenai Jim's Lodge
& Guide Service
P.O. Box 3675
Soldotna, Alaska 99669
www.FishAlaskaNow.com

18 February 2014

Dear Representative Keller and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I'm writing in support of the proposed legislation in the Alaska State House and Senate that would repeal the Blaine Amendment which is currently a part of the Alaska State Constitution. I support putting this matter before the voters of our state because I believe repealing this amendment will help to correct an egregious act of prejudice and discrimination.

As you are no doubt aware, in 1876 Congress passed a law mandating *that* any future territory joining the Union as a state must include in its constitution the Blaine Amendment, which strictly prohibited any state funding for religious schools. Proposed by the then House Speaker James Blaine, this amendment was intended to block any public monies being used to support Catholic schools.

Blaine and his supporters made no secret of their intentions or their hostility to Catholicism, which they regarded as antithetical to democracy, free inquiry, reason and their own understanding of Christianity. They believed that only by requiring Catholic (mostly Irish) immigrants to attend public schools could they be raised up from what they believe was the ignorance and superstition of Roman Catholicism.

Blaine et al pointedly did not object to non-denominational Protestant prayer, bible reading and religious instruction, which they believed contributed to making Irish immigrants good Americans by delivering them, however reluctantly from the perils of "rum, Romanism and riot.

The underlying fear of Blaine and those who supported his amendment was when the millions of Irish immigrants (mostly Catholic) eventually acquired political power, they would either eliminate the religious elements of public education that offended against their Catholic faith or appropriate public funds to support Catholic schools which would uphold rather than discriminate against their most deeply held religious beliefs and traditions, (which, in living memory had been outlawed in their native Ireland by their colonial masters).

Although Blaine's attempt to amend the United States Constitution narrowly failed in the Senate, he found enough votes in both houses of Congress to require that all new state constitutions after 1876 contain this amendment prohibiting public support of religious schools.

Its continued presence in the Alaska State Constitution is a shameful relic of a time when prejudice against Catholicism in general and Irish immigrants in particular, was widespread and virulent. Like other racist and bigoted legislation and court decisions from the 19th century such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and Plessy vs. Ferguson, the Blaine Amendment has no legitimate place in our constitution and should be repealed.

As a Roman Catholic deacon, as the descendant of Irish immigrants (Leonards, McGuirks and Sullivans) but most importantly, as a 30 year resident of this state and as a citizen, I urge you to give the people of Alaska the opportunity to vote on this important matter.

Respectfully yours,
Deacon Charles Rohrbacher
314 B. Street
Douglas, AK 99824

Mr. Chairman and committee members, my name is Stuart Thompson of District 10 speaking for myself as a citizen of our state. Start of my 3 minute prepared testimony about HJR 1.

This constitutional amendment about education should be put to a public vote. What's at issue is a very basic human freedom – freedom of mind that's founded on freedom of choice. What's at issue, socially, is the ability of our state's people to reach for posterity.

The only real virtue of US private education is its reduced class sizes and dedicated teachers that survive intimidation. The only real virtue of US public education is its economic efficiency and dedicated teachers that survive intimidation. The major defect of private education has developed by contagion from public education's major defect --- and that is indoctrination masquerading as education. Symptomatic of indoctrination is emphasis on memorization---encouraged and enforced by testing and adult duress. This in turn produces people who cannot think with or long remember what they memorize, and, worse, have mental conflicts creating attention loss that naturally arise from what they don't conceptually understand. Educational snake oil salesmen then push psychotropic drugs and crackpot educational theories as solutions to student problems, inattention, and unruliness---on the basis that student passivity equals attention and information assimilation. The lack of retention that naturally results has put the US near the bottom of national academic achievement by populations of industrialized countries per numerous recent studies.

What is the result? Our nation is dying. We justify a consumer---not industrialized---economy; government encouraged psychotropic drug and entertainment doping; spiraling individual and national debt; population protection directed by an elite; government supported special interests for the---ha!--- “public good”; and force and bribery/blackmail masquerading as international relations ... because it supports our so-called high quality of life. This is proof that our general population is insufficiently educated to recognize the propaganda of elected, economic, scientific, and intellectual aristocracies covering up degradation of the American people.

I don't think the framers of the Alaska constitution envisioned the disaster in the face of valiant individual teacher efforts that our educational system has fallen into. But they did establish an amendment process. Let's do it. It's only just. We just might get young people actively engaged in helping to rationally educate themselves---because they have been taught how to research and learn and do in any subject for all their lives, not only things to pass tests and feed the egos of ignorant adults..

Thank you for your attention. Good luck on your deliberations.

Stuart Thompson
PO Box 870702
Wasilla, AK 99687
1-877-950-7980
lookitover@att.net



SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Ensuring Quality Education Choices for Wisconsin Families of Children with Disabilities: Concerns About Special Needs “Scholarships”

BACKGROUND ON SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Families often struggle to obtain a quality education for their children with disabilities. The legislature’s sole response to this concern has been to introduce “special needs scholarships” or vouchers offering public tax dollars to families to use at private schools. Wisconsin has the benefit of reviewing how vouchers have worked for families in other states. This review found troubling results. In part, due to problems with vouchers in other states, no statewide disability or special education administrator organization in Wisconsin supports special needs vouchers. Organizations are instead working to improve other safe and high-quality education choices for families.

WHAT DO FAMILIES AND STUDENTS GIVE UP WHEN THEY ACCEPT A VOUCHER?

- The guarantee a child won’t be turned away – either at the door or sent back mid-semester. Voucher proposals will not require private schools to accept children with disabilities.
- The guarantee to any special education or related services such as therapies or assistive technology. Even if a voucher proposal says an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be required and implemented, schools are not required to provide specific services or supports.
- The guarantee that a professional with training will support a child. Recent Wisconsin voucher proposals have not required qualified special educators or therapists to be on staff.
- The right to keep a child safe from harmful and abusive practices, like seclusion and restraint. These protective laws do not apply in private schools.
- All rights under state and federal special education law, the strongest education law in the world. If things go wrong in a voucher school, families’ only option is to return to the public school.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN OTHER STATES?

FLORIDA operates the nation’s largest and longest-running special needs voucher system.

- The *St. Petersburg Times* found that schools have “popped up overnight by the lure of easy money” and found “outdated text books, unqualified teachers, physical abuse, lack of specialized services, and schools that cash voucher checks for students who are no longer enrolled.”¹
- In 2004, school officials at one private Florida school stole \$200,000 in voucher and other state education money.² A Tampa school named in a federal terrorism indictment received \$350,000 in voucher money.³
- A 2011 Florida investigation turned up the story of Christopher Vaughn who enrolled in a school his grandmother heard about at church. In 2010 when he decided to transfer schools, no school would accept his records. His poor education meant as an 18-year-old, he had to return as a freshman.⁴
- A 2011 *Miami New Times* called the Florida special education voucher system “a perverse science experiment, using disabled school kids as lab rats and funded by nine figures in taxpayer cash.”

OHIO runs the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program and the Autism Scholarship Program.

- A 2008 program study concluded that vouchers are “a poor model” that “should not be emulated in other states.”⁵ Problems cited include selective admission; the majority of providers “offered services such as tutoring or therapy” rather than a “classroom setting”; lack of oversight and accountability; and voucher students placed in restrictive settings.”⁶
- The Ohio study also found that a majority of schools limited enrollment, either by accepting only less severely disabled children, by charging more than the maximum voucher amount, or by requiring religious instruction.”⁷



CONCERNS ABOUT SPECIAL NEEDS VOUCHERS FOR WISCONSIN

- Voucher program proposals have limited accountability – either for fraud or for educational quality and outcomes.
- With less special education funding, local school districts - particularly small rural districts - will face additional financial hardship.
- Wisconsin disability service providers can double dip. There will be a financial incentive to establish a school, perhaps combining the voucher with Wisconsin's Medicaid funding for autism or other disability services, and making a profit using taxpayer dollars without accountability for results.
- Segregated, unregulated schools will expand as they have in other states.
- The program is not fiscally sound. Previous Wisconsin proposals have guaranteed that a child can keep the voucher until they graduate or turn 21 without being re-evaluated. This means that even if the child no longer needs special education services, they can take public tax dollars from their neighborhood public school for their entire educational career.
- A voucher program takes money out of public schools, impacting the remaining children with disabilities, often those with the most significant disabilities who private schools will not accept.
- Voucher programs lack transparency. Parents need facts and access to the complete record of a school to make a sound decision, but voucher schools have only minimal reporting requirements.
- Voucher proposals further threaten the already fragile financial viability of Wisconsin's highly valued small, local school districts.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE SCHOOL CHOICE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES?

Wisconsin's open enrollment law has several rules that many parents find discriminatory. Students with disabilities can be denied enrollment in a choice public school for vague reasons like "undue financial burden" or "lack of special education space." Students can even be turned back to their home school in mid-year with little right to appeal. Disability organizations are actively working with other education groups to improve open enrollment to address these concerns. Public school open enrollment provisions must be more flexible to allow for safe school choice options before Wisconsin develops a special needs voucher program that has failed in other states.

In addition, public schools often cite strained funding as a reason they struggle to provide supports to children with disabilities. Wisconsin has chronically decreased the portion of funding it provides to special education over the last two decades. Instead of spending scarce taxpayer dollars on unregulated special needs vouchers that have not been proven to improve outcomes in other states, Wisconsin should invest in the high-cost and other special education funds that can benefit all students.

¹ National Council on Disability. School Vouchers and Students with Disabilities. April 2003.

² Kimberly Miller & S.V. Date. "Seven Charged in Voucher Scam False Claims by School Alleged." *Palm Beach Post* 30 June 2004.

³ S.V. Date. "Voucher Oversight Remains Minimal." *Palm Beach Post* 1 July 2004.

⁴ Garcia-Roberts, Gus. "McKay scholarship program sparks a cottage industry of fraud and chaos." *Miami New Times* 23 June 2011.

⁵ Policy Matters Ohio, *Analyzing Autism Vouchers in Ohio*, Executive Summary, 2 (Mar. 2008), http://www.policymattersohio.org/pdf/AnalyzingAutismVouchers2008_0319.pdf.

⁶ Id., Executive Summary at 1-2.

⁷ *Analyzing Autism Vouchers in Ohio* at 41.

ANCHORAGE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: Anchorage_LIO@akleg.gov 907-269-0111/ phone, 907-269-0229/fax

WRITTEN TESTIMONYNAME: Catherine CowardREPRESENTING: selfBILL#/ SUBJECT: HJR1
COMMITTEE &HEARING DATE: 2/19/14

I am against a change in the constitution to allow for public funds for private/religious schooling. My son is an 8th grader at Romig Middle School in Anchorage & we ~~are~~ have been very happy with his education, and with the choices available to us within the Anchorage Public School system. However, funding cuts thus far have been necessitating teacher lay offs, increased class sizes, and program cuts. You won't make the public system better by taking away the monies that fund it, which is, I believe, what will happen if the constitution is amended to allow public funding to pay for private and/or religious education.

I oppose HJR1 & urge you to vote NO.

Thank you.

ANCHORAGE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: Anchorage_LIO@akleg.gov 907-269-0111/ phone, 907-269-0229/fax

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME: Catherine Coward

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I oppose HJR1 & urge you to vote NO.

Thank you.

To Whom it May Concern,

I am very concerned about this being added to our state constitution. The creation of public schools, both in our state and in our nation, is to provide the future workforce with the knowledge and skills they need to sustain our state and country. This is publically funded and free because all people will have an effect on our economy in the near future. Whether this effect is positive or negative, is directly related to the education that they receive as children.

To give public funds to private schools that are not held to the same standard as our public school and are able to deny any citizen of our state an education is un Alaskan.

If public funding is given to private schools, they must be held accountable for this money. SBA's, parents, and citizens hold public schools accountable for every way they spend their money. Budgets are approved, all salaries posted, and every penny given to a public school can be traced to that individual pencil.

Private Schools are not held to this same standard. They are a choice of the individual families to send their child. The only possible way to give these places public funds, would be to hold them to the same standards and accountability as public schools, and thus make them PUBLIC SCHOOLS. This would be a great waste of money and added oversight from the state to monitor these private schools. Let us focus on improving the schools we currently have, rather than creating new ones. I do not want my money wasted. Private schools should have the right to teach whatever they choose, as parents should have the right to send their child and pay tuition wherever they choose. Giving these schools public money is ridiculous.

In example, I am going to pay a licensed contractor to work on my house. This contractor has to be licensed by the state, follow state set standards, and is held accountable for the work he does and I will have an ability to recoup my money if he does a sub-par job. If I go with someone who is not licensed, I will pay them to work on my home. They may do well or my house may fall down on top of me and I would have no recourse because I went with an UNLICENSED contractor.

In regards to Constitutional Amendement HJR-1
2-19-2015

This is the same as giving private schools money. They may be great or they may be terrible and waste a great deal of Alaska's money. I am not willing to take this gamble.

Also, any school that receives public funding should not be able to remove students from the school. Whether this student has special needs, a different religious opinion, ect. Public schools are unable to suspend/expel a student without federal and state process. Again to impose these on a private school take away the autonomy and uniqueness of a private school.

Thank You

Bridgette Whitcomb

106C Finn Alley

Sitka, AK 99835

Teacher and Commercial Fisherman

ANCHORAGE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: Anchorage_LIO@akleg.gov 907-269-0111/ phone, 907-269-0229/fax

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME: Yolanda de la Cruz

REPRESENTING: Myself

BILL#/ SUBJECT: HJR 1
COMMITTEE &

HEARING DATE: 02-19-2014

I am not belong to NEA, neither to the American Legislative Exchange Council. I reject HJR 1. My kids used to attend private school, but over there the kids with wealthy parents and with political influence have priority and preference.

Right now my children are doing good at the public school, they have different choices and excellent teachers and councils. Therefore I strongly support public education. These politicians should set a better example to the kids by showing to respect the Constitution as it was created.

Ernest Prax

From: akhotrod6874@yahoo.com
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 10:07 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please support SJR9

James Armstrong
P. O. Box 445
Willow, AK 99688

February 18, 2014

The Honorable Wes Keller
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Keller,

I'm writing to urge you to vote for HJR 1, the referendum which gives us Alaskans the right to vote to fix our Constitution. We need to get rid of the flawed Blaine Amendment, which prevents Alaska from implementing parental choice and educational freedom if we so choose.

Studies on School Choice prove that competition leads to improved public schools, millions in taxpayer savings, and more freedom for parents to put their children in the school which is best suited to their children's needs.

But, regardless of how you might feel about Parental Choice, I'm asking you to vote FOR HJR1. Joint Resolution 1 merely gives me and my fellow Alaskans our right to vote to get rid of the flawed Blaine Amendment. Please don't deny us our right to vote on this important issue.

Sincerely,
James Armstrong

Ernest Prax

From: Allen Hippler <allen@faulknerwalsh.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 5:49 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: hjr1 testimony

Dear Representative Keller,

Please accept the following as my testimony on HJR1.

Given the reality in our society that education of young people is a collective responsibility, the question becomes, 'What is the most efficient and best method of delivering education to students?' It is my belief that private enterprise provides the best and most efficient use of society's resources. One has to look no farther than poor results in school districts, and overwhelming costs relative to existing private education. I encourage you and all legislators to get the most value for our money by using the most efficient schools available.

Allen Hippler
CFO
Faulkner Walsh Constructors
Rivercity Development, LLC
Top Fuel Co, LLC
Suite 881, LLC

(907)344-2522 tel
(907)344-2836 fax

Ernest Prax

From: Amrita Singh <singh@au.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 5:29 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn
Cc: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Testimony in Opposition of HJR 1
Attachments: 2014-2-18 AK HJR 1 No Aid Amendment.pdf

Hello,

Attached, please find testimony regarding HJR 1 before the House Judiciary Committee on February 19, 2014.

Thank you,

Amrita

Amrita Singh
State Legislative Counsel
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
1301 K Street, NW
Suite 850, East Tower
Washington, DC 20005
202-466-3234 x212
singh@au.org
www.au.org



Amrita Singh
State Legislative Counsel

(202) 466-3234 x226
(202) 898-0955 (fax)
americansunited@au.org

1301 K Street, NW
Suite 850, East Tower
Washington, DC 20005

**Testimony of
Amrita Singh
State Legislative Counsel
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
regarding HJR 1
before the
Alaska House Judiciary Committee
February 18, 2014**

I am offering this testimony on behalf of the Alaska members and the Alaska Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. HJR 1 would strip two provisions in the Alaska Constitution that guarantee that our taxpayer dollars will support public schools—open to all students regardless of race, religion, gender, or disability—rather than private and religious schools. The purpose of HJR 1 is to remove the constitutional protections that stand in the way of a private school voucher program in Alaska. Vouchers, however, violate fundamental principles of religious freedom and are poor education policy. Instead of providing equal access to high quality education or setting high standards and accountability, voucher programs have proven ineffective, lack accountability to taxpayers, and deprive students of rights provided to public school. Accordingly, the drastic measure of repealing fundamental provisions from the Alaska Constitution should be rejected.

The Resolution

This resolution strips a portion of Article VII, Sec. 1 of the Alaska Constitution, which bars the State from using taxpayer money to fund private religious schools. Voucher proponents seek to repeal this constitutional protection because religious schools participate in voucher programs at much greater rates than private secular schools. This is because religious schools are traditionally less expensive than secular private schools and thus a voucher goes further at such schools. In the D.C. voucher program, for example, nearly 82% of the participating schools were faith-based.¹ The result of voucher programs, therefore, is the funneling of taxpayer dollars to religious education.

This resolution also amends Article IX, Sec. 6 of the Alaska Constitution in order to escape the requirement that taxpayer money be spent on a “public purpose.” If passed, HJR 1 would allow taxpayer money to be spent on the non-public purpose of funding private religious schools.

Passage of HJR 1 Would Violate Core Principles of Religious Liberty

Americans United recognizes the value of religious education, and understands that parochial schools can serve an important role in the lives of many children. But, because most parochial schools either cannot or do not wish to separate the religious components of the education they offer from the academic programs, these schools must be funded by voluntary contributions, not taxation. For example, *The Wall Street Journal* published a piece this month by Cardinal Anthony Dolan, the archbishop of New York, in which he explained that Catholic schools “won’t back away

¹ US Dep’t of Educ., Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Final Report at xxvii (June 2010) (U.S. Dep’t of Educ. Final Report).

from insisting that faith formation be part of our curriculum, even for non-Catholic students.”² Such a stance, of course, is unobjectionable when the school is supported by church funds. Our objection is to using taxpayer funding to support such curriculum.

The current Alaska constitutional provisions that bar public funding of religious schools protect religious freedom in various ways. First, they protect taxpayers from being forced to subsidize a religious education that sharply conflicts with their most sincerely held religious beliefs. For those who do not share a particular religious tradition, such taxpayer-supported religious content is an affront. Second, they keep the government out of the business of religion—the government should not be funding religious education but instead funding schools open to all students regardless of their faith. Third, they protect the autonomy of religious schools. Public funding entangles government with religious schools and weakens these schools by making them dependent upon government money. In order to protect religious freedom, therefore, the current Constitution should stand and HJR 1 should be rejected.

Alaska Should Not Adopt a Program that Aids Discrimination

Private schools can limit admission based on religion, gender, economic status, disability, and other criteria. And, religious schools can use religious hiring criteria. Most voucher schemes permit private schools to maintain these admissions and hiring criteria *and* benefit from taxpayer funded tuition. This violates the longstanding principle that government money should never fund discrimination. Taxpayers should not fund programs through tax credits that harm the fundamental civil rights of students and teachers.

Religious schools can limit admissions and hiring not just to co-religionists, but also to only those students—and the parents of students—who follow its teachings and tenets. Religious schools can expel a student for refusing to take a religious oath, for being gay, or for engaging in any other religious teaching the school prohibits. Religious schools can also segregate students or apply different policies based on gender. And, these schools can fire an unwed pregnant teacher or a teacher going through a divorce, if either violates the religious teachings of the school.

Although the State permits these schools to engage in these practices with their own private funds, such discriminatory policies should never be supported and funded with Alaska taxpayer funds.

Vouchers Do Not Improve Student Achievement or Resources

According to multiple studies of the District of Columbia,³ Milwaukee,⁴ and Cleveland⁵ school voucher programs, students offered vouchers do not perform better in reading and math than students in public schools. In 2011, the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau released a five-year longitudinal study, which concluded that students in Milwaukee using vouchers to attend private and religious schools perform no better on standardized tests than their counterparts in public

²Cardinal Anthony Dolan, *The Plan to Save Catholic Schools: How to combat falling enrollment while keeping standards high*, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 1, 2013, A11,

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323701904578275921970228476.html?mod=googlenews_wsj>.

³U.S. Dep't of Educ. *Final Report*; U.S. Dep't of Ed., *Evaluation of the D.C. Scholarship Program: Impact After 3 Years* (Apr. 2009); U.S. Dep't of Ed., *Evaluation of the D.C. Scholarship Program: Impact After 2 Years* (June 2008); U.S. Dep't of Ed., *Evaluation of the D.C. Scholarship Program: Impact After 1 Year* (June 2007).

⁴Witte, Wolf, et al., *MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Third Year Report* (Apr. 2010); Witte, Wolf, et al., *MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Second Year Report* (Mar. 2009); Witte, Wolf, et al., *MPCP Longitudinal Education Growth Study Baseline Report* (Feb. 2008); Witte, *Achievement Effects of Milwaukee Voucher Program* (Feb. 1997); Witte, et al., *Fifth Year Report Milwaukee Parental Choice Program* (Dec. 1995).

⁵Plucker, et al., *Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, Summary Report 1998-2004* (Feb. 2006); *Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, Executive Report 1998-2002* (Feb. 2006).

schools.⁶ Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education studied the D.C. voucher program for five years and found the program produced no statistically significant improvements overall in educational achievement.⁷

Voucher programs also fail to offer participating students greater educational resources. In fact, the Department of Education studies of the D.C. voucher show that students participating in the program are actually *less* likely to have access to programs for English language learners, learning support and special needs programs, tutors, counselors, cafeterias, and nurse's offices than students not in the program.⁸

Vouchers Lack Accountability

Most voucher programs lack sufficient accountability measures. They lack regulation, reporting, monitoring, and transparency. The current administrator of the D.C. voucher program, for example, admitted that quality control is "a dead zone, a blind spot" of the program.⁹ And, a report issued by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) revealed that the D.C. program has failed to meet even basic statutory requirements. For example, the administrator permitted schools to participate—and allowed students to attend schools—even though they lacked a valid D.C. occupancy certificate, failed to submit required financial data, and failed to submit required annual operational reports with basic information on curriculum, teachers' education, and school facilities.¹⁰ Indeed, some participating schools failed to submit information on accreditation or educational soundness, yet voucher students were directed to and attended those schools.¹¹

Similarly, the state of Georgia has given out 170 million dollars in tuition tax credits since 2008, yet it is difficult to determine "how the money was spent and on whom."¹² There is no way to determine whether the private schools funded are successful or failing, whether the program is serving low-income students, or whether the program is supplying tuition to kids who were and would be attending private schools regardless of the tuition tax program.¹³

The State cannot justify using taxpayer dollars on programs that are in no way accountable to the taxpayer.

⁶ Legislative Audit Bureau, *Test Score Data for Pupils in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (Report 4 of 5)*, 17 (Aug. 2011) ("The project's five-year longitudinal study shows no significant difference in the performance of Choice and similar MPS pupils after four years of participation.")

⁷ *U.S. Dep't of Educ. Final Report* at xv, xix and 34.

⁸ *U.S. Dep't of Educ. Final Report* at 56, 57, 60 (June 2010).

⁹ Lyndsey Layton and Emma Brown, "Quality Controls Lacking for D.C. Schools Accepting Federal Vouchers," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 17, 2012, <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-17/local/35507144_1_voucher-program-voucher-dollars-private-schools>.

¹⁰ US Gov't Accountability Office, *District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program: Additional Policies and Procedures Would Improve Internal Controls and Program Operations*, Pub. No. 08-9 at 34-35 (Nov. 2007) (GAO Report).

¹¹ *Id.* at 34.

¹² Maureen Downey, "Private School Tax Credit: A \$170 million tax diversion that Georgia lawmakers cloak in secrecy. Why?" *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Feb. 17, 2012 < http://blogs.ajc.com/get-schooled-blog/2013/02/17/private-school-tax-credit-a-170-million-tax-diversion-that-georgia-lawmakers-cloak-in-secrecy-why/?cxntfid=blogs_get_schooled_blog>.

¹³ *Id.*

Ernest Prax

From: Amy Limeres <amylimeres@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2014 12:21 PM
To: Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Vote no on HJR1

Dear Committee Members,

As the parent of three children in the public schools in Anchorage, I strongly oppose a constitutional amendment that would permit vouchers for private and religious schools. Please vote NO on HJR1.

Sincerely,
Amy W. Limeres

Ernest Prax

From: Andy Romanoff <andykristen@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:45 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJRI

Dear Representative Keller,

I support public education wholeheartedly, and feel strongly that if passed, HJRI would have lasting negative consequences for Alaska's schools and the quality of education for our children. I do not support diverting public funds to private schools. I believe in providing the opportunity for a quality education for all students and do not believe that diverting funds to the private sector will result in this.

Please do not vote to move HJRI out of the Judiciary Committee. It's a dead end for equity in education!

Sincerely,

Kristen Romanoff
Parent of two children in the Juneau School District

Ernest Prax

From: Ann Gifford <agifford@faulknerbanfield.com>
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2014 11:09 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Follow-up to 02.19.14 House Judiciary hearing on HJR1 -- the Sheldon Jackson case and Alaska's Constitution

Dear Chairman Keller and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

This email is to follow up on testimony and comments from the Committee's hearing on Wednesday, February 19, concerning the interpretation of the provision in Article VII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution that "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution" and the provision in Article IX, Section 6 that "No tax shall be levied, or appropriation of public money made...except for a public purpose." Once again, I am speaking only for myself, as a parent of students who graduated from public schools in Alaska and as an attorney who has worked with public school districts in Alaska for more than 25 years.

The prohibition against using public funds for the "direct benefit" of religious and other private schools is drafted more narrowly than similar prohibitions found in some other state constitutions, which prohibit both "direct and indirect" aid to religious institutions. That was a deliberate choice on the part of our constitutional delegates, as the Alaska Supreme Court noted in its decision *Sheldon Jackson College v. State*, 599 P.2d 127 (1979). In that case, the Alaska Supreme Court ruled that a tuition grant program for Alaskan students who attended private colleges constituted an impermissible direct benefit because the "chief beneficiaries" of the program were "the private colleges themselves" and the grants constituted a substantial benefit to those private schools. In reaching this decision, the court cited minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention that reflected our founders' intent "to support and protect a strong system of public schools." 599 P.2d at 129. The court also noted that the voters of Alaska had recently rejected a ballot proposition that would have amended our constitution to permit "direct aid such as scholarships and tuition equalization grants" to students attending private schools. 599 P.2d at 128.

The court specifically recognized that forms of aid that are provided neutrally to promote the health and welfare of all students, and that provide only an incidental benefit to private schools, are normally constitutional. In discussing these points, the court stated that there was a "substantial question" as to the "continuing vitality" of its earlier decision in *Matthews v. Quinton*, 362 P.2d 932 (1961), which was extremely broad in rejecting a statute that authorized transportation assistance to both public and private students. See discussion in *Sheldon Jackson* at 599 P.2d 130 n. 20.

Some people have suggested that we need to amend Article VII and Article IX to protect existing arrangements between public and private schools in Alaska, such as when an Alaska school district pays for a public school

student to purchase foreign language course materials from a private university. I see nothing in either the *Sheldon Jackson* case or the *Matthews v. Quinton* case that indicates our court would disapprove agreements to provide secular services and materials to public school students merely because the provider was a private school. The key difference between these types of arrangements and a voucher program is that services provided to public school students help make the public education system stronger.

Where that leaves us is that the only reason to amend our constitution would be to permit programs that provide exclusive and substantial aid to private schools. Mr. Komer, the attorney from the Institute for Justice (a Virginia-based school choice advocacy group), who spoke to you on Wednesday said that the purpose of the amendments would be to permit private school voucher programs -- which he said he preferred to call "scholarship" programs. The people of Alaska have already rejected this concept twice -- once at our constitutional convention and once by rejecting the 1976 initiative to add language to Article VII specifically authorizing direct aid to private school students. Please listen to your constituents who are explaining all the reasons that they do not want to spend public money on private education now.

The language you are considering now is actually more extreme than the proposed amendment the voters rejected in 1976. That amendment would have simply added the following phrase to Art. VII: "however, nothing in this section shall prevent direct aid to students in accordance with the law." HJR1, in contrast, would completely remove the prohibition against benefiting religious and other private schools from Art. VII and would also amend Article IX's directive that public money must be spent for a public purpose to create an exception if the payment is "for the direct educational benefit of students." That means that so long as money was being spent for the direct benefit of students, it wouldn't even have to meet the public purpose test. That would truly open the door to benefiting special interest groups at the expense of the public good. The people of Alaska are relying on you as legislators, and especially as members of the House Judiciary Committee, to vet bills so that we don't end up with laws that have harmful unintended consequences. Please consider the potential for harm embodied in HJR1 and vote against putting it on the ballot.

Sincerely, Ann Gifford

Ann Gifford ▪ Faulkner Banfield, P.C. ▪ 8420 Airport Blvd., Suite 101 ▪ Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 523-6133

Ernest Prax

From: Ann Gifford <agifford@faulknerbanfield.com>
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 8:51 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Opposition to HJR1

Dear members of the House Judiciary Committee,

This is to express my opposition to HJR1/SJR 9. I am an attorney who has worked with public school districts for many years. I am also the parent of three children who graduated from public schools in Juneau. The comments below reflect my personal opinions as a citizen of our state. I am not writing to you on behalf of any client.

I oppose HJR1/SJR9 because it is not good for kids. Here are a few reasons why:

The amendments open the door to vouchers and other forms of direct public assistance to private schools. Public money should not be used to pay for private school. We have taken on the societal obligation to provide a free public K-12 education for all children in the state because as a society we all benefit from an educated, productive populace and we all pay the price in things like higher crime rates and expensive incarceration when kids grow up without a good education. We expect even residents who have no children to pay taxes to support public schools. No parent or child has a right to a "share" of the state's education money. They are entitled to access the public educational program that we collectively provide. If they want something different, that is their choice, but it should also be their responsibility to pay for it.

One big concern is that vouchers don't generally help the kids who need help the most. The students who use vouchers to attend a private school are those whose parents are able to navigate the admissions process, transport their kids to the schools and provide all the other types of support that are needed to help kids succeed in a private school. Many students who live in poverty don't have parents or other family who can do all those things. This is a particularly big problem in Alaska, where many of our neediest students live in remote bush communities where there aren't any private schools to begin with.

Another concern is that vouchers haven't been shown to produce significant benefits even for the students who are able to use them. Most studies on the voucher programs that have been tried in other states show little or no improvement in educational outcomes. Meanwhile, there have been numerous scandals associated with misuse of public funds by private schools who aren't held to the same standards as the public schools. When we spend public money for education, we're entitled to expect safe schools that don't discriminate, that provide due

process before excluding students, that use certified teachers and that teach a curriculum that meets state standards. How would we assure that private schools meet these standards?

I am also puzzled by those who say that “competition will lead to better public schools.” That idea imports business concepts into the public arena where they don’t fit very well. Competition can lead to better results for consumers of something like auto insurance because the businesses that are competing are driven by a profit motive. What is the motivation that would spur a school to improve in the presence of private competition that isn’t there otherwise? School teachers and principals don’t get paid any more when more children attend their schools. If personal pride is supposed to be the motivating factor, why do people think it would only be triggered by beating out private competition, or that the State needs to fund that private competition to make that happen? School officials obviously take a lot of pride in their successful programs now. Supt. Paramo of Mat-Su clearly is very proud of the successful choice programs Mat-Su offers its students. If pride is the key, recognizing successful programs seems more likely to get results than bashing the less-successful programs and spending public dollars to increase the amount of private competition on what is already an uneven playing field.

Finally, I disagree with those who say that the proposed amendments to our constitution are necessary to assure that school districts can continue to purchase goods or services from private educational vendors like Sylvan Learning Systems. Our constitution prohibits only direct support to private educational institutions. Even though the Alaska Supreme Court has interpreted our constitution to prohibit some types of support to private institutions that other courts have found to be “indirect”, I see nothing in our court’s decisions that suggests it would invalidate the purchase of secular services or materials for public school students simply because the vendor of them is a private educational organization.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this. I hope that you and our other legislators will turn your attention and effort to ideas for strengthening our public schools, for the benefit of all our children and the future of our state. Sincerely, Ann Gifford

Ann Gifford ▪ Faulkner Banfield, P.C. ▪ 8420 Airport Blvd., Suite 101 ▪ Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 523-6133

Ernest Prax

From: Ashley Nohr <ashleynohr@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:10 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Yes yes yes
Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Ashley Rhodes <arhodes@acsedu.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:05 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I'm for a yes vote on HJR1 – Anchorage Alaska resident , Miss Ashley Rhodes.

Ernest Prax

From: Barbara Eaton <drb@drbarbaraeaton.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:53 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Hello!

I was unable to call in to testify this morning; however, I do want my voice and that of my family's heard!!! We are FULLY in favor of HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion this year and vote on it in November.

School Choice is FOR PARENTS and STUDENTS and thus needs a statewide discussion because it is so important in allowing parents to have a say in their child's education. Polls show that the general public is in favor of parents having school choice. Unfortunately, some groups like the NEA want to dictate to parents where and how their children are to be educated. THAT'S NOT FAIR and it's NOT AMERICAN!!! We the PARENTS deserve the right to say what's best for OUR children, not the NEA!!! Much of their agenda runs in opposition to what we stand for in our home so why in the world should we be forced to PAY for that kind of indoctrination of our children????? It would be like the government forcing kids to go to a private, religious school....no one would think THAT was fair so why is it fair that the liberal NEA gets to exercise its influence on MY kids???

It is time for parents to have a choice.

I am sure that you're well aware that this is a VERY crucial issue that carries a lot of weight as we head into the voting booth. Your decision regarding HJR1 will have a dramatic affect on votes that are cast for YOU or your opponent.

Will you give parents their RIGHT to choose or will you act like Washington big government and force us to abide by what you, and the NEA, determine is best for our kids?

Thank you for your attention and service.

Ben and Barbara Eaton

From: Barbara J Struble <barbjst@gci.net>
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 7:57 AM
To: Barbara J Struble
Subject: House Bill JHR1

Please support House Bill JHR1

If passed, this bill would allow the citizens of Alaska the opportunity to amend the constitution so that the legislature can consider allowing educational funds for "Parental Choice" in education instead of the monopoly of public education.

Also, get education out of the "public" arena and privatize education in Alaska. Two great benefits to privatizing education:

1. This would stop federal the encroachment of common core into our educational system and
2. No more taxpayer support for obamatax. Teachers' unions could pay for their benefits.

Educational excellence through diversity and free enterprise and financial responsibility is the goal.

Thank you,

Peace,
Barbara J Struble
Maranatha

Ernest Prax

From: Barbara Thurston <barbara@thurstons.us>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 12:11 PM
To: Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Benjamin Nageak; Rep. Beth Kerttula; Rep. Bill Stoltze; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Doug Isaacson; Rep. Eric Feige; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Geran Tarr; Rep. Harriet Drummond; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Kurt Olson; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Mark Neuman; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Mia Costello; Rep. Mike Chenault; Rep. Mike Hawker; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Pete Higgins; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Tammie Wilson; Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Proposed Constitutional Amendment

To members of the Alaska House of Representatives:

I am writing to express my concern about SJR9 and HJR1, the proposals to amend the Constitution to allow for public money to go to private, parochial, or for-profit schools.

While the concept of "allowing parents to choose their children's school" sounds appealing, I fear that such a move would significantly harm Alaska's ability to develop the well-educated workforce that we need to be competitive in the 21st century.

Public schools in Alaska are subject to many requirements, and have extremely high expectations put on them. Public schools are subject to a number of state and federal requirements, including special education rules, teacher tenure and retirement benefit laws, requirements that teachers be "highly qualified", and testing requirements, all of which were put in place in an attempt to make sure that schools were accountable to the public for the education provided to children. Public schools are also required to provide an education for every child in the community who attends that school, regardless of that child's learning abilities, behavior issues, or home life.

Private schools are not currently subject to any of these requirements. They can accept or deny admission to any child they wish, and select teachers based on any criteria they choose. This often allows them to appear to be more "successful" than public schools simply because of the students they enroll - it's not hard to have a high graduation rate if you only enroll academically strong and motivated students, whose families are heavily involved in their education.

I think it's likely that if SJR9 or HJR1 passes, and a bill is proposed to allow funding for private schools, that an attempt will be made to discourage schools receiving public funds from discriminating against students with particular needs. I don't, however, believe it's realistic to expect that this will result in private schools actually having an enrolled population similar to the neighborhood public schools. The child with special needs who moves mid-year from a village into an urban area because of a family crisis is unlikely to be welcomed into the local private school. The same is true for a child who is emotionally disturbed, or whose parents work odd hours and aren't able to provide transportation to a school across town, or the student who has limited proficiency in English.

Simply put, some students are more expensive to educate than others. One can't assume that the funding for a local school district can be allocated evenly among the students, and "travel" with the student to

whatever school that student attends. In addition to the costs of helping students with special needs or circumstances, there are overhead costs for a local school district (building maintenance, etc) that do not decrease with a modest decrease in enrollment.

Allowing funding to "travel" with a student would undoubtedly be a benefit for private schools and the students currently attending them, and would likely spur the creation of for-profit schools specializing in educating lower-cost students. It would also, however, make it much more difficult for our local public school districts to provide an appropriate education for all students, including those whose situation makes them more expensive to educate, or whose families are unable to navigate the new choices that might be available.

It's important to remember that Alaska already offers a significant amount of choice within our public schools. The larger populated areas (and some smaller ones) offer multiple choices of Charter Schools, all of which provide choices to families while maintaining the high expectations and oversight that apply to all public schools.

A Constitutional change like this would also be inconsistent with other services provided in Alaska. There are a number of situations in which the state or local government provides a service. While citizens may take advantage of that service or not, they are not given the option of taking their "share" of the cost of that service and using it to pay for a private alternative. For example, while many businesses choose to hire security guards, we don't let them use their "share" of the funding that would otherwise go to the local police department or state troopers to help pay for those guards. People who are frustrated with the quality of the snow plowing on their road and choose to plow it themselves don't get a refund of their "share" of the road maintenance funds. Similarly, public schools are a service that is provided by the state and local government to the people of Alaska. Any child in Alaska may attend the public schools and use that service, but they should not be entitled to a "share" of the neighborhood public school's cost to use to pay for a private education.

A constitutional change of this magnitude is significant, and should not be approved without due consideration. I have heard several legislators say things like "I don't personally support it, but I do think that people should have the right to vote on this". Alaska was designed as a representative democracy for a reason - so that legislators, who have spent the time researching an issue can use their best judgement when placing their vote. This issue is too important to bypass the judgement of individual legislators and turn into a contest to see which "side" can do a better job of getting voters to the polls.

I urge you to vote "no" on SJR9 and/or HJR1 when it appears before you.

Thank you.

Barbara Thurston
Juneau, AK
(907) 789-2991

Ernest Prax

From: Bethany Marcum <bethanymarcum@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 12, 2014 5:56 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Cc: Bob Griffin
Subject: HJR 1 information packet
Attachments: School Choice Leg Package 11 Feb.pdf

Representative Keller,

Thank you for co-sponsoring HJR 1. Attached please find an information packet responding to common misinformation surrounding this resolution. A hard copy of this packet has been provided to non-sponsoring legislators. Feel free to use this information as you interact with them, and let us know if we can provide any other data to assist you.

Respectfully,

Bethany Marcum
for Bob Griffin (312) 753-8228
Education Research Fellow, Alaska Policy Forum

Dear Legislators,

Those of us in the School Choice movement want nothing more than for you to allow the people of Alaska to vote on whether or not to remove a restriction in our state constitution. That restriction, imposed on the framers of the Alaska Constitution by the Federal government as a condition of statehood, was conceived in historical intolerance.

The desired "public good" we *all* want in exchange for our limited tax dollars is an educated public. It is difficult to understand how some believe that only government institutions are capable of producing that desired outcome, when the evidence strongly suggests otherwise. We trust that you will use the empirical evidence and will be data driven as you make this important policy decision.

We don't know what course future legislatures will take in implementing the many options of School Choice if the people vote to remove the Blaine Amendment language from our constitution. Unfortunately, some have tried prematurely to frame a School Choice debate that will take place in a future legislature, in terms that are not consistent with the experiences of the 23 states that have already traveled that path. We feel compelled to respond. We will briefly reinforce the following points in the pages to follow.

1. School Choice doesn't harm public schools. The evidence suggests it strengthens them.
2. School Choice increases the efficiency of the public education system across the U.S.
3. School Choice improves student outcomes.
4. School Choice does not violate the U.S. Constitution.
5. School Choice does not reduce the number of teaching jobs.
6. Alaska public schools need healthy competition to improve student outcomes.
7. School Choice programs can be tailored to help all students, including those with special needs.
8. School Choice reduces racial and economic segregation.
9. The Blaine Amendment was not conceived by our state founders; it is a remnant of intolerance.
10. We must challenge our preconceived notion that only government entities can provide certain services.
11. Abundant choice is not currently available in our public schools.
12. If schools produce great results, parents will choose them, regardless of staff certifications.

Bob Griffin

Education Research Fellow, Alaska Policy Forum

Responses to School Choice Myths:

1. Myth: School Choice hurts public schools.

Response: School Choice has never harmed public schools. There are 23 states where public funds follow the child; in none of those states have traditional public schools been harmed academically.

There have been 23 peer-reviewed studies of student outcomes for students who remain in public schools where a voucher is available. In 22 of those studies student outcomes for kids who stayed in public schools improved. In one study, students saw no statistically significant improvement but also no harm.

2. Myth: School Choice will cost Alaska taxpayers \$100 million.

Response: School Choice programs save taxpayers' dollars. Six empirical studies on taxpayer effects of School Choice in Florida, Milwaukee and Washington DC found that taxpayers saved money with School Choice programs. No studies have shown negative effects on taxpayers as a result of School Choice programs.

*Hypothetical Alaska Scenario -- \$5,000 voucher:
[Caution: We have no idea what form actual School Choice legislation might take or the actual cost associated with School Choice in Alaska until a future legislature decides to introduce legislation.]*

*If the state of Alaska offered a \$5,000 voucher to parents and 15% of current public school students transferred to private schools, taxpayers **would save \$78 million annually, without closing any current public schools.** This is just one possible scenario. (See attachment 1)*

3. Myth: School Choice in the Lower 48 has not improved education outcomes.

Response: There have been 12 peer-reviewed studies of outcomes for students who moved to private schools as a result of School Choice. Six of those studies noted positive effects for all students. In five studies some students saw positive effects. One study (New York) showed no visible effects, positive or negative.

4. Myth: School Choice violates the 'Establishment Clause' of the U.S. Constitution.

Response: Not true. The U.S. Supreme Court Zelman Decision (2002) ruled in favor of the allowance of school vouchers in relation to the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.

5. Myth: School Choice will cause a loss of teaching jobs.

Response: Some teachers may transition to private school jobs. Roughly the same number of kids will need to be educated and that will require roughly the same quantity of teachers.

6. Myth: Alaska public schools are doing a great job.

Response: No one doubts that Alaska kids are just as smart as kids in other states. Nor does anyone doubt that Alaskan parents love their kids, or that our teachers are very dedicated. There is evidence however, that our kids are not doing well in reading and math relative to other states -- and the trend is getting worse.

In 2013, Alaska was dead last in the U.S. in low-income 4th grade reading scores according to the U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Our best 2013 NAEP score ranks Alaska 34th in the U.S. for upper/middle income students in 8th grade math.

Alaska is trending downward relative to other states in NAEP testing. In 2003, our combined

NAEP scores for upper/middle income and low-income students ranked Alaska 43rd in the U.S. in combined 4th grade and 8th grade math and reading. By 2013 we had fallen to 48th.

7. Myth: Private schools do not accept kids with special needs.

Response: Not every public school can accommodate every student with disabilities; neither can every private school. The McKay Scholarship Program in Florida has shown that private schools are more than willing to enroll students with disabilities if they are given similar financial support. Future legislation may encourage the creation of private schools tailored specifically to disabled students.

8. Myth: School Choice causes racial and economic segregation.

Every School Choice program that has been studied has found increased diversity. Empirical studies show that School Choice breaks down racial barriers and leads to more integrated schools.

9. Myth: The framers of the Alaska Constitution wisely included Blaine Amendment language.

Response: The Blaine Amendment was a precondition to statehood imposed by the federal government. It was an anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant measure and eventually supported by the Ku Klux Klan.

10. Myth: Only public institutions can accomplish public functions effectively.

Response: Certain government tasks that involve the use of deadly force are clearly the responsibility of government, like the police or military. Outside of those narrow tasks there are few rational arguments that government monopolies are necessary for accomplishing the desired public good.

Our roads and public buildings are constructed and maintained by combinations of public and private entities very effectively.

11. Myth: We already have abundant "public" School Choice.

Response: Anchorage alone has thousands of families on waiting lists for charter and alternative schools. The public system is clearly not meeting the public demand for choices.

12. Myth: Private schools can have uncertified teachers.

Response: The focus should be on student outcomes, not inputs. Teacher certification is no guarantee of effective teaching. Private schools are judged by the quality of student outcomes they produce. If private schools have poor quality teaching staff that produce poor quality results, parents will leave.

Of 171 scientifically sound studies on teacher education, only nine found a significant positive relationship with student performance. Five studies showed a statistically significant negative relationship between teacher education and student performance. The remaining 157 studies showed no statistically significant impact of teacher education on student performance.

Hypothetical \$5,000 Voucher to Parents of Private School Students

Students		Alaska State Costs/Student No Voucher			Total Variable Cost
		Total	Variable	Fixed	
Public	130,000	\$18,058	\$11,668	\$6,912	\$1.516 Billion
Private	11,000		\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	141,000			Total Cost	\$1.516 Billion

Students		Alaska State Costs/Student --\$5,000 Voucher			Total Variable Cost
		Total	Variable	Fixed	
Public	110,000	\$18,058	\$11,668	\$6,912	\$1.283 Billion
Private (current)	11,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$55 Million
Private (new)	20,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$100 Million
Total	141,000			Total Cost	\$1.438 Billion
				Annual Cost Savings with Voucher	\$78 Million

Scenario based estimates from *The Fiscal Effects of School Choice Programs on Public School Districts*, Benjamin Scafidi, PhD., The Friedman Foundation, March 2012. Table 6, Short-run Fixed and Variable Costs by State, 2008-09

School Choice: The Empirical Evidence

School Choice does not harm public schools.

1. Martin Carnoy, et. al., "Vouchers and Public School Performance: A Case Study of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program," Economic Policy Institute, 2007.
2. Matthew Carr, "The Impact of Ohio's EdChoice on Traditional Public School Performance," *Cato Journal*, Spring/Summer 2011.
3. Rajashri Chakrabarti, "Closing the Gap," *Education Next*, Summer 2004.
4. Rajashri Chakrabarti, "Impact of Voucher Design on Public School Performance: Evidence from Milwaukee Voucher Programs," Federal Reserve Bank of New York Staff Report #315, January 2008.
5. Rajashri Chakrabarti, "Impact of Voucher Design on Public School Performance: Evidence from Florida Voucher Programs," Federal Reserve Bank of New York Staff Report #315, January 2008.
6. Rajashri Chakrabarti, "Can Increasing Private School Participation and Monetary Loss in a Voucher Program Affect Public School Performance? Evidence from Milwaukee," *Journal of Public Economics*, June 2008.
7. Rajashri Chakrabarti, "Vouchers, Public School Response and the Role of Incentives: Evidence from Florida," *Economic Inquiry*, January 2013.
8. David Figlio and Cecilia Rouse, "Do Accountability and Voucher Threats Improve Low-Performing Schools?" *Journal of Public Economics* January 2006.
9. David Figlio and Cassandra Hart, "Does Competition Improve Public Schools? New Evidence from the Florida Tax-Credit Scholarship Program," *Education Next*, Winter 2011.
10. Greg Forster, "Lost Opportunity: An Empirical Analysis of How Vouchers Affected Florida Public Schools," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, March 2008.
11. Greg Forster, "Promising Start: An Empirical Analysis of How EdChoice Vouchers Affect Ohio Public Schools," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, August 2008.
12. Jay Greene, "An Evaluation of the Florida A-Plus Accountability and School Choice Program," Manhattan Institute, February 2001.
13. Jay Greene and Greg Forster, "Rising to the Challenge: The Effect of School Choice on Public Schools in Milwaukee," Manhattan Institute, October 2002.
14. Jay Greene and Greg Forster, "Rising to the Challenge: The Effect of School Choice on Public Schools in San Antonio," Manhattan Institute, October 2002.
15. Jay Greene and Ryan Marsh, "The Effect of Milwaukee's Parental Choice Program on Student Achievement in Milwaukee Public Schools," School Choice Demonstration Project, Report 11, March 2009.
16. Jay Greene and Marcus Winters, "Competition Passes the Test," *Education Next*, Summer 2004.
17. Jay Greene and Marcus Winters, "An Evaluation of the Effects of D.C.'s Voucher Program on Public School Achievement and Racial Integration after One Year," Manhattan Institute, January 2006.
18. Christopher Hammons, "The Effects of Town Tuitioning in Vermont," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, January 2002.
19. Christopher Hammons, "The Effects of Town Tuitioning in Maine," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, January 2002.
20. Caroline Hoxby, "Rising Tide," *Education Next*, Winter 2001.
21. Cecilia Rouse, Jane Hannaway, Dan Goldhaber, and David Figlio, "Feeling the Florida Heat? How Low-Performing Schools Respond to Voucher and Accountability Pressure," National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, November 2007.
22. Martin West and Paul Peterson, "The Efficacy of Choice Threats within School Accountability Systems: Results from Legislatively Induced Experiments," *Economic Journal*, March 2006.
23. Marcus Winters and Jay Greene, "Public School Response to Special Education Vouchers: The Impact of Florida's McKay Scholarship Program on Disability Diagnosis and Student Achievement in Public Schools," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, June 2011.

School Choice saves tax dollars.

1. Susan Aud, "School Choice by the Numbers: The Fiscal Effect of School Choice Programs, 1990-2006," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, April 2007.
2. Susan Aud and Leon Michos, "Spreading Freedom and Saving Money: The Fiscal Impact of the D.C. Voucher Program," Cato Institute and Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, 2006
3. "The Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program Saves State Dollars," Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Report 08-68, December 2008.
4. Robert Costrell, "The Fiscal Impact of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: 2010-2011 Update and Policy Options," School Choice Demonstration Project, Report 20, December 2010.
5. Revenue Estimating Conference," Florida Legislative Office of Economic and Demographic Research, March 16, 2012, p. 456, line 55.
6. Patrick Wolf and Michael McShane, "Is the Juice Worth the Squeeze? A Benefit/Cost Analysis of the District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program," *Education Finance and Policy*, Winter 2013, pp.74-99.

School Choice Reduces Racial segregation in Schools.

1. Greg Forster, "Segregation Levels in Milwaukee Public Schools and the Milwaukee Voucher Program," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, August 2006.
2. Greg Forster, "Segregation Levels in Cleveland Public Schools and the Cleveland Voucher Program," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and Buckeye Institute, August 2006.
3. Howard Fuller and Deborah Greiveldinger, "The Impact of School Choice on Racial Integration in Milwaukee Private Schools," American Education Reform Council manuscript, August 2002
4. Howard Fuller and George Mitchell, "The Impact of School Choice on Racial and Ethnic Enrollment in Milwaukee Private Schools," Institute for the Transformation of Learning, December 1999.
5. Howard Fuller and George Mitchell, "The Impact of School Choice on Integration in Milwaukee Private Schools," Institute for the Transformation of Learning, June 2000.
6. Jay Greene, "The Racial, Economic and Religious Context of Parental Choice in Cleveland," paper presented at the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management meeting, November 1999.
7. Jay Greene, Jonathan Mills, and Stuart Buck, "The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program's Effect on School Integration," School Choice Demonstration Project, Report 20, April 2010.
8. Jay Greene and Marcus Winters, "An Evaluation of the Effects of D.C.'s Voucher Program on Public School Achievement and Racial Integration After One Year," Manhattan Institute, January 2005.

Explanation of enclosed bar charts

What's an "Achievement Day"

The following bar charts compare Alaska student test scores in a measurement conducted by the U.S. Department of Education every odd year known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). U.S. Average student progress on each measurement (math and reading) is 41 points between the 4th and 8th grade. That equates to 10.25 points per year in average achievement gain. Dividing the yearly average achievement gain by a standard 180 day school year, the expectation is that a student will achieve increase their NAEP score one point for every 17.5 school days. Using that yardstick, we are able to estimate the number of "achievement days" difference between individual states in math and reading. Low income students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Upper/middle-income students do not qualify for free or reduced lunch. The following bar charts are expressed in the difference of achieving days relative to the lowest performing state for that NAEP test year.

Example: In 2003, Alaska students were 3.6 NAEP points (66 achievement days) ahead of students in Alabama and 10.7 NAEP points (193 achievement days) behind students from Wyoming in cumulative average NAEP test scores in 4th and 8th grade reading and math for low income and upper/middle income students.

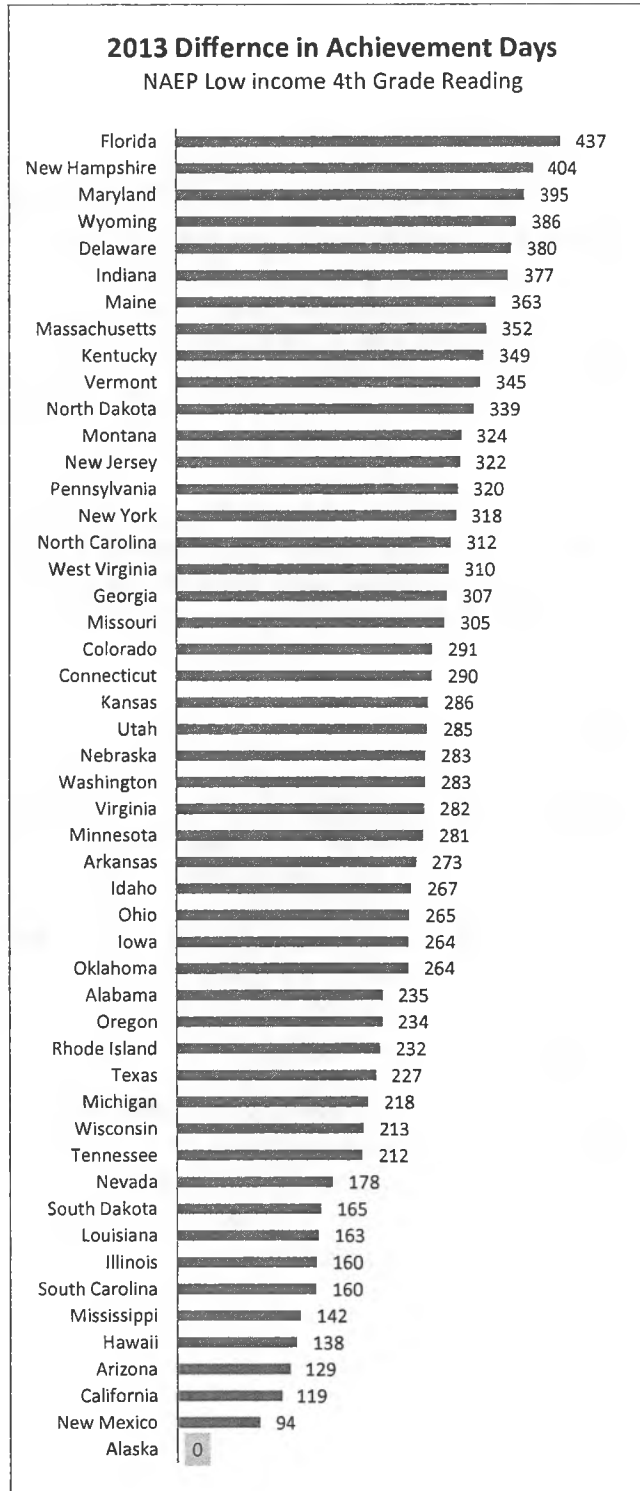
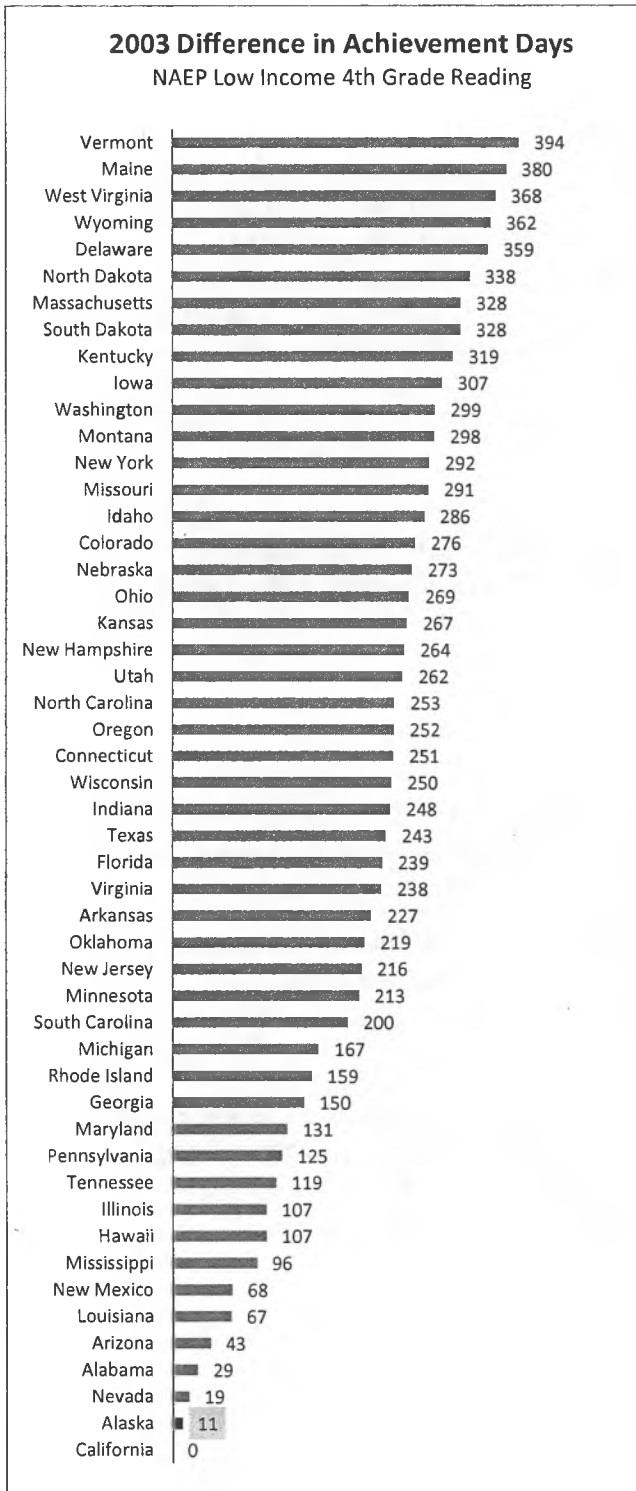
Bar Chart Summary:

Page 8: This chart shows low-income 4th grade reading. Alaska's low point relative to other states. In 2003 Alaska students were 49th in US in low-income 4th grade reading by 2013 Alaska had slipped to 50th, 94 achievement days behind New Mexico (49th).

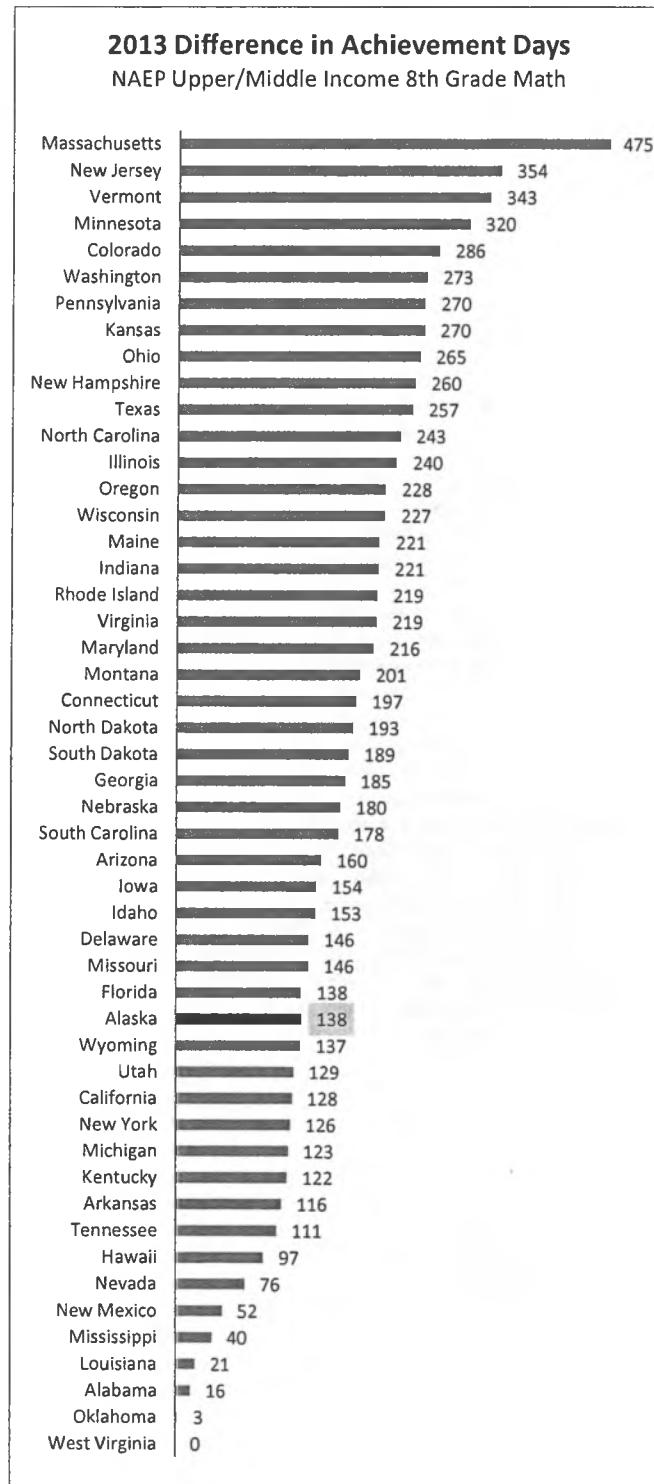
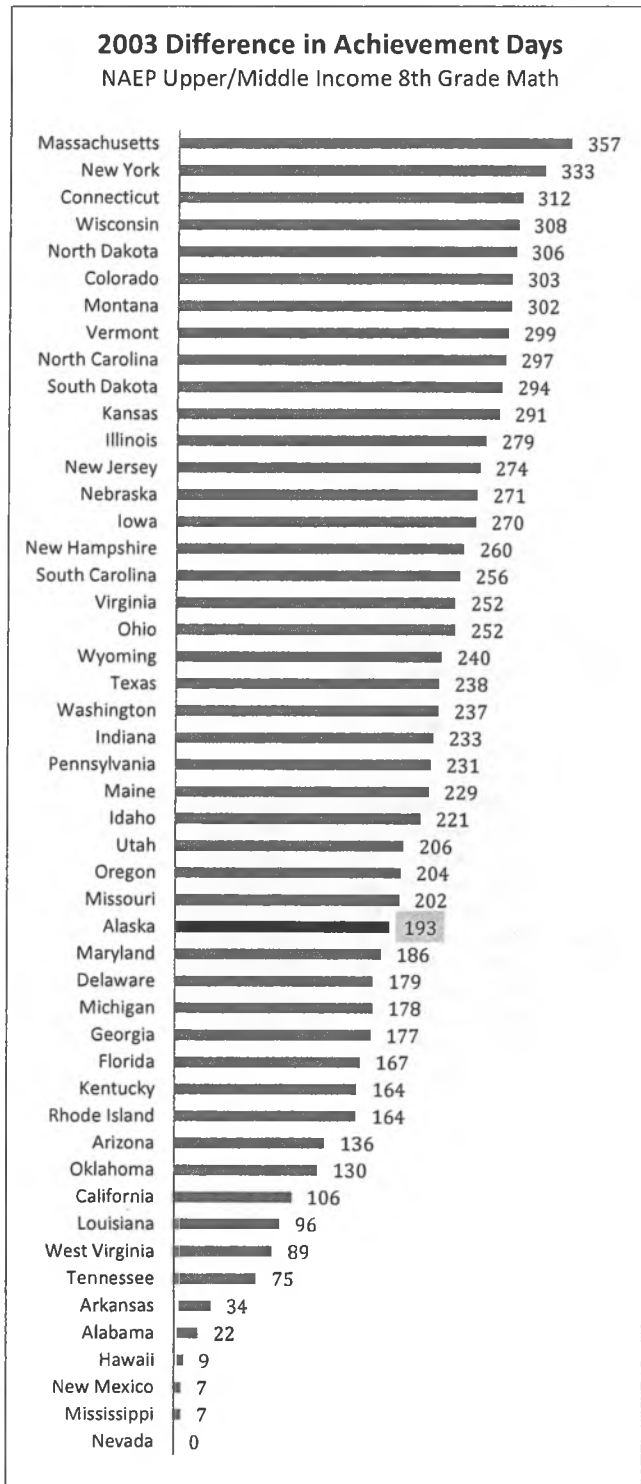
Page 9: This chart shows upper/middle-income 8th grade math. Alaska's highest point relative to other states. In 2003 Alaska students were 31st in the U.S., 164 achievement days behind Massachusetts (1st). By 2013 we had slipped to 34th, 337 achievement days (1.9 achievement years) behind Massachusetts.

Page 10: This chart shows the overall combined low-income and upper/middle-income 4th and 8th grade reading and math scores for the 50 states. In 2003 Alaska was 43rd. In 2013 Alaska was 48th in a statistical tie for last place with Mississippi and Alabama. To control for poverty differences between states for comparison, equal weight was given to achievement for low income and upper/middle students.

Low-Income 4th Grade Reading-- Alaska's Low Point



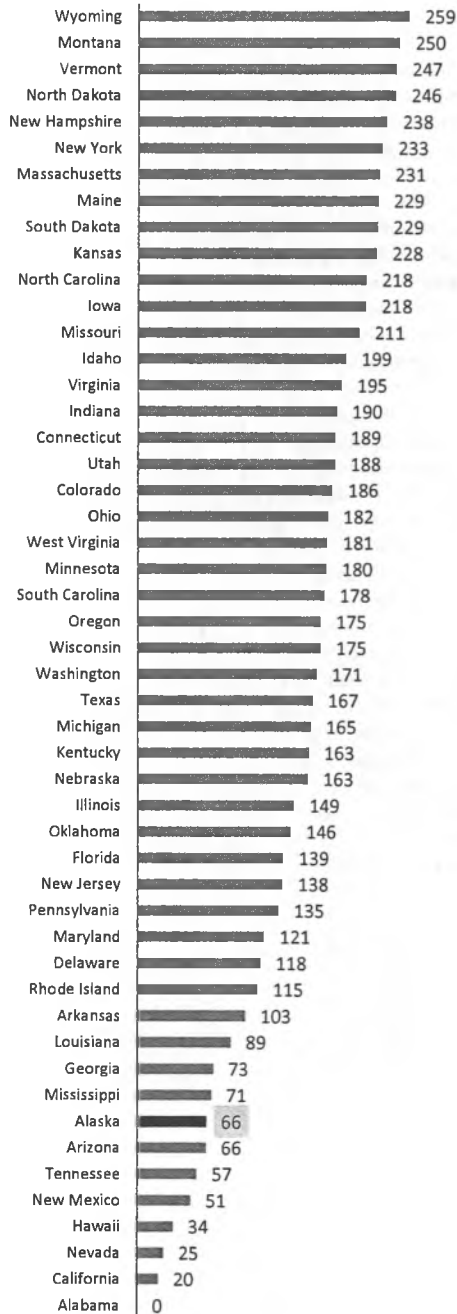
Upper/Middle- Income 8th Grade Math-- Alaska's High Point



Combined Low-Income and Upper/Middle Income 4th and 8th Grade Reading and Math

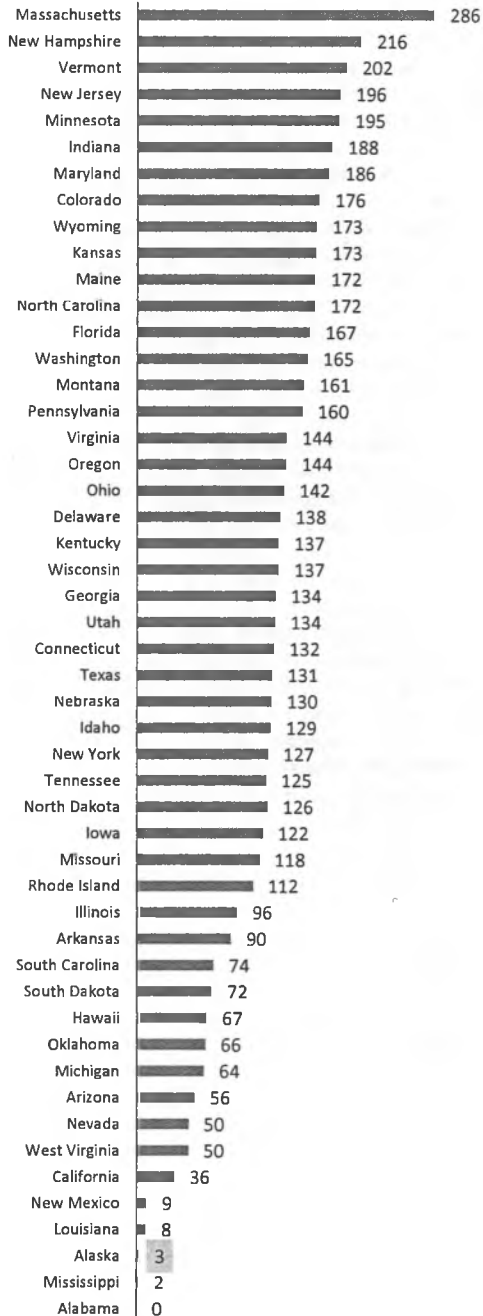
2003 Difference in Achievement Days

2003 NAEP 4th and 8th Grade Reading and Math
Combined Upper/Middle Income and Low Income Scores



2013 Difference in Achievement Days

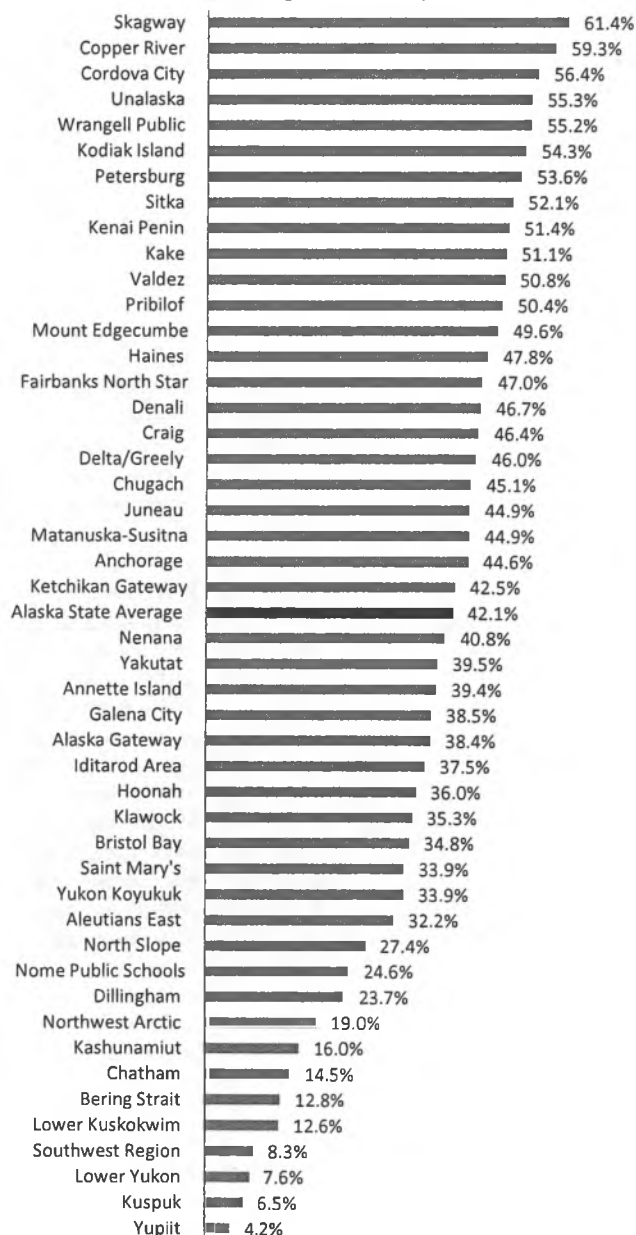
2013 NAEP 4th and 8th Grade Reading and Math
Combined Upper/Middle Income and Low Income Scores



GlobalReportCard.org

2009 Alaska School District Rankings

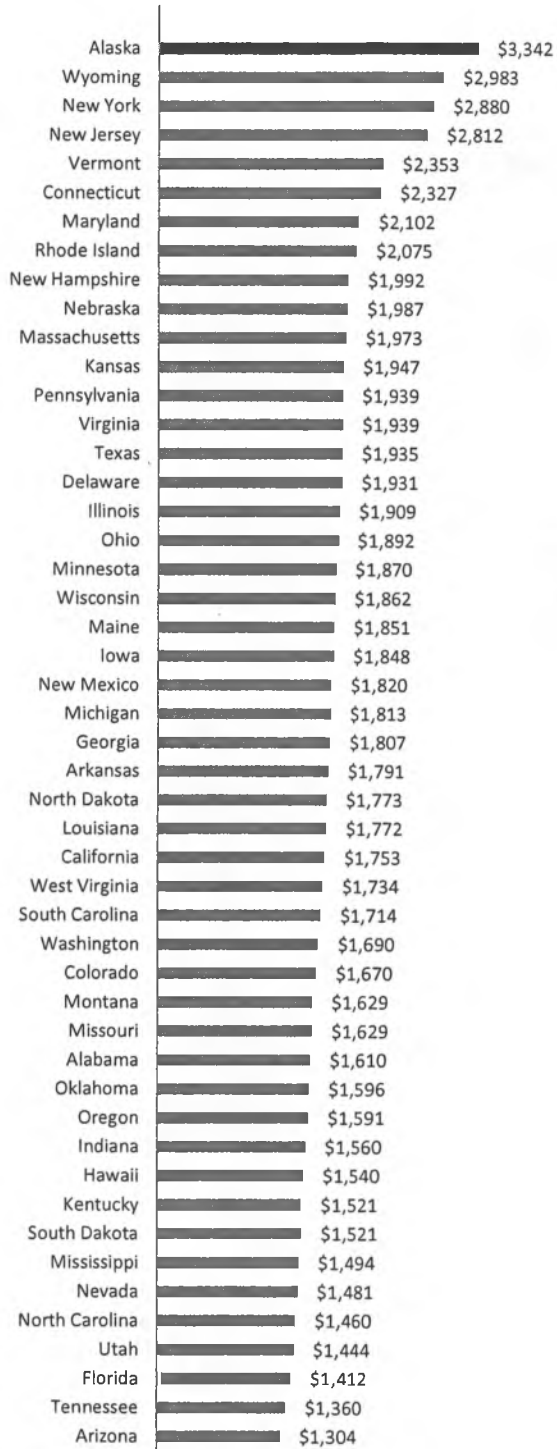
Combined Math and Reading Percentile Compared to 25 Industrialized Countries



Some rural Alaska school districts outperform the largest districts despite disadvantages of economies-of-scale and median wages lower than more urban areas. The GRC score indicates the combined math and reading achievement by the average student in a public school district compared to student achievement in a set of 25 developed countries. The score represents the percentage of students in the international group who would have a lower level of achievement. For example, a percentile of 60 means the average student in a school district would perform better than 60% of the students in the international group.

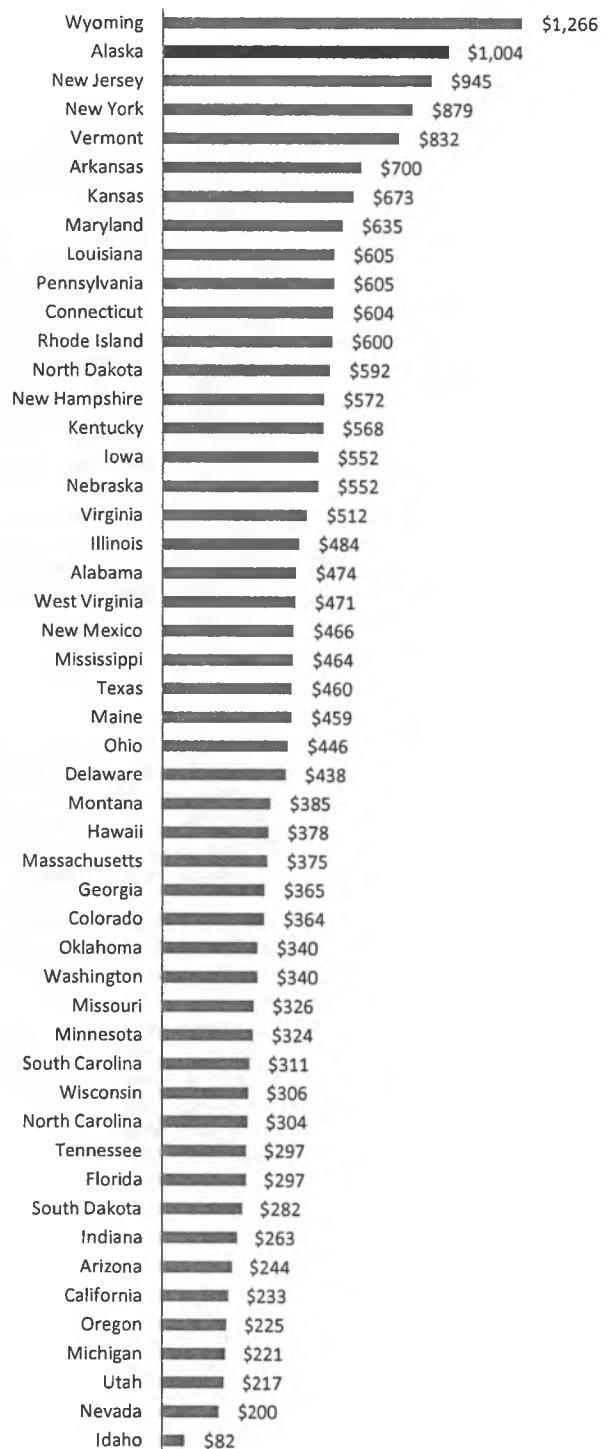
K-12 Spending 2010

State and Local Spending per Capita
Source: NEA Rankings and Estimates, Dec 2012



K-12 Spending Increases 2002-2010

State and Local Spending per Capita
Source: NEA Rankings and Estimates, Dec 2012



Ernest Prax

From: BETTE REED <bette@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 4:13 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: NO on HJR1

I urge you to vote NO on HJR1

Our schools are not funded enough and you should not divert education money to private schools.

Bette Reed
Palmer, AK

Ernest Prax

From: Bill Hutchison <billhutchison3@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 8:52 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 Testimony

Dear Rep. Keller,

I would like to testify as below, in **favor** of **HJR1**.

I believe that it is very simple, that education funding should go with and to the student, not any institution. Depending on where the parents and student want the student to attend, the funds should be disbursed monthly for home schooled or charter schooled students, or annually if the student will be attending public school. A public school choice should limit the ability of the student to choose a different institution during the school year. Home school, or charter school will enable the student to change schools at an end of month boundary, with the new choice determining where remaining payments or balance of funds go.

I believe it is the student and the student's parents who are being, or should be the ones funded until graduation from 12th grade. If that had been available to my wife and I, and our kids, my wife would have continued to home school our son and daughter. It is a choice that many additional parents will probably make after passing HJR1.

Sincerely,
William (Bill) H. Hutchison III
Anchorage 99504
907-337-6001

--

Politically Correct is Objectively Wrong.
substitute Insane for Objectively Wrong.
Gun Control: Best achieved using both hands.
Income Inequality? I'll compete for that!

Ernest Prax

From: Bill Leight <bleight@ancbt.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Good Morning:

I am sending this email to encourage you to vote YES on HJR1. Thank you for listening and serving our great State of Alaska.

William Leight

2400 Scarborough Drive

Anchorage, Alaska 99504

Ernest Prax

From: BLAINE SISSON <nosis4@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:25 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1 and truly hope that you will vote against this measure. Thank you.

Susan Hood Sisson
200 Sunny Hills Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99712
907-457-3840

Ernest Prax

From: Brenda Riley <brendariley81@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:05 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR 1 and urge you to vote NO.

Brenda Riley
PO Box 71618
Fairbanks, AK 99707

Ernest Prax

From: Bucket <akbucket@alaska.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:44 AM
To: AK Senators; AK House
Subject: SJR9 and HJR1

All,

I should like to encourage all to support the two aforementioned legislations.

Some of you responded to my prior missives concerning this issue in the negative.

Those opposed **did not clarify their opposition** – they were just against parents having a choice in their children's educational choices.

The 2012 Pearson's Report stated:

Recent research indicates that countries with greater choice of schools have better education outcomes. Presumably, allowing parents to choose the best schools rewards higher quality and leads to overall improvement. In practice, however, finding the mechanism to make this happen is difficult. Extensive studies of voucher programmes and charter schools in the United States indicate that, while both can be beneficial, neither is a magic formula. On the other hand, for-profit private education is providing students in some of the least developed areas of the world an alternative to poor state provision and showing the potential benefits of choice and accountability. Ultimately, as in any market or quasi-market, the real value of choice comes from people having the right information to select the option that is truly superior.

America's standing in the world on educational outcomes is abysmal – all manner of study has shown this outcome, or ask anyone hiring new graduates locally.

Those that would deny parents the right to vote for our children's access to a better educational outcome **because of their special interests ties** are unfit for public office.

--

Thomas B. Wood
Eagle River, AK 99577
907.227.8844

Ernest Prax

From: butera <butera@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 1:31 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1 and urge you to vote NO.

Ernest Prax

From: Carolyn <cml@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2014 9:11 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: No State money for private schools

MTA Wireless Smart Phone

Ernest Prax

From: Carolyn Vermette <cmvermette@me.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 9:10 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller:

I am writing to respectfully request that you submit my email to be used as testimony to support HJR1 in order to allow parents the opportunity to choose for their children the best education possible. Our children our of future!

I have two children currently attending Grace Lutheran School in Kenai, AK. We are extremely pleased with the Christ-centered education and loving instruction that my sons are receiving at the school, which would not be possible at their local public school. While I grew up in a family of public school teachers and have nothing but respect and admiration for teachers, both public and private, my husband and I felt that our sons would thrive in a private religious school setting. I feel that all parents should have the opportunity to decide the best available school for their child regardless of race, economic status or place of residency.

In short, please support the HJR1 constitutional amendments and give the voters the voice to vote on School Choice. Thank you for your time and efforts.

Regards,
Carolyn Vermette

Ernest Prax

From: Carrie Narow <arcticaloha@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2014 11:38 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: ann.brough@k12northstar.org; anne.konefal@k12northstar.org; brian.smith@k12northstar.org; jcpierson@gci.net; doug.lange@k12northstar.org; gail.carlo@k12northstar.org; ginger.egan@k12northstar.org; jeannie.james@k12northstar.org; jennifer.bodily@k12northstar.org; jim.gilbert@k12northstar.org; julie.michaelis@k12northstar.org; tkra@acsalaska.net; fbkthrun@gci.net; mary.clancy@k12northstar.org; mary.palmer@k12northstar.org; melanie.hinzman@k12northstar.org; nicholas.hoy@k12northstar.org; rhiannon.sallee@k12northstar.org; robin.benjamin@k12northstar.org; sarah.miner@k12northstar.org; shane.wiegand@k12northstar.org; susan.brainard@k12northstar.org; arcticaloha@gmail.com; anneudry@yahoo.com; nettie123@gmail.com; cdthomas253@msn.com; arizona412@hotmail.com; csds8104@gmail.com; kreg1177@yahoo.com; dan.brough@k12northstar.org; seebz@hotmail.com; akjml@hotmail.com; jessiwalton@hotmail.com; beasley.kat@yahoo.com; fayan04@hotmail.com; aythya642@gmail.com; schillingx4@yahoo.com; rainey_pooh@hotmail.com; marie.kokrine@tanachiefs.org; maryann.johnson2@bannerhealth.com; michellej@mosquitonet.com; lowrysims@yahoo.com; bxj325@gmail.com; nina.mcdermitt@gmail.com; sscrase@mosquitonet.com; sarah.fbak79@yahoo.com; lost_in_cantwell@rocketmail.com; stephanienafpliotis@yahoo.com; Briana L. Randle; susanguzman22@yahoo.com; tnarow@gmail.com; anthony.pfister@alaska.gov; krmiller2012@gmail.com
Subject: School Funding & Curriculum Choices

My name is Carrie Narow, I am a parent of three, two of which are in Elementary School. I am writing to inform you of my position regarding public school funding and freedom to choose the best curriculum to suit our student's needs.

I am very concerned about the funding for public schools. I believe teaching our kids is the highest priority, whether you are a parent or not. This should always be our highest priority. They are our future.

Classes at Joy Elementary are already up to 27 students. My children and I would be very disappointed to see classrooms get even larger. We want the teachers to be able to teach each student. We rely on them to teach the lessons necessary to get them started on the right foot to take on the next grade. We cannot allow classes to become any larger. No student left behind right?

When I think of a student struggling. I think of tutors and the amount of time a teacher has to give each individual student. When I was going to school and struggling, I was able to work with a tutor and my teacher. Working together I was able to really enjoy the lesson and grasp the concepts. Without the two of

them I would not have been able to keep up. Students need the appropriate number of teachers and staff to benefit them effectively. They need the teacher's time.

I still remember these people. They along with other teachers, and my parents helped mold me into the person I am today; a good person, and parent, caring and empathetic to others, and an active contributing member of the community. These are traits I and my husband are passing on to our children. Lessons every child in society should have. If children are given the time and resources they need at school and home they have the best chance to become the good citizens we want them to become.

As far as curriculum, I believe each state should have the knowledge and ability to choose what is best for their students. Every student learns differently and at different speeds so these things need to be considered. Teachers have the greatest knowledge on how to teach our children.

Each of our children are on a journey with similar goals. We control the path which they travel and it is our responsibility to guide them. I believe our state leaders want the best choices for our children and will allow the flexibility they need.

Respectfully,

Carrie Narow

Ernest Prax

From: Charles & Carole Hart <prolife@gci.net>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 3:17 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Email to be used in the testimony of HJR 1

Rep. Wes Keller,

Please use this as testimony for HJR 1.

Thank you, Carole Hart

Please pass HJR 1 so that the people can vote to uphold the original intent of the Constitution.

As originally written and ratified by Alaska voters, our state constitution allows the Legislature to use public funds to benefit students even when this indirectly benefits private or religious schools.

SJR9/HJR1 puts the legislature back in the driver's seat of lawmaking on this issue. **Please let the people vote on SJR9/HJR1.**

The following paragraph sums up well, for our family, the need for the passage of this law:

We could lose some programs we like

Currently there are a number of state programs that involve an indirect benefit for private and religious providers. Private courses taken through public homeschool programs, adult vocational training, church-affiliate preschools, college scholarships, and tutoring services are among them.

The Legislature has repeatedly indicated its understanding of the original intent of Alaska's

constitution in the way it structures the funding of such programs. Yet these programs could be in jeopardy if challenged in court because they are in violation of prior court decisions. SJR9/HJR1 would clear up any ambiguities threatening these programs. Please let the people vote on this amendment.

Regards,

Carole Hart

Ernest Prax

From: Chris and Tina Bernoski <ctbernoski@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 7:40 AM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Wes Keller; Sen. Anna Fairclough
Subject: AGAINST HJR1

Dear Representatives,

My name is Tina Bernoski, I grew up in Anchorage and have always attended our great public schools. I am a school counselor and mother of students who attend public education. I am definitely AGAINST HJR1 and want public funds to ONLY go towards public schools. As a school counselor, who works at a "high risk" high school I will tell you that if we go to a "voucher type system" and allow public money to go towards private schools, we are just deepening the divide. We are now promoting a "haves " and "have not" system. Education has always been the "American dream" and allowing for a level playing field, please do NOT take this away from my students and my kids!

I appreciate the hard work you do, however, I truly believe that if you are invested in the betterment of Alaska's future you would increase the BSA to a meaningful amount and inflation proof it. I know the students I work with daily have connections to educators that help them reach their full potential. And when we continually make cuts to educators(due to lack of funding) we take away opportunities. I truly believe that Alaska can be amongst the best nationally if we make education a priority and fully fund public education!

Thank you for your time and consideration

Tina Bernoski
7030 Apollo Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99504
ctbernoski@msn.com

Ernest Prax

From: Chris Spears <chris.spears204@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:26 AM
Subject: HJR1

My name is Chris Spears and I'm a public school parent and concerned Alaskan who cares about our kids. I support SJR9 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can vote on it. It is an American tradition to have choices and discussion. How could you not support school choice?

Ernest Prax

From: chuck kaucic <studefan1@email.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:38 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: I Support School Choice

Rep Keller,

I am a Palmer resident who works in Wasilla & strongly supports School Choice & urges the passage of HJR1.

TX for standing strong.

CK

Ernest Prax

From: clover tiffany <clovertiffany@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same

Sincerely,
Clover Tiffany

Ernest Prax

From: Craig Wood <cwood1776@outlook.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:29 PM
To: Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg;
Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Wes Keller
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: HJR1

Greetings Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am a concerned parent of four children and two grandchildren who desires to improve the educational system for *all Alaskans*. I live in Representative Josephson's district. I have read the language and the intent behind HJR1 and support it with all my heart and mind! This is a special opportunity to introduce innovation and accountability in our educational system. I especially envision the empowerment of those parents with limited resources.

It's part of our American and Alaskan tradition to have choices and to have a discussion. All of Alaska's children are affected by this, so all Alaskans should have the opportunity to vote on it.

I urge you to vote yes on HJR1.

Respectfully,
Craig Wood

Ernest Prax

From: Dalia Gonzalez <daliacgonzalez@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 7:37 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: ParentChoice

Hello Mr. Keller,

I have been a public school employee for over 15 years and had my children attend public schools. About 2 years ago my daughter had the misfortune of being placed with a very difficult class. Two students in her class had severer behavior and mental issues. They were not a danger to themselves or others, is the reasoning they did not need extra services for their behavior. However, when they did get upset chairs, books, pencils and other school objects would fly across the room. Our family decided that it was not safe to have her in that classroom. We had no other alternative because there was no other 2nd grade classroom to switch her into, and there were no other schools to transfer her into. Parents are only allowed to register for schools inside their boundaries and denied schools outside boundaries. After my daughter watched and learned negative behavior/words we decided to look into a private school. It was expensive and did not know if our family could afford the tuition. Then the inevitable came; my daughter started to stand up to the students' negative behavior and was sexually assaulted, as a 7 year old by another 7 year old. He was suspended for his actions, but we knew that the environment would never change. She was with him since Kindergarten and had faced other issues. The next day we pulled her out of public school and made financial changes to make it work.

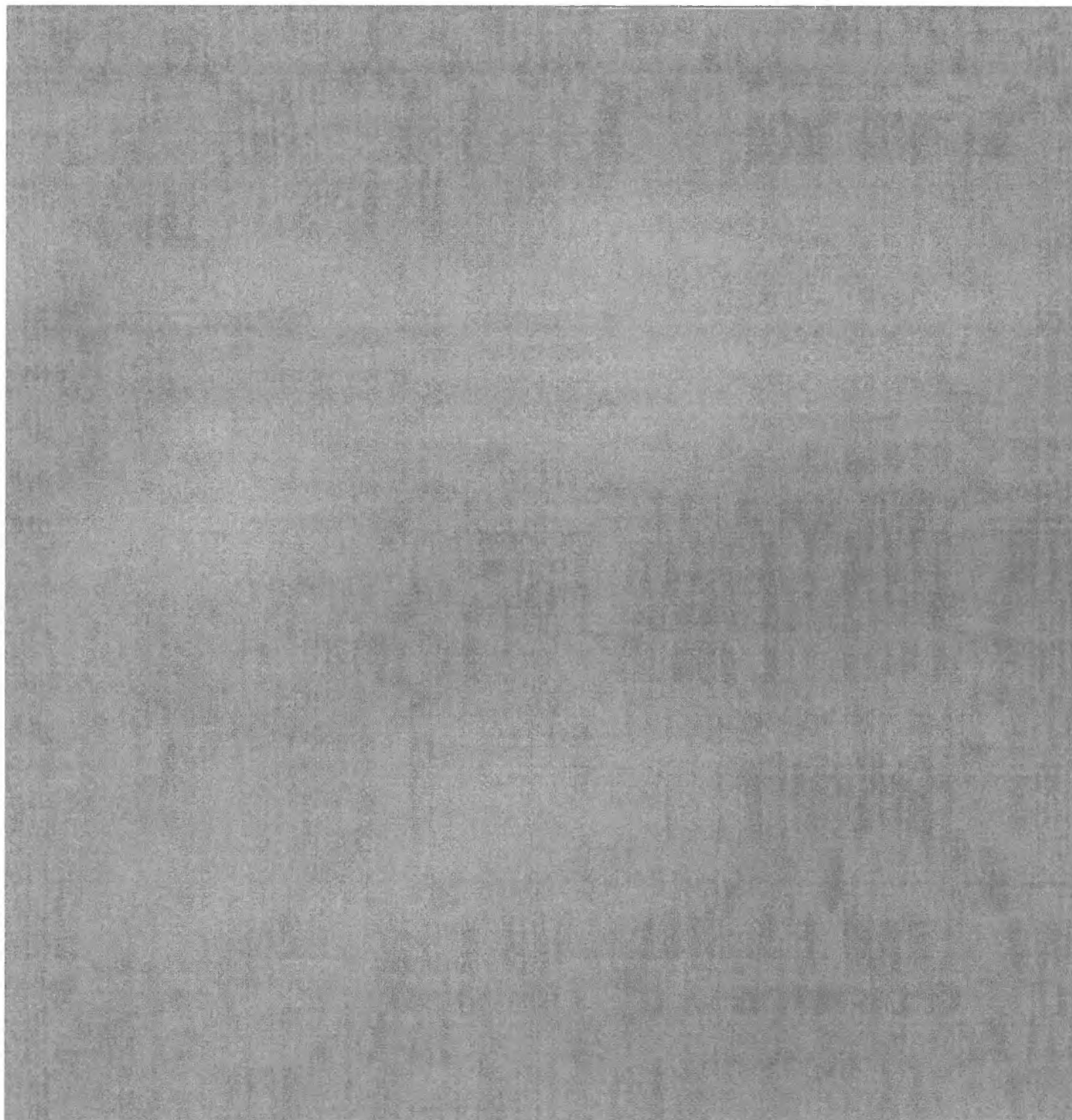
Our family pays our taxes to the public school levies, but can not use those funds if we want our children to learn and be safe. We never choose to be our of the public school; however, under those circumstances we had no other choice. Please consider allowing parents to make choices on where their children can receive the best education for their own children. For who knows what is best for each child than the parents of that child.

Thank you,

Dalia González

Ernest Prax

From: Danielle Kern <dkern@acsedu.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: SJR9



I am writing in support of the School Choice Scholarship legislation proposed by Governor Parnell. I am a constituent of Rep. Bob Lynn and Senator Kevin Meyer.

I believe parents should be able to choose what the best education is for their children, whether it be public or private. Many parents believe their choice is limited, mainly because of finances.

I hope that all taxpayers would agree that the decision for responsible spending of education dollars includes the parents of students.

It is my hope that you would consider carefully this legislation and vote in support of it.

Thank you for your continued hard work for Alaska!

Danielle Kern, BSN, RN

Wife, Mother, School Nurse - Alaskan

Ernest Prax

From: Danna Grammer <danna.grammer@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 1:06 PM
Subject: SJR9

Dear Legislators and Governor,

Thank you for your service. As a voter in Anchorage and a parent of a child in the Anchorage School District, I am writing to you to let you know that I oppose SJR9. I believe the founding members of our constitution had the insight that public funds should not be used to fund private and religious schools. Those funds need to be utilized in our public schools to provide better opportunities for ALL Alaskan children. Whether a parent chooses to send their child to an Alaska public school or find alternative schooling is a personal choice, but I do not believe that is a choice that should be funded by the citizens of Alaska. Instead, our state's money should be used to make this state's public schools the best they can be and something that ALL Alaskans can be proud of.

Furthermore, it seems counterintuitive to a voter like myself that if there is not enough funds to fund our public schools in such a manner that every child is given an opportunity to excel at education rather than just getting by with a mediocre education, that there would be enough funds available to provide vouchers for private and religious schools. My answer is that there shouldn't be.

I feel as a governing body, it should be the position to do what's right for the greater good of the citizens of the state rather than a select few, which is what I believe SJR9 would be doing to the education system of our state.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,
Danna Grammer
1145 I Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907-306-5526

Ernest Prax

From: daveyrocket@gci.net
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 3:09 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 - Email testimony In Support

Please use my email as testimony in the judiciary committee hearing on HJR1. I support HJR1 which is the constitutional amendment to remove the Blaine amendment from our State constitution.

We support school choice for parents and families. The Alaska Supreme Court, through judicial activism, has prevented programs that allow the use of public funds for private and religious schools. Passing HJR1 will honor the intent of the delegates of our state constitution.

As are public and private schools, religious affiliated schools are primarily in the business of educating students in core curriculum and they should not be discriminated against when public funds are dispersed for educational costs.

Parents and students are the best decision makers in choosing an educational institution that will provide a quality education best suited to achieve the students educational goals.

Public testimony on this legislation has been unequally skewed toward public education providers and unions.

Please pass SJR9/HJR1 so that Alaskans can decide, free of judicial and political bias, on the merits of this constitutional amendment to affirm the original intent of our constitution.

Thank you,

David Agosti
14251 Jarvi Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99515

Ernest Prax

From: David Nyman <DNyman@restorsci.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 10:26 AM
Subject: SJR 9 and HJR 1 Vouchers and Quality of Public Schools and Longer Term School Budgeting Process

I would like to express my opposition to the recent movement to amend the constitution to distribute public funds to private schools. I have 4 teens in the public school system in Anchorage. They have variously attended Chugach Optional, Central Middle School of Science, Steller and West High. My step daughter attended Girdwood Elementary and now attends South High. It is a challenge to keep up with the scholastic and extracurricular activities but in doing so I have come to the opinion that Anchorage Schools offer a wide range of options and in most cases excellent educational environments. When there is a problem it is up to me the parent to work with the child and school system to identify it and resolve the issue. Thus when I hear others grouse about the public school system I think to myself that perhaps they need to be more involved with the school system.

In my opinion the initiatives identified above as SJR9 and HJR1 are flatly misguided and will detract from continuing to promote and build the best public education system possible. Thus I object to these measures and the constitutional changes they would require. Alaska's constitution has been shown time and time again to be well crafted as it is based on sound principles. What I see in the current efforts is some folks who are in a position of authority believe they should change the current system based on their perception of what is occurring versus the reality of the situation.

With that said, Alaska can always do better in managing the expenses or the quality of the school system. The year to year budgeting process, I believe, detracts from any manager's ability to plan over a longer time frame as proposed by forward funding. The herky jerky nature of our annual budget scramble affects all branches of our government, allows for easy insertion of poorly justified projects into the process. Mega projects that are sexy like the Knik Arm Crossing or the Susitna Hydro siphon capital away from basic services including our schools.

In conclusion I hope everyone has a productive session and works toward the benefit of all Alaskans!

Best Regards,

David Nyman

Ernest Prax

From: Dawn Brashear <dawn.brashear@k12northstar.org>
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 9:20 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: I oppose HJR1

Dear Elected Officials:

I oppose HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

1. Public education is the backbone that supports a strong middle class and therefore a strong democracy.
2. A strength for our country is the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

Dawn E. Brashear Dawn E. Brashear, M.Ed, NCC
Mom of Katie and Evan School Counselor
The Watershed School Woodriver Elementary School
FNSBSD FNSBSD

Ernest Prax

From: Debbie Clary <debbie.clary@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:36 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I would appreciate a yes vote on this bill. I believe parents should have a choice where their child is educated.

Ernest Prax

From: Debby Retherford <debby@alaska.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:34 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1 and urge you to vote NO. Not only will this legislation not help our schools (which are NOT failing, by the way), but it attempts to fix a problem that does not exist. Our children already have many choices within the public school system - a public school system that is one of the pillars of our democracy in this country. If parents want changes locally, they should work through their local school boards. The best government is that which is closest to the people.

Besides, this legislation does not have the majority of the publics' support, despite what some may say, and will be defeated at the polls. In the meantime, hundreds of thousands of dollars will be spent on both sides. We have better uses for that money, we have better solutions for schools, and we have greater issues in this state on which our leaders should be focusing.

Debby Retherford
Palmer, Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: Deborah A. Bennett <deborah.bennett@k12northstar.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:21 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: I oppose passage of SJR9 / HJR 1 and ask that you do the same

Dear Representative Keller,

I **oppose** passage of SJR9 / HJR 1 and ask that you do the same

Sincerely,

Deborah Bennett
1479 Farmers Loop Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709

Ernest Prax

From: Denise Koch <denise_koch@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 16, 2014 6:40 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Cathy Munoz; cjfarr@hotmail.com; sean.parnell@alaska.gov
Subject: Oppose HJR1

To Representatives and Governor
Parnell:

I am not a member of the NEA.

I am only representing myself.

I am a mother of two children. One daughter goes to Harborview public school. The other daughter will enter kindergarten at Harborview next year. I am also a proud graduate of public school, from kindergarten through graduate school.

With all the gloom and doom talk about public education, I wanted to say that I'm very happy with my daughter's teachers. However, the flat funding of education is already leading to increases in classroom size. There is a limit to how many children even a good teacher can reach. This problem has been exacerbated by the decrease in the number of paraeducational aids that assist children with behavioral issues in the classroom.

I want strong public schools. The years of flat funding for education for the past three years followed by this resolution seems like an engineered failure for public school in order to privatize education.

It's fine to foster educational competition with charter schools – as long as they are public. This would be a fair comparison, where schools can't turn low income, low performing, or students with disabilities away.

It's important to preserve strong public schools as a foundation of the common good and of our democracy.

Please oppose HJR1.

Thank you for your consideration.

Denise Koch

924 D Street

Juneau, AK 99801

• • •

Ernest Prax

From: Donna Matthews <dwmattthews@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Keller,

I realize that as the primary sponsor of HJR 1, you are not likely to consider rejecting it in your committee hearing today. But I wanted you to know that there are opposing views.

You are a steward of our constitution. You vowed to “support and defend the Constitution of the State of Alaska.” The authors wrote a constitution that would not invite or require the frequent tampering that has made monsters of many state constitutions. You should not recommend changing it without **dire need** or **grave injustice needing remedy**. Constitutional matters are of a fundamental importance.

Does the issue of funding private schools meet either of those standards?

Is the need dire?

Public schools are doing amazing work in Alaska. Schools of choice exist wherever the population permits. Mat Su Superintendent Dr Deena Paramo testified to the Senate Finance Committee on Feb 3 about the extensive options available in her district. Other districts also give choices that that meet diverse student needs.

Is there a grave injustice that needs remedy through constitutional change?

Are public schools perfect? Do they have all the tools they need to educate our Alaska children? No! *A major path to good education is appropriate funding. If this were not true, then why would supporters of SJR 9 and HJR 1 want a funding route for private education?*

And I ask you to consider what is popularly known as the “law of unintended consequences.” If the constitution is amended as proposed:

- Will all that follows this amendment be to the benefit of the education of the children of Alaska?
- How will you know giving public money to a private school has improved an Alaska child’s education?
- Will you establish and fund standards the schools must meet with oversight of operations?
- How will you guarantee that public funds do not also become support for private school construction and transportation?
- Will changing the constitution lead to abuses or scandals as other states have experienced when profit-making private education companies divert public funds to themselves or their stock-holders?

Is our State Constitution now inadequate for the task of supporting education?

Consider the minutes of its founders.

The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention show that an unsuccessful motion was made to delete entirely the direct benefit prohibition of article VII, section 1. By rejecting this proposal the convention **made it clear that it wished the constitution to support and protect a strong system of public schools**. Other authorities have also suggested that a constitutional provision barring aid to all private schools serves to enforce the separation of church and state without requiring executive or judicial inquiry into the sectarian affiliation of

particular schools, and furthermore disengages the state from the undesirable task of withholding benefits solely on the basis of religious affiliation.

Delegate John B Coghill, supporter of article VII, Section 1, specifically expressed the thought that the amount of tax dollars available for the support of public schools might be lessened if public funds were used to support private schools.

Please reject HJR 1 and SJR 9. The need for this drastic change does not exist except in the hyperbole of its sponsors. The reasons to make this drastic change lack substance and assurances. Please support public education.

Sincerely,
Donna Matthews
Anchorage and Halibut Cove

Ernest Prax

From: Doug Weimann <kasuun@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 4:44 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Vouchers - Legacy

"Protecting our public schools against privatization and saving them for the future generations of American children is the civil rights issue of our time."

- Diane Ravitch, former U.S. assistant secretary of education under President H.W. Bush and reappointed by President Bill Clinton.

Ernest Prax

From: Dr. K <drkrichbaum@alask.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:10 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Support for HJR1

Dear Representative,

My name is Charles Krichbaum, D.C. and I live in Representative Bob Lynn's district. I have lived in the anchorage area for over 32 years. Please support HRJ1 and allow freedom of choice for parents to send their children to the schools that best supports their needs.

Thanks Chuck

Ernest Prax

From: Drew and Marcie <drewandmarcie@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:33 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: SJR9/HJRI

Dear Representative Keller-

We ask that you support **SJR9/HJRI**. **There are many reasons, but one reason is we believe the constitution has not been interpreted correctly by the courts. If it needs to go up for a vote, we believe the people of Alaska should be involved with the process of helping correct this wrong.**

At this time we do believe we have enough information to know if we support vouchers, even though we do send our daughter to a private school. We also understand that the voucher system is a long way off and will face many battles.

Thank you for your time

Respectfully,

Drew and Marcie Koop

_____ Information from ESET Smart Security, version of virus signature database 9440 (20140218)

The message was checked by ESET Smart Security.

<http://www.eset.com>

Ernest Prax

From: Dvdgamble <dvdgamble@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:39 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: we support SJR1

Importance: Low

and we vote, thank you for listening.

Ernest Prax

From: EDWARD BURNS <bpburns@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:45 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in favor of HJR1

Dear Representative Keller and Judiciary Committee Members:<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

I'd like to offer this testimony in support of HJR1 and ask that you vote in favor of this bill. As the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Juneau, it is my moral obligation to raise with you the grave concern about having language in our Alaska Constitution that is based on bigotry of years past. Allow me to present to you what I wrote in my article in the Juneau Empire on February 2, 2014 (which can be found here: <http://juneauempire.com/opinion/2014-02-02/moving-forward-education>):

The Blaine amendment, which was unfortunately included in the Alaska Constitution, is rooted in 19th century anti-Catholic bigotry and discrimination. Initially proposed in 1875 by Speaker of the House James Blaine as an amendment to the United States Constitution, it was intended, under the rhetoric of “separation of church and state”, to block any public funding of “sectarian” (meaning Catholic) schools, even when this would have been permitted under the First Amendment. Tellingly, Blaine and his supporters had no objection to prayer, Bible reading or religious instruction in the public schools, as long as it was non-denominational and Protestant.

The Blaine amendment and other national and state laws ostensibly intended to separate church and state grew out of a pervasive prejudice that many Americans held regarding Roman Catholicism, which they believed was incompatible with democracy and freedom. Many 19th century native-born Americans were openly suspicious of the loyalty and patriotism of the millions of Catholic immigrants (mostly Irish) entering the country, fearing that their first and most important allegiance was to the Pope, who they considered an authoritarian and anti-democratic foreign ruler.

Although this attempt to amend the national constitution narrowly failed in the Senate, Congress did require that all states admitted to the Union after 1876 must include a version of the Blaine amendment prohibiting the use of public funds to wholly or in part support religious schools. This is how it came to be included, almost 100 years later, in the Alaska Constitution.

Repeal of the Blaine amendment would, for the first time since territorial days, allow public per pupil funds to be used by parents to send their children to the school of their choice, including religious and other private schools. Such funding would still have to satisfy the stringent requirements of the First Amendment and the corresponding provision of the Alaskan Constitution.

As a citizen and as a Catholic leader, I believe that in the 21st century, the Blaine amendment should be removed from our State's Constitution. I welcome legislation that would allow the citizens of this State to repeal its provisions.

Why? Not only because this amendment, motivated by sectarian prejudice, has no place in our State Constitution, but because I believe that parents should have the freedom and the resources necessary to send their children to the school which best meets their needs. They should be able to do so using their child's share of public education funding through programs of parental choice such as tuition tax credits, educational savings accounts, scholarship tax credits or opportunity scholarships.

Growing up as I did in Pittsburgh, I am grateful that my parents were able to choose the schools that I attended as a child and as a teenager. In my early childhood I attended two Catholic schools where I was taught by dedicated and committed religious sisters. For high school I attended Lincoln High School, a public institution. In choosing these schools, religious and public, my mother and father exercised their right and responsibility to choose the school best suited for their children. I am grateful to them for the education I received, an education reflecting the value they placed on academic faith formation, excellence, high moral and ethical standards and religious instruction.

However, in our State and across our Nation there are many families, especially those in poverty, who do not have the financial resources to choose the best school for their children. All of our families in Alaska should have access to the resources needed in order to attend the school of their choice, including traditional public schools, public charter schools, secular and religious private schools and homeschooling.

In addressing parental choice, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has said, "For nearly 150 years, the Church has unequivocally taught that parents have the right and responsibility to serve as the primary educators of their children. To assist them in this sacred duty, the Church has articulated clearly that children have the universal right to an education in faith, and the state has the fundamental obligation to enable such a right. In both written word and lived witness, the Church has advanced parental choice as a fundamental part of its mission to protect the equality of educational opportunity that is the birthright of all children."

Thank you for your time and for your consideration on this important matter. Blessings to you for all you do in service to the people of Alaska.

Respectfully yours,

Bishop Edward J. Burns

Diocese of Juneau, Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: Gayle Trivette <gayletriv@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 3:21 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Thank you for your service to our state. I am opposed to HJR1 for the following reasons:

Public Education is a Cornerstone of Democracy.

*Public schools are governed by locally elected school boards. Individual schools have parent/teacher organizations open to All parents and school staff.

*Children from all backgrounds come together to learn the skills need to thrive in our diverse country and world, including how to work in groups, problem-solve and resolve conflicts with people whose life experience maybe very different from their own.

*Public Schools are financially and academically accountable to the governing bodies that finance them.

*Public Schools are mandated to provide appropriate education for All Children regardless of their needs or abilities.

*The Alaska Constitution mandates that the state of Alaska provide funding for all children, recognizing the responsibility of each adult generation to provide education for every member of future generations.

Private Education offers a FALSE CHOICE.

*Private schools are free to choose their own governing body whether it's an individual, sectarian group, or corporate interest.

*Private schools are free to choose which students they will accept or reject making it very unlikely the students will have the opportunity to work, learn and play with the diversity of people they will engage with as adults and that some parents and children will NOT have access to the school they would choose.

*There is not a mechanism designed to hold private schools financially and academically accountable. Developing one would be costly.

***Under funding public education and then accusing it of under performing is disingenuous.**

*Despite several years of declining real dollars in funding public education, our public schools are striving valiantly and making progress toward the goal of success for every student. With adequate funding that progress would be faster, benefiting our state economically and socially.

I urge you to vote NO on JHR 1, support inflation proof funding for PUBLIC Education, and move on to other important state business.

Thank you for your public service to all Alaskans.

Gayle Trivette
Juneau, AK

Ernest Prax

From: Gene Randall <gene.randall2014@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:19 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep.kathy.munoz@akleg.gov; Sen. Dennis Egan
Subject: No on HJR1

Honorable House Judiciary Members,

If we truly honor our governmental forefathers, we will recognize their wisdom in crafting a state constitution designed to provide protections for the public, meaning all Alaskans. An amendment to subsidize private or religious organizations just flies in the face of the letter and spirit of the Alaska Constitution.

I strongly urge a "NO" vote on HJR1.

Eugene "Gene" Randall
11346 N. Douglas Hwy
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Glenn Clary <gclary@ancbt.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:24 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representatives,

Please VOTE YES on HJR1.

First, thank you for continuing to support the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend. My family and I appreciate receiving these state funds every year. These funds are used at our discretion without state mandates. We are free to spend these state funds on items our family chooses. We can purchase a Bible, tithe any portion to our church or purchase additional religious books or magazines. These are our choices and we appreciate your continued support, maintaining our freedom to make these choices.

The same freedom should be granted to parents concerning their children's education. Some are saying that state funds should not be going to private or private religious schools. They say it is unconstitutional and should remain unconstitutional. They maintain that Alaskans should not be giving the opportunity to change Alaska's constitution. They believe only Legislators are allowed to decide where state funds can be used unconstitutionally. You may ask, "Where is this happening?" Let me name a few. Legislators approve major state funds to be spent on a religious Methodist college, APU – Alaska Pacific University. Legislators also allow college tuition funds to follow graduating Alaskan high school seniors to attend BYU, and many other religious institutions.

Just like these legislative exponents', HJR1 (the School Choice Bill) does not fund religious schools; it funds the education of children. If a parent determines that a religious school will provide the best education, then the parent, not the state, is free to make that choice. Appropriating funds to parents and supporting their freedom to make sure their children get an education compatibly matched to their child. This is the role of government. Please provide all children with school choice and VOTE YES on HJR1.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss additional merits of HJR1

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Glenn Clary

907-952-2251

Ernest Prax

From: Hester Sanders <daveandhester@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:14 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

We would like to encourage you to vote for HJR1.

We support HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy discussion this year and vote on it in November.

While we see things like oil taxes and pot go on the ballot, how could you tell us that we don't have the right to have a discussion about the future of our children?

Don't be afraid of the possibilities. That's why we sent you to Juneau to make sure that Alaskans like us are represented.

Please make the right choice and vote in favor of this ballot.

Dave and Hester Sanders

Ernest Prax

From: Hillis, Molly <molly.hillis@juneauschools.org>
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 4:58 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: School Board; Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz
Subject: HJR 1
Attachments: Letter in regards to HJR 1.PDF

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

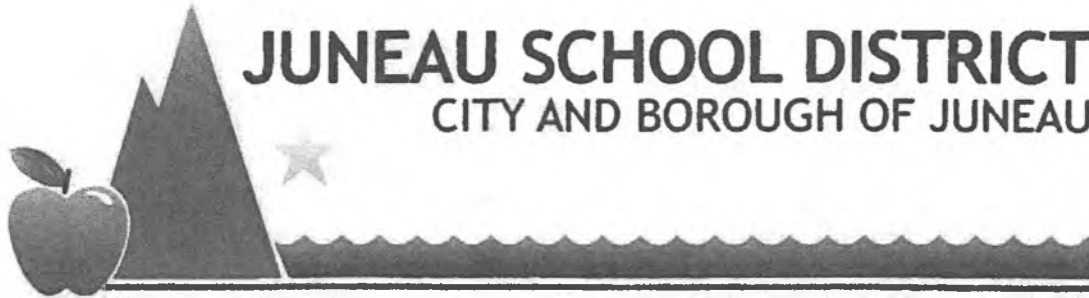
Dear House Judiciary Committee members,

Please see attached letter in regards to HJR 1 from the City and Borough of Juneau Board of Education.

Sincerely,

Molly J. Hillis
Administrative Assistant

Superintendent's Office
Juneau School District
(907) 523-1702
molly.hillis@juneauschools.org



10014 Crazy Horse Drive • Juneau, Alaska 99801-8529 • (907) 523-1700

February 18, 2014

Honorable House Judiciary Committee
House of Representatives
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: Opposition to HJR 1 to be included in Bill Packet

Dear House Judiciary Committee members:

We are writing this letter to express our opposition to House Joint Resolution 1. Upon taking our oath of office, as school board members, we swear that we will support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Alaska. Separation of church and state is clear. Public funds cannot go to religious schools. We do not support the removal from the Constitution of Alaska, the language, "no money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or private school." It would be in direct conflict with the United States Constitution.

In the language added in HJR 1, "however nothing in this section shall prevent payment from public funds for the direct educational benefit of students as provided by law", it assumes that the education offered will be of benefit to the students. This implies that there will be oversight of all educational options. Yet the bill does not address accountability measures to children and their families and the public. In the recent Senate hearing on vouchers, the speaker from Marquette University, a Senior Fellow in Law and Public Policy, cautioned that voucher systems had not brought high quality options to students that was desired, the programs were unregulated without any public disclosure or reporting requirements. This is of great concern and our work is dedicated to high standards for the children in our district. In addition, in our district, and across the state, we do offer choices to families (Montessori, Charter School, Tlingit Culture Language Literacy program) and do have accountability systems in place.

The Legislature is charged with maintaining a public education system. Funding needs to be worked out for our public schools. As a Board we have heard the message from the Legislature that districts need to be accountable and our students making progress before receiving more funding. As a Board, we feel that we are doing this and our data verifies we are making some progress. Our funding has not kept pace with our costs; class sizes are higher, we have fewer nursing services, art lessons, and less special education services to name a few. A stable funding plan needs to be in place for our current neighborhood schools that meets the needs of our students and their families. Operating with less revenue when we are already stretched thin is very concerning.

Sincerely,

Juneau School

Sally Saddler, Sean O'Brien, Andi Story, Phyllis Carlson, Destiny Sargeant, Barbara Thurston, Lisa Worl

Cc: Senator Dennis Egan, Representative Beth Kerttula, and Representative Cathy Munoz

Ernest Prax

From: hommek <kimberlyhomme@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:13 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn
Cc: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Letter and Attachment regarding HJR 1
Attachments: OppositiontoSchoolVoucherlegislation02-19-14.pdf;
2-19-14SelectedPublicSchoolDistrictSponsoredAlternatives.docx

Dear Representatives Keller and Lynn,

I understand that HJR 1 will be heard in the House Judiciary Committee today. I am submitting testimony and an attachment in opposition to HJR 1. Please do not pass this resolution from your committee because of the negative effect of reduced funding for public schools, already at the bare-bones minimum. Regards, Kimberly Homme

Examples of Public Education Program Alternatives

The "Big Five" Alaska School Districts' School Alternatives

Anchorage School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 48,492

Elementary Alternatives

Anchorage Basic Curriculum (ABC):

- Birchwood ABC
- Northern Lights ABC
- Northwood ABC

Montessori:

- Denali Montessori

Open Optional:

- Bowman Elementary
- Chinook Elementary
- Chugach Optional
- Eagle River Elementary
- Polaris K-12
- Susitna Elementary

At-risk teens:

Note: These programs are for students who have fallen behind in credit and are more likely than others to drop out of high school and not attain a high school diploma.

- AVAIL, Ages 16-19
- Benny Benson/SEARCH, 7-12
- SAVE, 11-12

International Baccalaureate:

- Romig Middle School, 7-8
- West High School, 9-12

Online:

- ASD iSchool, 9-12

Open Optional:

- Polaris K-12
- Steller Secondary

School-within-a-school:

- East High School, 9-12
- School through the Arts
- West High School, 9-12

Continued

Page Two of Four

Anchorage Public Charter School/Choice Programs, grade group served (continued):

Seminar:

- Service High School, 9-12

Science focus:

- Central Middle School of Science, 7-8

World Discovery Seminar:

- Chugiak High School, 9-12

Charter schools:

Cultural & language charters:

- Alaska Native Cultural Charter School
- Rilke Schule Charter School

Homeschool charters:

Note: these charter schools provide resources and support to families interested in home schooling their children:

- Home-school
- Family Partnership Charter School
- Frontier Charter School

Open optional charter:

- Aquarian Charter School

Structured charter:

- Eagle Academy Charter School

Technology-focused charter:

- Highland Tech Charter School

Waldorf-inspired charter:

- Winterberry Charter School

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student population: 14,273

Charter Schools:

Chinook Charter, K-8

Effie Kokrine Early College Charter, 7-12

Watershed Charter, K-8

Star of the North Secondary Charter School: Career Education Center (grades 11-12) & North Pole Campus (grades 7-12)

Continued

Page Three of Four

Other Fairbanks Schools of Choice:

Barnette Magnet, K-8

Fairbanks B.E.S.T., K-12 (correspondence: home school or online classes)

Hutchison High School 9-12

At-risk/Other Alternative Schools or Programs:

SMART/DW PASS (district's program for suspended/expelled students)

BRIDGE (special education - formerly known as the HIRE Program, helps students learn skills to help them transition from school to adult living.

OPTIONS (program located at Hutchison - pregnant/parenting students)

Juneau School District charter school and other schools of choice

Student Population: 4,957

Public Charter School/Choice Program(s), grade group served:

School Programs:

Tlingit Culture, Language and Literacy, K-5

Montessori Borealis 1-8

Charter School:

Juneau Community Charter School, K-8

Online School Program:

HomeBRIDGE, K-12

At-risk Teens:

Yaakoosge Daakahidi Alternative High School, 9-12

C.A.R.E.S., a credit recovery program, 9-12

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 8,892

Charter Schools

Aurora Borealis, K-8

Fireweed Academy, K-6

Soldotna Montessori, K-6

Kaleidoscope School of Arts and Sciences, K-6

Continued

Page Four of Four

Other Kenai schools of choice:

River City Academy, 7-12

Connections, K-12 (home school program)

Distance education program, 9-12 online (also, as needed, video-conferenced classes from Kenai Central HS to smaller schools)

Homer Flex, 9-12

Kenai Alternative High, 9-12 & PK

Mat-Su Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 17,247

Public Charter School/Choice Program(s), grade group served

Charter Schools

Academy Charter, K-8

American Charter Academy, K-12

Birchtree Charter, K-8

Fronteras Spanish Immersion, K-8

Midnight Sun Charter, K-8

Twindly Bridge Charter, K-12

Schools with a Specific Mission

Beryozova (Russian-speaking school), K-12

Mat-Su Central School (homeschool), K-12

Mat-Su Day School (students experiencing behavioral issues), 6-12

Mat-Su Career & Technical High School, 9-12

Burchell High School (opportunity for credit recovery), 9-12

Valley Pathways (opportunity for credit recovery), 9-12

District Choice Programs/Alternatives

Alaska Middle College School, 11-12

Palmer High School's International Baccalaureate (IB) program, 11-12

Note: urban Alaskan school districts also have policies that allow students to attend schools outside of their attendance area if there is space at the receiving school and the parents provide transportation.

February 19, 2014

Representatives Wes Keller and Representative Bob Lynn, Chairs
House Judiciary Committee, Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Keller and Representative Lynn:

I hope the session is going well for you in Juneau. I am writing to express opposition to House Joint Resolution 1 under consideration by the House Judiciary Committee. As you know, HJR 1 seeks to change the constitution to allow public funds be used for private, for-profit religious and secular schools. I think that the most important responsibility of the members of the Alaska State Legislature is to accept responsibility for providing for an educated and strong Alaskan community, and provide adequate funding to support that ideal by sufficiently managing our plentiful resources. The voucher legislation is in direct conflict with that goal. It will deplete limited resources and provide more resources to students whose families have demonstrated that they are be able to afford the religious alternatives in which they have enrolled their children.

Providing an adequate education within the public education system for children of our Great State is of utmost importance. When you travel throughout the regions of our state, you will find schools that have failed to provide an adequate, minimal level of education for a lot of complicated reasons. As policy makers, there needs to be great attention to what must be done to support those schools in crisis and help their students make adequate academic growth. Instead of providing more resources to the families that have demonstrated they can afford options, we need to find ways of better supporting those school districts with the lowest student achievement performance. The effect of HJR 1 is to divert potentially over \$100 million for a purpose that does not benefit the ideal goal of government providing basic needs.

Another important point is that when families want to exercise their right to choose, they have many choices. Families can choose to have options within our public education system or they can choose private education. Private education is often subsidized by the primarily religious organizations which provide the private education system. Private education, more often than not, experiences low taxes as non-profit organizations or are tax-free. Private education choices can be provided at a low cost to the consumers. When I was growing up, my parents enrolled my two sisters and me in a religious school in Anchorage. There was only one wage earner in the family. There was a lot of financial support opportunities for those who wanted the assistance.

The fact of the matter is that within public education, there are choices. It is not a one size fits all type of education program. School districts have encouraged options within public education by providing choices, outside of the typical charter school model.

I've worked as a professional educator for over 20 years in three school districts, which include the Juneau School District, the Anchorage School District, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. I own property in each of those school district boundaries and continue to have connection to those communities. During my years of public service, I've witnessed a number of education options become more available to parents. Parents have wanted options and districts have provided many options, as long as they could be options provided to the all. Please find the enclosure an overview of options available within the largest five school districts in the state. The information is from the school districts' webpages.

Best wishes,

Kimberly Homme

Attachment: The Big Five Alaska School Districts' School Alternatives

Ernest Prax

From: jack.newell@acsalaska.net
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 12:56 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Cc: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Constitutional Amendment

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To the
Honorable Wes Keller,

This is an email to be used as testimony in the hearing of HJR1. There are many proposals and opportunities that are presented every year. I would like to present my support for the opportunity we have as Alaskans to improve the state of educating. Many parents are questioning why their privilege as parents and providers are not allowed choice in the development of their children. Some may think that an upgrade to a structure is enhancing education, but I think there is a deeper possibility to improve the opportunities for a family and their children, thus to the benefit of our greatland, the State of Alaska.

The thought of allowing parents to select a school, public or private, for their children should be forefront on the minds of those who govern this state. I believe the merits to promote a choice in parenting, mainly how our young minds our formed is a parent's choice, not a state provided only, thus no choice. This opportunity will benefit when if we are bold and sincere towards providing a quality non-biased education for our young minds and future leaders.

I ask for you to allow a vote of people on this to provide a father and a mother a choice in the future of our children. Please support a citizen vote on SJR9 and HJR1. The founders of our state recognized that future generations needed the flexibility to respond to possibilities in a way that would benefit the minds of many. SJR9/ HJR1 would restore it. Please let the people vote on this amendment.

The opportunities for the future are best when we allow for our principles that were strong when were a territory to continue as a state. We should be a leader for our children benefit to encourage them - for a mind is a great strength not to be to wasted by deceit of a few.

Wishing you the best in health and prosperity in this great time in our lives,

Respectfully
submitted,

Jack R
Newell

Ernest Prax

From: James Connelly <jcon53@kpunet.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 6:32 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Representative Keller,

This email is my testimony in support of HJR1. It's time to stop discrimination against the children of Alaska because of their freedom of choice regarding religion and the freedom of speech. In their pursuit of an education which guarantees those constitutional freedoms, they are denied the financial assistance that is given to public school children. It is time to right this wrong, and I ask for your support of HJR1 so all of Alaska's children have an education which is consistent with their constitutional freedoms and those benefits which should be afforded to all.

James R Connelly
PO Box 5681
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Ernest Prax

From: James K. Johnson <freetochoosealaska@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:41 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 Testimony

Greetings Rep. Keller:

You may use my testimony at the hearings for HJR1:

I support HJR1 because it will remove the Blaine admendment from our State Constitution. Alaskans need the opportunity

to vote on whether public funds can be used to benefit students that attend private or religious schools. The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention reveal that the delegates voted two to one to uphold this type of funding. Real competition amongst Alaska schools will benefit Alaskan families, our state, and ultimately our nation. The NEA opposes real school choice because competition will mean they will have to compete for the educational dollars; they believe their personal lives are much more secure when they enjoy a virtual monopoly on K-12 education in America. Unfortunately, our educational and behavioral standards in our nation have taken a steep decline because of the lack of accountability in our public schools.

Please support HJR1 so many Alaskans can have a real choice in their children's education.

James K. Johnson, Owner
Alaska's Kenai Jim's Lodge
& Guide Service
P.O. Box 3675
Soldotna, Alaska 99669
www.FishAlaskaNow.com

Ernest Prax

From: Jason Boerger <jboerger@cordovasd.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:39 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Vote Yes on HJR 1

I support HJR 1 and urge you to vote Yes!

Sincerely,

Jason Boerger

Ernest Prax

From: Jeff and Gretta Trotter <trotter@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 8:01 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: House Resolution 1

Dear Representative Keller,

No public dollars should be spent on private or religious schools. There are already numerous choices for students to enroll in classes in our public schools. Please focus on ways to support our kids in the public schools.

I am against House Resolution 1.

Sincerely,

Jeff Trotter

971 S Joanne Drive

Palmer, AK 99645

Ernest Prax

From: Jen Foggie <JenF@mooreheating.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:18 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Charisse Millett
Subject: HRJ1

Hello. My name is Jen Foggie. I'm an Alaskan who cares about our children.

HJR1 is a wonderful opportunity to further the discussion about what's best for our kids. I support HJR1 going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion this year and vote on it in November.

There is no purpose in retaining this Blaine language in our constitution. An Alaska Supreme Court decision is squashing the will of the people, contrary to federal Supreme Court decisions. We should be given the opportunity to re-align our state with the USA on this issue.

Please vote yes on HJR1...please let us vote. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jen Foggie

Ernest Prax

From: jennifer dunn hoeger <jennydunn@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 7:46 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt
Subject: Opposition HJR1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in opposition to HJR1. I oppose a constitutional amendment that would allow public funds to go to private and religious schools. The Lower 48 has already attempted this and data shows that vouchers have put a drain on public resources while doing no better than public schools.

Respectfully,
Jenny Hoeger
Palmer

Ernest Prax

From: Jess T Ellis <jesstellis@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: School choice editorial

Rep. Keller,

Thank you for your efforts in support of school choice legislation. I think it is the most important issue of our day. The potential for improving education is limitless. Attached is a copy of an editorial I authored on the subject:

SCHOOL CHOICE WOULD BENEFIT EDUCATION IN THE VILLAGES AS WELL AS CITIES

Most parents want what's best for their child. They want them to be successful in life and to receive the education needed to qualify for a well-paying job or occupation.

Education--the gaining or transfer of knowledge--is really one of the basic functions of life. It's why we have a brain with a nervous system feeding it information from our five senses. Much of human activity in this world is intended to affect how well education is accomplished. Attentive parents spend much of their time teaching and nurturing their children.

Education is big business. We spend vast amounts of money on schools where educators add to the effort. Education is a major part of the state budget. Education doesn't start with pre-school, nor end with a college degree, or even a PhD.

Then there is "the media".

Ours is called the "Information Age". People with a good idea of how to convey information better have founded new schools, started news networks, created the internet or improvements to it, and invented computers, "Smart phones," fax machines, and other gadgets. With these aids to communication information is literally flying everywhere at the speed of light.

When it comes to formal education, all this has rendered the education model of one teacher at a chalk board in front of a class of fifteen to forty students expounding on some chapter in a text book as obsolete as a Princess phone.

Our standings in national test scores witness to the need for improvements in Alaskan education. For example our fourth grade reading scores for low income students were dead last; reading scores for fourth grade middle/upper income students were 49th out of 51.

Parental interest in improved ways of schooling has given rise to home schooling, charter schools, and a demand for other educational options.

In many cases the private sector is stepping up to the plate and providing solutions. In Alaska, there are more than 2200 students paying tuition to attend the top 5 (by attendance) private K-12 schools.

The Constitution of the State of Alaska needs to be amended to allow the Legislature to provide more families the option of choosing the schools their children attend. A sentence in Article VII of the state constitution, sometimes referred to as the Blaine amendment, has been interpreted by the Court as prohibiting the Legislature from directly or indirectly funding parental choices of alternative schools.

Many Alaskans are content with the offerings of their neighborhood public school. For those who are not satisfied, the Blaine Amendment needs to go. In education, one size doesn't fit all. There are too many different needs for one giant bureaucracy to effectively meet.

Some have expressed skepticism that "school choice" could work in the bush. Such a view suggests a lack of vision or a lack of knowledge of the many innovations in distant learning currently available to anyone, especially those with a computer and access to the internet. These offerings from the private sector are made to order for the bush, particularly those villages with too few students to qualify for a school.

Educational achievement in Alaska could take a giant leap forward were parents free to use their child's government provided educational allotment on the school of their choice, whether it be a public or private sector developed program.

Passage of SJR 9 and HJR1 which are ready to be voted upon by the Legislature, are required to put the question on the 2014 ballot so Alaskan voters could decide this issue. If you haven't expressed your views on this issue to your state senator and representative, now is the time to do so.

Submitted by:

Jess T Ellis, DDS, MS
11741 Barr Road
Anchorage, AK 99516
Cell: (907)947-0298

Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Jim Cooney <jcooney@btcinc.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:23 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Good morning. I would like to voice my opinion on the upcoming HJR1 vote. To be able to assist with financial assistance for school choice adds an opportunity for parents who would not be able to do so.

I ask that you consider YES on this vote.

James and Pamela Cooney

Ernest Prax

From: Joann Mitchell <joann.mitchellak@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:07 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Sen. Hollis French
Subject: HJR1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to ask you to NOT support HJR-1--the "school voucher" bill. I simply do not understand how diverting dollars from public schools to private schools will help improve the quality of education in our state. What exactly are the problems that are trying to be solved and how will private schools solve them? How does a voucher system help improve a student's chance for success in Little Diomedea or other remote locations?

I grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Milwaukee was one of the first school districts to implement a voucher system. But as I understand it, parents could only use the vouchers if their neighborhood school was considered a "failing school". And, in Milwaukee there is a large number of private schools already established and ready to accept the kids (heck, in my suburb there literally was a Catholic grade school within 2 blocks of every public elementary school). While in principle I am vehemently opposed to vouchers, at least in Milwaukee there was some reasoning behind the program. I have yet to hear any logical reasoning to go to vouchers in Alaska.

My children went to a private preschool and I was on the board of directors there. In addition to its preschool program, they also has a struggling elementary school. At the time I was on the board, there were about 20 kids in grades k-3 and 6 in grades 4-6 (3 of the 6 were brothers). The reason the elementary program struggled is not because it was too expensive for the families that attended the school but rather because there are so many outstanding options in the public school system! The key is to find ways to expand those great options within the public schools and not send the money to private schools.

And for those that argue that parents who send their children to private schools should be "reimbursed" because the public system does not have to educate their child, well, we don't reimburse residents without children because the belief is everyone needs to contribute to public education because everyone benefits from a well-educated society. We don't reimburse citizens that never have a fire at their home, never have a need to call the police, etc. Let's not make education an exception to this!

Please vote NO on this. Let's focus on improving our public education system and that is not going to happen if public funds are diverted to private schools.

Joann Mitchell
2521 St. Elias Drive
Anchorage, AK 99517
(907) 248-9565
joann.mitchellak@gmail.com

Ernest Prax

From: joel jackson <jobee56@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:35 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1 and urge you to vote no

Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: John & Evie <jamstreit2007@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 5:21 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please, use my email as testimony in the hearing of HJR1

Dear Rep. Keller,

I am in favor of passing SJR9/HJR1 so that we the people can vote--to uphold what I believe was the original intent of our constitution. Please pass SJR9/HJR1 so that the people can vote to uphold the original intent of our constitution. There are many exciting possibilities for innovation in education. The founders of our state recognized that future generations needed the flexibility to respond to these possibilities in a way that would benefit all students. Our Alaska Supreme Court has taken away this flexibility. SJR9/HJR1 would restore it. Please let the people vote on this amendment.

Sincerely,
Eva Streit
Anchorage, AK

Ernest Prax

From: John and Kathleen Tappel <jktappel@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 12:53 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Keller,

As a retired educator of children for 19 years and a concerned parent and grandparent I urge you to support HJR 1, to allow for more choices, more freedoms to Alaska's parents and guardians of children. I support school choice going on the ballot so that Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion about what's best for our kids this year and vote on it in November.

Competition naturally makes for better products and services. The same has proven true in education.

I urge you to support HJR 1! The Polls show that Alaskans do support it and want the chance to vote on it in November.

Thank you,

Kathleen R Tappel

Anchorage

District 25

Ernest Prax

From: john Fleming <akflemings@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 6:51 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I have been in Anchorage since 1963 and even taught in Anchorage public schools. I support HJR 1 because I believe that parents should determine where their children should be educated. I support the proposed amendment to the state constitution which would make this freedom of education possible. I urge to pass this resolution out of your Judiciary Committee. John & Diane Fleming, 4701 Cambridge way, Anchorage, AK 99503 907-230-7783

Ernest Prax

From: Jomarie Thomson <jomarie@akalt.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 1:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

I just want to take a moment of your time to express my opposition to HJR1. Our state constitution is a model for the nation and shouldn't be tinkered with casually.

This issue is important to many families but not all have the experiences to comment as I do.

I've attended both public and parochial schools. My parents sacrificed to send us to the private schools and that is as it should be. The state should not be in the business of subsidizing private business, even the education business. While my parish's pastor wouldn't agree. I don't want state dollars going to a Catholic school any more than I want it going to a madrasa.

As a parent I have one son who needed to spend 3 years in a private school because of his learning disabilities. The cost was nearly as much as 3 years of college would have been. Instead of subsidizing this cost through vouchers, Alaska should be fully funding programs so that all students can have access to the specialized education that is needed.

Finally, if you look at communities where vouchers have been instituted you'll see that the results have not been successful. In Milwaukee the private schools have sucked resources from the public schools without producing noticeable results. Louisiana has even worse results. We need well educated graduates who can compete world-wide. Vouchers to private schools are a terrible way to achieve that goal.

--

JoMarie Thomson

CrucibleDesigns.com
JoMaries.com
AkAlt.net

907-349-3984

Ernest Prax

From: Joseph Butcher <jabutcher@alaska.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please let us vote on HJR1. from the Butcher's

My name is Joseph Allan Butcher, and I would like to be involved as much as I am able in following and supporting THE SCHOOL CHOICE BILL (HJR1). It is my understanding that this comes before THE HOUSE JUDICIAL MEMBERS on the 19th of Feb. I may have called in the past but it is very important to me that you know just how important this matter is to the Butcher's. and even though you may not be the representative of my area on the west side of town, you will be representing the will of our choice. Please vote yes on this HJR1. Simply if you say yes you allow us to vote. Please let us vote. As a father of five and home schooling in partnership with the ASD, it is becoming more and more evident that we do need choices, more choices to make the difference for our kids. Thank you.

Ernest Prax

From: Joseph Kurber <joe@chenahills.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 2:16 PM
Subject: Support SJR 9 and HJR 1

I'm an Alaskan who cares about my child's education and I support SJR 9 and HJR 1. It is critically important that our children have the best education possible, and these bills would help do that. Alaskans deserve a chance to vote on these issues.

Please vote to move this bill forward.

Joseph Kurber
Chief Executive Officer
Chena Hills LLC
(907) 978-9486

Ernest Prax

From: Judith.mcquerry@yahoo.com
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 5:05 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

Please do not support this bill! the last thing our education system needs is the loss of funding that could happen with the passage of this bill. We NEED to support education for all. the parents who really want religious education for their children will find a way to pay for it and NOTHING is stopping benefactors from contributing extra money to schools which emphasize whatever they especially value.

Passage of this bill would support Yeshivas and Madrasas, as well as Protestant and Catholic religious schools.

Judith McQuerry

Sent from my iPad

Ernest Prax

From: Judy Henley-berg <henleyse1@kpunet.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:49 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: re: the Blaine Amendment

Sir, as a product of Catholic school here in Ketchikan, I strongly urge you to consider changing the constitution that would allow funds to be distributed to school of the familie's choice. We all know that we need a little or sometimes a lot of God in our lives in this scary world we are living in now. Not all children fit in the public school systems and the parents that decided that their school district is not working for their child, should be able to choose another method of schooling, without it financially draining their funds. I do think if it was changed, we would have a much better product in education as it would, number #1, make the schools more competitive in getting students to go to their school and number #2, teachers would be able to teach in the schools that work better with their methods of teaching. I hope you will seriously consider changing this law. Thanks you Judy Berg 1-907-247-4369.

Ernest Prax

From: Julie Houghton <jules1@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

19 February 2014

Dear Representative Wes Keller,

I strongly OPPOSE HJR 1 and urge you to vote NO. I have a daughter at Barnette Magnet School, at which I am an active volunteer and a son at Lathrop High School. I see the impact of limited resources every day. How? Parent volunteers tutoring students in math and reading in the halls among other basic jobs. At Barnette Magnet the students are enthusiastic about learning through the explorations with the exceptional instruction under the Magnet model. Barnette Magnet alone stands to loose 2 FTEs. To Barnette Magnet this means 2 full time or 4 part-time teachers which would eliminate at least 8 explorations. This would pose a huge problem to student leaning. Good education can ONLY be achieved with reasonable student to teacher ratios. As legislators, please ask yourselves if you could effectively instruct a classroom of 26 -28 energetic eight year old's or hormonal teenagers. I couldn't do it. Could you?

Our children also deserve individual attention when needed, they need clubs that encourage outdoor activities that promote good health, and to discover just how their education will guide them to reach their full potential in life. I urge you to increase the state's investment in my daughter and son's school.

It is not okay to divert funds from public to private schools. Private schools by definition are funded by the attendees and are an alternative to public schools. If state funds are used to subsidize private schools what incentives are their to stay in the pubic schools system. Taking away from public schools weakens the resource available to the majority of children in the system in the first place. Their is no room for cuts in funding for public education. Quality education will keep our state on the cutting edge of industry advancement, will keep our graduates in state, will feed our University System, and will lead to job creation and a healthy state economy.

To close, do NOT adopt a constitutional amendment that paves the way for vouchers and diversion of precious state dollars away from our neighborhood schools. Please take the time to develop a better solution. Our children are worth every penny.

Respectfully,

Julie Houghton
907-460-0480
919 Third Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Ernest Prax

From: Karen M <miernyk@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 9:23 PM
To: Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Dennis Egan; Sen. Berta Gardner; Sen. Pete Kelly; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. John Coghill; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Lesil McGuire; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Mike Dunleavy; Sen. Anna Fairclough; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Kevin Meyer; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Fred Dyson; Sen. Hollis French; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Peter Micciche; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Doug Isaacson; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Mark Neuman; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Steve Thompson; Rep. Mike Chenault; Rep. Eric Feige; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Pete Higgins; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Kurt Olson; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Mia Costello; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Bill Stoltze; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Mike Hawker; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Benjamin Nageak; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Geran Tarr; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Subject: allowing public funds be used for private schools

Dear Alaska Legislators:

I would ask that you vote not to allow public money to be used for private schools. I know many of you would argue that this increases school choice for families. However, I would argue just the opposite. Families with single parents often can not commute to a school to pick up and drop off children. They don't have the private school choice. Families without reliable transportation can not commute daily to pick up and drop off children. They don't have the private school choice. Adults with jobs that do not have flexible hours often can not pick up and drop off children. They don't have the private school choice. Families that live in Tooksook Bay, Alakanuk, Point Hope, or other rural communities don't even have private school options so they most certainly don't have private school choice.

I would argue instead that allowing public money to be used for private schools does nothing more than give to middle and high income families at the expense of lower income families. I say at the expense of lower income families because I can not see any way that this measure does not take away from neighborhood schools that are used by most families in Alaska and likely ALL lower income families. Those are the families we should concentrate on helping.

I would ask that instead of allowing public money be used for private schools we take that money and use it instead to beef up neighborhood schools, especially those in lower income areas. I'm not an educator, so I'm not going to be so bold as to suggest exactly what needs to be done to accomplish this. But I can say with a lot of certainty that funding private schools is definitely not the answer!

Thank you for your time. I assure you that if this goes to a public vote, mine will be an emphatic NO.

Karen

Ernest Prax

From: Karla Hart <alaskabirder@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:15 PM
To: Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Wes Keller
Cc: Rep. Cathy Munoz; Sen. Dennis Egan
Subject: Oppose SJR 1

Public funding for public schools, private funding for private schools. Period.

I oppose SJR 1 and urge you to do the same. Certainly before any vote a real analysis of the fiscal impact to public schools should be available for all to study.

Karla Hart
Juneau

Ernest Prax

From: Kathleen Tonn <tonn.kathleen@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2014 4:32 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please vote yes on HJR1 Wes. Thank You, Kathleen Tonn

Ernest Prax

From: Kathy <krecken@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:49 PM
To: Representative.Bob.Lynn@akleg.gov; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep. Mike Chenault; Senator.Kathy.Giessel@akleg.gov
Subject: Vote No on HJR1

I strongly urge a No vote on HJR1. Unless private schools are required to accept all applicants (like public schools), provide special education English Language Learner services, and private school students are required to take Alaska State Tests (with private schools being ranked just as public schools), they should not be allowed to receive public education funds.

In addition, HJR1 runs contrary to both the U.S. and State of Alaska Constitutions.

Kathryn L. Recken
19567 Rusty's Way
Cooper Landing, AK

Sent from my iPad

Ernest Prax

From: Kathy Fitzgerald <k2@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 2:41 PM
To: Kathy Fitzgerald
Subject: Public funding of private or religious schools

Dear Representatives,
I am opposed to public funding of private or religious schools.
Sincerely,
Kathy Fitzgerald

Ernest Prax

From: kimbrough mauney <kimbroughred@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 12:02 AM
To: Rep. Bob Lynn
Subject: money for education

Thank you all for your hard work in Juneau! I appreciate your thoughtful decision making when it comes to spending money on education. I am currently getting my State Teaching Certification in the MatSu Borough District, and I have hopes to someday have a hand in creating more charter school options, especially for high schoolers. I am also a spiritual person who thinks it is great for people to practice religion of whatever choosing. Thanks to Rep. Feige's newsletter, I learned that BSA has gone up significantly over the past few years. This is a good thing; I prefer to see that number rise than what we spend on military operations. I am NOT ok with spending state money on education that is sponsored by or linked to religious organizations. Please continue to keep State and Religion separate! As for private schools, they too should fund themselves.

The public system in our state works, thanks in part because it includes Charter schools and 'school within a school'. These alternative, yet still public/state funded, learning environments are necessary part of the public system, meeting the needs of various groups, and I'm very thankful that our state supports them.

Please continue to support public schools, including charters, with state funding. Again, religious and private schools know what they got into when they started- grant writing galore :) !

~Kimbrough Mauney, Anchorage and Wasilla, AK

Ernest Prax

From: Kristie May <arctic_kristie@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2014 3:35 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Sen. Peter Micciche
Subject: HJR 1

I support HJR 1 as a licensed teacher and NEA member. I do believe that if a non-public school receives the State's funds for education they should be required to have certified teachers. I know first hand that most private schools do not have certified teachers on staff. They use lay teachers.

I feel large school districts abuse their powers. For example, I chose to pursue a doctoral degree at UAF and did not want to work full-time. When a part-time position came available, after the school year started, I was issued a "temporary" contract. This means that I am forbidden to pay into my existing TERS. I do not earn any credit towards years of service. Social Security is taken out of my paycheck even though as a certified Alaskan Teacher I am not allowed to draw Social Security when I retired due to an agreement the State of Alaska enter into with the Federal Government. This is abuse of power. They want all my credentials, but do not want to allow me to continue to pay into TERS because my contract is less than a full school year! Worse is the State law allows this action towards teachers. I may as well work for the private sector where Teachers are treated with dignity. Please correct this abuse of power!

Every child should have their educational tax dollars follow them to a school that treats certified teachers as valuable staff and allow them to pay into TERS.

Thank you,

Kristie May Parsons, M.Ed. Special Education
907-982-3330

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Ernest Prax

From: Kristina Johannes <AMDG@alaska.net>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 2:55 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony on HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I support HJR1 and urge your committee to pass it so that the public can vote on this most important issue.

The legislature should have the freedom and flexibility over the issue of public funding of education that was envisioned when our constitution was written and ratified.

I also believe that over the years, Blaine amendments in state constitutions have given cover to anti-religious prejudice and have obscured the true meaning of the establishment clause in the United States Constitution. It is obvious from reading the minutes of the Alaska constitutional convention that our delegates did not intend to further any such prejudice but unfortunately the Alaska Supreme Court has interpreted it otherwise.

I believe this amendment will remedy that problem.

P

X

Kristina Johannes

Anchorage

Ernest Prax

From: Laura Bonner <ljbonner@acsalaska.net>
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2014 12:10 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Representative.Charisse.Millet@akleg.gov; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: ljbonner@acsalaska.net
Subject: Written testimony for HJR 1

My name is Laura Bonner. I live in Representative Lynn's district. I wanted to testify at the public hearing but was unable to attend. I represent myself and my daughter who is in 10th grade student in Anchorage School District.

I oppose passing the resolution to amend the State Constitution. The students who need public education the most cannot vote. Parents of many of those students won't vote either due to substance abuse issues, mental or physical health issues, criminal histories, or voter apathy. Who is protecting those students' rights to an education? Their only chance is a quality public education. If the state funds vouchers/scholarships to private schools, won't public education funding be reduced? If the so, the state runs the risk in paying more later through the courts, public safety, providing more correctional facilities, and dealing with substance abuse issues to name a few.

Senator Bishop and Representative Drummond are correct regarding HJR 1 and SJR 9 that the details of consequences of its passage by voters and its effect on public education must be investigated. Details of a voucher/scholarship that would include but not limited to oversight of educational standards, teacher qualifications, enrollment acceptance policies, parental participant requirements, transportation, and funding. Public education paid for with public money allows public input. Would that apply to private institutions that accept public-paid vouchers or scholarships as well?

At the very least, the Judicial Committee needs to investigate how this amendment will impact our state's duty to provide for education for all students, especially those who need it the most. After all, they too should be protected by the Alaska Constitution. You have at your disposal the tools to properly investigate the expected consequences of amending the constitution. You should use them so that the public can be informed of how changing the constitution would impact all education in Alaska. Failure to do so would be a disservice to the citizens of our state.

I urge you to reject this resolution.

Laura Bonner
3101 E 112th Ave
Anchorage, Alaska 99516
ljbonner@acsalaska.net

Ernest Prax

From: LeighSteele-Ross <lsteele1234@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 6:56 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Please Vote yes on HJR1

In RE: School Choice Bill HJR1

My name is Leigh Johnson-Steele and I'm a grandparent, who cares about my grandchildren as well as all Alaskan Children.

Representative Bob Lynn is my Representative.

I support HJR1. Although HJR1 doesn't have any programs attached, it could open the door to benefiting many children so I urge you to put this on the ballot for Alaska's voters.

I believe it is part of our American and Alaskan tradition to have choices and to have a discussion. All of Alaska's children are affected by this, so all Alaskans should have the opportunity to vote on it.

Please vote yes on this bill.

Thank you.

Leigh Johnson-Steele
6641 Crooked Tree Dr
Anchorage AK 99507

Ernest Prax

From: Lisa Rickey <salmonberry@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 12:32 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1; SJR 9

Dear Representative Keller

I am writing to urge you to NOT support any constitutional amendment that would allow public funds to benefit religious or other private educational institutions.

I am appalled that HJR 1 and SJR 9 are threatening our constitution and attempting to not only break the boundary of the separation of church and state, but to allow the state, which is facing huge deficits in educational funding for public schools, to fund private and religious schools.

Please vote against these constitutional amendments.

Thank you,

Lisa Rickey

907.321.1610

60-year resident of Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: Lisa Worl <lmworljnu@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:29 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz
Subject: HJR1 - Please vote NO

The primary reason I'm in opposition to HJR1 is it opens the door to allow vouchers and the diversion of valuable state dollars away from public schools. Vouchers cost tax payers money, allow private schools to receive public funds without accountability, and diverts funds from schools that serve all children.

In a time when school districts across the state have been making painful cuts due to flat funding, it is counter-productive for our state to consider spending additional dollars rather than provide more for what we know works in education -- reduce class size, improve the effectiveness of teachers through professional development and provide programs for the struggling students. School districts statewide have been and continue to work diligently. In Juneau, we've made great strides in improving our student's learning and on-time graduation rates from 70 to 79% last year. What we need now is a commitment from our legislature to support our schools that serve all children not constitutional changes that would take away resources from our schools.

Public dollars belong in public schools where there is accountability. Our school board members are elected by our community, our teachers are required to be certified and meet high teaching standards, our school curriculum must meet core standards, and our budgets and meetings are public and open for all to provide input and scrutiny. Our public schools serve all students. In the larger school districts, where most of the private schools are located, they already offer alternative programs such as Montessori, charter, and CHOICE and CARES which offer extra support to students who need more help to graduate.

Research has shown that vouchers cost tax payers money. Alaska is not the first state to consider allowing public dollars to go to private schools. States that have vouchers programs have seen increased costs. They not only cost more but, again, they take public dollars away from public schools.

I oppose HJR1 and I ask that you please vote "No". Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lillian M. Worl
9159 Wolfram Way
Juneau, AK 99801

Ernest Prax

From: llolmb <lindablefgen@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Greetings,

I am very concerned about and opposed to HJR1 funding private and religious schools.

I understand the desire to move this forward without a fiscal note, however, the implications are irresponsible to the needs of public education and the separation of church and state.

Per a Juneau Empire news article:

"Meyer said he did not see moving forward this session with companion legislation that would spell out how the change could be implemented. The proposed constitutional change would be the first step, he said."

We do not buy homes without a long term financial plan. Why would we even consider passing this resolution without knowing the financial impact on our public school system?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Linda M. Blefgen

Ernest Prax

From: LORIE STOORZA <loriestoorza@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:27 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please vote yes. This is an issue that the people of Alaska need to vote since it affects our children.

Thank you

Lories Stoorza
Parent and long time Ak resident

Ernest Prax

From: lynnette dihle <dihles@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: No on SJR9/HJR1

Dear Representatives,

I have been an Alaskan since 1975. Our children have been educated in Alaska, and my grandchildren are now in Alaskan schools. My husband and I and many of our family members are regular church attenders.

Although I understand the difficulties for parents who prefer private schools whether or not it be for religious reasons, **I strongly stand that vouchers are not the choice. As representatives of our remarkable and beloved state, I want you to invest in educational strategies that work and I want you to maintain our esteemed state constitution that separates church and state.**

As I have looked into this issue I have several concerns including but not limited to:

Funding is diminished for public schools and learning is impacted for the majority of students especially those who are already at a disadvantage.

There are already excellent options in the public schools a family can make to meet the educational needs of their children.

Public schools are the cornerstone of American democracy. Parents have an opportunity to voice/vote in parent groups, parent site councils, vote for school board members. Graduation rates in Alaska are improving.

Private schools can choose which students they accept and dismiss. There is NO state or federal oversight of educational standards and safeguards.

Statistics in the lower 48 indicate performance has not improved, nor graduation rates.

There are other ways that private schools can exist as a viable option that do not involve changing the state constitution.

Thank you for your work.

Sincerely,

Nils and Lynnette Dihle

Ernest Prax

From: Margo Waring <margowaring@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 8:44 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR 1

Member of the House Judiciary Committee,

Please do not pass HJR 1 from committee. Our constitution is right to separate church (mosque, temple, synagogue) from state . Public funds should be spent for public education.

Margo Waring

Ernest Prax

From: Mark Runkle <mrunkle@ancbt.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:49 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

As a parent of a school age child, please give us the opportunity to vote on the proposed changes regarding school choice. Our children deserve the very best educational opportunities that we can give them. It sounds like we the people of AK will have the chance to vote on legalizing marijuana usage. Shouldn't our children's education get at least the equal time on the ballot?
Thanks for your time and consideration.

Mark Runkle
Assistant Pastor/Executive Assistant
Anchorage Baptist Temple
6401 East Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99504
(907)333-6535
mrunkle@ancbt.org

Ernest Prax

From: Marvin Yoder <marviny59@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 1:18 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: HJR

My name is Marvin Yoder.

I have been hearing that if the citizens have a choice in education it will devastate the public education system.

We have heard that before. I was in Galena when the Distance Learning program was instituted. There were complaints then this would be disaster to public schools.

15 years later this program has proved to be a good thing for education and many districts are now embracing what they fought against only a few years ago.

And by the way, what would it cost if the State was required to increase the capital budget to house another 5000 students.

Please allow the voters to give their opinion on this issue in the 2014 election.

Ernest Prax

From: Mary Pat Schilly <mpschilly@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:11 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Mary Pat Schilly
4435 N Douglas Hwy
Juneau, AK 99801
907-321-4214
mpschilly@gmail.com

Ernest Prax

From: Mary Spalding <mspalding@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 3:49 PM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR 1

I have been listening to the House Judiciary Committee hearing and am now addressing the question of opening up the Alaska constitution to eliminate the Blaine Amendment wording to voters. My concern is that this issue will be influenced by the deep pockets of those supporting private schools with many ads from institutions such as the "Institute for Justice." Of course, those who support public education will have their own rallies but it will be difficult to match the funds that will enable television ads for the constitutional change. Voters really need to have an education of the huge ramifications if it should pass. We need funds for our public schools not for political ads. Our state constitution was written by very wise people after studying other states. Let's leave it alone.

Mary Spalding

Ernest Prax

From: Mary Spalding <mspalding@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:28 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please do not let this bill go any further. Listen to the reasons of those who oppose public spending for private institutions. The state cannot afford to divert funds away from the important task of educating all children no matter their income level or abilities.

Mary Spalding
5406 W Dimond Blvd
Anchorage, Ak 99502

Ernest Prax

From: Matt Johnson <mattjohnson@resdat.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 1:17 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Cc: Sen. Berta Gardner; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: I strongly oppose HJR1

Honorable Rep. Keller,

As a father of three kids in three different schools within the Anchorage School District, I strongly oppose HJR1.

Our direct experience with our Anchorage public schools has shown us that there is already ample choice in the Anchorage School District.

The problem with our public education system is not lack of choice—it's lack of adequate funding. Flat funding of the BSA over the last three years has diminished our education system. We give billions to foreign corporations with no reciprocal commitment to perform, and yet we cripple our schools by underfunding them. We can do better.

Our family strongly opposes HJR1, and we will continue to do our part as concerned citizens and parents to ensure our schools are adequately funded, and that public education funds are not diverted to private schools.

Respectfully,

Matt Johnson

124 East 23rd Ave.

Anchorage, Alaska 99503

907-223-3986

Ernest Prax

From: Matthew and Laurie Fagnani <fagnani@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:27 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: House Judiciary committee hearing Feb 19 at 1:00
Attachments: School Choice letter february 19.docx

Dear Chairman Keller,

Thanks you for having a hearing in this important issues. I plan on being their at today Judiciary hearing to speak in support of the bills and school choice being decided by the voters.

Matthew

Matt and Laurie Fagnani

337-4700 Home

250-2313 Matt cell

569-7070 Laurie work

February 19, 2014

Representative Wes Keller
House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative/Chairman Keller and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My Name is Matthew Fagnani I am writing to show my support of SJR19/HJR1. I am the current Board Chair for Lumen Christi High School, yes we are a Catholic high school. Where 40% of our faculty and students come from different denominations of faith that make up our school populations. In the past I was also the Policy Board Chair for Aquarian Charter School. Although I am not here representing Aquarian, I will speak to my tenure as the Chair during that time because it is germane to the current discussion.

My family has had the privilege of participating in all 3 forms of education. Charter, Parochial, and Public. For us school choice was important as our children did not fit the "one size fits all philosophy" and that is what this discussion is all about. Parents deserve to have choices how to educate their children.

A Voucher system would go a long way to providing equal opportunity to parents who choose a different path to educate their children. Not all children learn the same way and the cookie cutter approach is not sufficient to compete in today marketplace. Last week the Anchorage Daily News had an article as I recall were student were testifying to the legislature that the current exit exam mandated for all students to take should be dropped due to the inability of the test and to determine if a student is educated. That the test was testing students at a 6th grade level. Is the workplace or college at a 6th

grade level? Yet in the public school system we have children failing that test. So yes as a parent and constituent choice is important.

Working in the alternative school environment has not always been easy. At the time we went to a charter schools they were not fully endorsed by the school board, there was always friction with the school BOD members who did not support the Charter School system, because it was taking money and resources from the public schools. As with time, those opinions seemed to have settled down, but only after Aquarian charter had a waiting list of more than 300 families who wanted alternative education.

By providing choice to parents you are providing many exciting possibilities for innovation in education. The separation of church and state is not the issues but, what is opening up educational opportunities so parents can take control of their children and they can choose the best education Alaska's money can buy, and use that voucher anywhere they want. Competition is good for the marketplace why would it not be good for the public school.

The founders of our state recognized that future generations needed the flexibility to respond to these possibilities in a way that would benefit all students. SJR9/HJR1 would restore it. What does it hurt to find out what the people want? Please let the people vote on this amendment.

Matthew Fagnani
2559 Loussac Dr.
Anchorage, Alaska 99517

Ernest Prax

From: Melody Mann <melmann@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 7:37 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Representative Keller,

I am a 23 year veteran teacher with 21 years in the Mat Su Valley. I am Inupiat and also an alumni of Palmer High. I am proud of my heritage and my education. I know I have benefited from the Constitutional mandate to educate Alaska's children and am proud to now educate Alaska's children. Coming from a background of poverty and a heritage of no formal education - I have come a long way! It is because of my family and my teachers that I grew to love learning and now spend my career teaching OUR children to love learning. I also take my civic responsibilities seriously and am proud to be a super voter.

The prospect of diverting resources from public schools is heart breaking to me. I think that those that need education the most will now be relegated to second class schools because families with the means and resources to put their very able children into private schools will do so. Parents have that option now and do not need state support to chose private schools. No one trusts that public funds will not be diverted from already strapped school districts (I know ours runs as lean as it has to) which will weaken public schools that are overburdened and under supported already.

The main problem I have with that goes right to the heart of the beauty of public education - Inclusion. We take everyone and do our best to help them develop the skills and knowledge to pursue their dreams. Students from every background learn to get along and work with all kinds of other learners. We help students develop civility and empathy for people who are not like themselves.

I heard families speak at the town hall meeting last weekend who worried about having to pay for other curriculum because it was not supported by the public correspondence program. We too opted to supplement our own children's education. We paid for private piano lessons and gymnastics. We volunteered to teach Sunday school classes in our church and to coach youth basketball teams. We chose not buy karate lessons. Those choices are always available to parents.

If you haven't seen the public school choices here in the Mat Su school district, I invite you to check out all the awesome choices right here in our public schools. We offer choices to our families!

The public schools are for the common good. Let's keep it that way.

Thank you for your time. Please, remember all Alaska's children are counting on you!

Respectfully,

Melody Mann
1850 E Village Lp
Wasilla, AK 99654

Ernest Prax

From: Michele Faison <mmfaison@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 7:31 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: vote yes onHJR1

please vote yes on HJR1

I could use the financial help to continue my son in private his Christian school

Sent from my iPhone. Michele

Ernest Prax

From: Michelle Turinsky <michellet@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 1:34 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in the Hearing of HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

Please let this email represent my personal testimony in the hearing of HJR1. **I am opposed to changing the constitution to allow public funds to go to private or religious schools.**

My daughter attended private school kindergarten through eighth grade, so I fully understand why parents would like to have financial help in sending their children to private schools. It's our responsibility, however, to first and foremost provide a quality public education to all. Unfortunately HJR1 would take money away from schools that are already facing a financial shortfall. Please do not support HJR1 and please **INCREASE FUNDING TO THE SBA BY \$404. this year, and inflation proof the SBA for future years.** I also think that it's very important to maintain a separation of church and state, and in my opinion providing state money to private/religious institutions crosses this line.

I completely understand that our state is in financial difficulty and that oil revenues and therefore our income is in steep decline. We must make funding education a priority though—it's truly a bridge to our future! It benefits us all.

Thank you,

Michelle Turinsky
2301 Saint Elias Drive
Anchorage, AK 99517
(907)276-6299

Ernest Prax

From: Mike Stoltz <mtmike@live.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 1:33 PM
To: pamelaness@matsugov.us; alex.strawn@matsugov.us; traleika@alaska.net; bnvalentine@yahoo.com; TCC Council; Vern Halter; Kathy Stoltz; Kathleen Sousa; john.moosey@matsugov.us; Sen. Mike Dunleavy; Rep. Wes Keller; Sen. Charlie Huggins
Subject: RE: Talkeetna Flood Report

Alex/Pam

I fully realize how understaffed Mat Su Borough is and underfunded. Thanks for the response.

As I once mentioned to Pam, Talkeetna is "all chiefs, no indians".

Attempting to organize such a group in Talkeetna is difficult to say the least.

I heard of a figure of 40 million needed (and should have been spent yesterday) to address the flooding issues in Talkeetna.

I do not know if that figure is accurate.

If, The Army Corp of Engineers handed off many years ago the Talkeetna dike/levy responsibility to Mat Su Borough and Mat Su Borough accepted the Talkeetna levy/dike responsibility as the Corp of Engineers claim, the discussion is somewhat irrelevant as to who is responsible.

We in Talkeetna are dealing in attempting to address future flooding issues in Talkeetna not such past issues as who dropped (like the Talkeetna dike/levy going uninspected for years)] the ball.

While some of this staff/assembly was not on board in the past, as you are aware, the issues of Talkeetna flooding must be addressed.

I have information regarding mitigation funding from FEMA, where non-profits may apply (the TCC or perhaps even the Talkeetna Chamber may be eligible).

I have some understanding of the Talkeetna dike, the possible late filing of FEMA paperwork by Mat Su Borough Staff, the lack of inspections of the dike/levy by Mat Su Borough (or the Army Corp of Engineers) and FEMA refusing to consider funding the rehabilitation of Talkeetna dike/levy on those grounds.

Is Mat Su Borough Staff still going through the appeal stage with FEMA?

The question I have is, has mitigation been applied for by Borough Staff, for Talkeetna.

Talkeetna plays a huge economic role in Alaska Tourism.

Numbers need to be shown how much.

Princess cruises, bed tax collected, people traveling to Talkeetna through Wasilla/Palmer paying taxes, gas, train service, flights around Denali, people coming to Alaska, all would be effected if Talkeetna was wiped out

like Galena was in 2013.

Do we in Talkeetna need to organize and go to our US Senators, Murkowski and Begich to attempt to get some mitigation funding.

That is the direction I am thinking of trying to go with some of our locals in Talkeetna.

I have no idea what Mat Su Borough Staff has accomplished, if anything, with the Talkeetna flooding issues as far as getting funding to address such.

One thing I do believe, there will be no FEMA funding, none, unless Talkeetna goes into mitigation to address the flooding issues in our area.

<http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program>

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Main Content

Program Overview

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration. The purpose of the HMGP is to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster. The HMGP is authorized under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

Eligible Applicants and/or Subapplicants:

- State
- Local governments
- Indian tribes or other tribal organizations
- Private non-profit organizations

Mike Stoltz

From: Pamela.Ness@matsugov.us
To: mtmike@live.com
CC: Alex.Strawn@matsugov.us
Subject: FW: Talkeetna Flood Report
Date: Tue, 18 Feb 2014 22:02:36 +0000

Mr. Stoltz,

Attached is the latest Flood Insurance Study for the Borough. It has been broken down into two parts for you. We also have information at this link: <http://www.matsugov.us/planning/codecompliance/flood-plain-development>

From: Alex Strawn
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 11:57 AM
To: Pamela Ness
Subject: FW: Talkeetna Flood Report

Think you can help Mr. Stoltz out?

From: Mike Stoltz [<mailto:mtmike@live.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:15 AM
To: Vern Halter; Eileen Probasco; Alex Strawn
Subject: FW: Talkeetna Flood Report

fyi

From: mtmike@live.com
To: tccsecretary@yahoo.com
Subject: FW: Talkeetna Flood Report
Date: Tue, 18 Feb 2014 11:14:22 -0800

fyi

From: mtmike@live.com
To: kathy@meandering-moose-lodging.com; bnvalentine@yahoo.com; traleika@alaska.net
Subject: Talkeetna Flood Report
Date: Tue, 18 Feb 2014 11:06:33 -0800

1982 ???? I am looking for a updated Flood Report. Anyone know of any for Talkeetna.

http://www.matsugov.us/docman/doc_view/113958-outreachfloodingbibliography?tmpl=component&format=raw

The Comprehensive Plan for Talkeetna has not been updated, to my knowledge, for quite some time.

http://www.matsugov.us/docman/doc_view/911

Ernest Prax

From: Nancy Courtney <cabowabo1@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:18 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz
Subject: Vote No on HJR1

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am a lifelong resident of Juneau. I was well educated in our Juneau public schools and have two daughters who have also been well educated in our public schools. I respectfully urge you to vote No on HJR1.

Public school education is the foundation for ALL Alaskans to get a good education, no matter their race, religion, or financial class. Private and religious schools, many of which also provide Alaskans a good education, are not required to follow the same rules as far as accepting all students, no matter their race, religion, or financial class. Also, some are for-profit institutions. I do not believe Alaska's public funds should be put into educational systems that do not include ALL Alaskans, no questions asked.

By voting against HJR1, you are not limiting school choice, you are confirming to every Alaskan child that he or she has the right to receive a good public education and that their State government and legislative representative supports public education.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Courtney
5001 Pond Vista Drive
Juneau, AK 99801
907-321-2285
cabowabo1@gci.net

Ernest Prax

From: norma <latinotour@kpunet.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:38 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Choice education

Hello Mr Keller.

We support HJR1 . We hope the possible elimination of the onerous Blaine Amendment from the State constitution to permit State financial assistance to families to make true school choice possible.

Sincerely.

Mick & Norma McGinnes

Ernest Prax

From: Pastor Guenther <pastorguenther@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 6:16 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Fwd: State of the State Speech

Representative Keller,

I just wanted to send you a quick email to let you know that I believe that school choice is an issue that is crucial to the future of our educational system, our children, and our state. It's an issue I believe in so strongly that I'll back it with my vote and I know that the same is true of many of the members of our church. I'm not sure where you stand on the issue, but I'm convinced that creating a "free market" in education will improve the system all around and will have a rich payoff in a few short decades. Though I'm a pastor, I don't even say this from a religious perspective, but believe that competition among the schools will make for a better education all around. Right now I believe the government has a sort of monopoly on education. Competition will make the public schools better, provide for better jobs, and a better citizenry. I'm thoroughly convinced that it will create more jobs, boost the economy, and keep kids off the streets and out of trouble. School choice will only make the great state of Alaska better. Please, let me know where you stand on this crucial issue and do all you can to help get rid of the Blaine amendment and create a free market in education. Thank you for your time! Your service to our state is greatly appreciated no matter which side you fall on! I will be praying for you and for all the important work you do.

Sincerely,
Pastor Rob Guenther

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
47585 Ciechanski Road, Kenai, AK 99611
www.GraceLutheranKenai.com
pastorguenther@gmail.com
(907) 690-1660

Read sermons online: www.GraceLutheranKenai.com/Sermons
Listen to sermons online: www.GraceLutheranKenai.com/Podcast
Watch services online: www.GraceLutheranKenai.com/Webcast

Ernest Prax

From: Patrick Travers <pjtravers@att.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:27 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in Support of HJR1 to Repeal the Blaine Amendment

Dear Representative Keller and Judiciary Committee Members:

I am writing to ask that you vote favorably on HJR1, which would amend Article VII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution to remove the following sentence: "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution." It would also amend Article IX, Section 6 to clarify that it shall not prevent payment from public funds for the direct educational benefit of students as provided by law.

The language that would be removed from Article VII, Section 1 has its infamous origin in the "Blaine Amendment," an attempt in the late Nineteenth Century by anti-immigrant "Nativist" groups to prevent government assistance to religious schools, even when this would be otherwise permitted by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It was intended by supporters of this proposed amendment to the United States Constitution to deprive the children of the largely Catholic immigrant communities coming from Ireland and southern and eastern Europe of their religion and culture by forcing them into public schools. There they would be overtly or covertly encouraged to adopt the beliefs, doctrines, and practices of the "Native" majority having its roots in northern European Protestantism. (For Alaskans, of course, the arrogation to themselves of the "Native" title by people whose northern European ancestors had themselves only recently arrived on this continent is itself full of irony.) This proposed amendment, backed by presidential candidate James G. Blaine, fell one vote short of the qualified majority of both Houses of Congress that would have made possible its submission for ratification by the States. Nevertheless, its supporters continued to further its purposes by imposing the requirement that it be included in the constitutions of new States as a condition for their admission to the Union. We can be confident that the framers of the Alaska Constitution did not share the odious intent of the Blaine Amendment, but found it included in a large number of State constitutions upon which they were relying as sources.

Thus, the original intent and the continued effect of the language that would be removed from the Alaska Constitution by HJR1 has been to place a burden on the free exercise of religion that is guaranteed by Article 1, Section 4 of that Constitution and by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It is important to remember that any funding of religious schools that might take place if HJR1 were to be adopted would still have to meet the stringent requirements of the prohibition of the establishment of religion that is provided for by these same constitutional provisions. It is thus the Blaine Amendment that imposes additional limits on Alaskans' freedom of religion, and not proposed State funding of religious schools meeting the requirements of the establishment clause.

I would hope that everyone on every side of this discussion supports a strong public school system in our State as the powerful foundation of our educational system. One of the most basic purposes of government is to provide for the education of the young, and it is through the public schools that this will be achieved for the great majority of our children. Any measure that would weaken our public schools would necessarily weaken our State and our society, and have catastrophic consequences for our young people. Growing up in a military family, I had the opportunity to attend three wonderful public high schools, and know well the positive impact that they have had on my life. I am also aware, however, that my experience in public high schools was enhanced, and not limited, by my earlier experience of Catholic elementary schools, and that this earlier

experience helped me to contribute more fully in the socially, culturally, and spiritually pluralistic public school environment.

In a State like ours which places such emphasis on individual liberty, the freedom of families to have wide discretion in the education of their children should be widely recognized and implemented. Instead, most Alaskan families find themselves confronted with no practical choice except an effective monopoly of their children's educational opportunities by the local public school system. This is largely the result of the presence of Blaine Amendment language in our State Constitution, preventing State financial assistance to families that choose an educational alternative to the public schools. Human experience has repeatedly demonstrated that such monopolies consistently fail to maximize excellence, innovation, and flexibility, while frequently succeeding in maximizing costs and inefficiencies. Apart from the historical and moral considerations discussed above, a powerful argument can be made that the encouragement of religious and other private schools in Alaska will, in the end, greatly strengthen our public schools by breaking their current monopoly and encouraging them, through competitive motivations, to improve the quality of their service to students and families. In addition, collaborative arrangements among public schools, religious and private schools, and home schooling families can lead to innovative approaches to education in the diverse social and cultural circumstances of our communities. It should in no way reflect poorly on the wonderful abilities and dedication of so many of our Alaska public school teachers and staff that the system in which they work--a monopolistic system resistant to needed change and adaptation--has consistently been shown to be wanting in its service to our children and their families. As important as generous funding of our public schools undoubtedly is, I am convinced that spending more money exclusively on the public school monopoly will not produce the results that we all want for our children.

Thank you for your consideration of the points I have presented, and for your service to our State.

Sincerely yours,

Reverend Patrick J. Travers
Pastor
Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Church
9055 Atlin Drive, Juneau, Alaska 99801
Cell phone 907-723-7303
Email pjtravers@att.net

Ernest Prax

From: Phil Campbell <nluccpastor@ak.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:02 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to HJR1. Public funding for private schools is a bad idea. Voting to put a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot allowing this will extend a discussion that diverts attention from adequately funding public education. I urge you to vote against this resolution in committee. You can put a stop to this divisive proposal before further time and energy is expended on this ill-conceived idea. We need to come together and focus on solutions that strengthen public education rather than spending time on matters that further separate us.

I oppose public funding for private education because I believe in the common good. Money for education should not be divided up into private, individual pots. We all have a responsibility to care for all children, not just those in a particular segment of the population. We all benefit when public schools are strong. Public schools have the right and the obligation to educate all students. Private schools can choose who they educate. We can't afford to siphon off public resources for narrow interests.

As a pastor, I respect the right of religious and other private entities to establish schools, but the responsibility of funding such endeavors rests with the religious communities and private sector. I am involved in religious education, but I do not expect the state to subsidize it. What I do expect is for all of us to join together to strengthen public education that is accessible to all children in our state. HJR1 does not do this.

Thank you for considering my views, and thank you for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Phil Campbell

Pastor

Northern Light United Church

400 W. 11th St.

Juneau, AK 99801

907-586-3131

www.northernlightchurch.org

Ernest Prax

From: railingbunch@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 3:52 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

We support HJR1 going on the ballot so that all Alaskans can have a healthy vigorous discussion this year and vote on it in November.

There is almost no fiscal impact attached to this resolution. With the many challenging fiscal issues facing Alaska, please just pass this and get back to the real business of the Finance Committee.

Thank you,

Scott & Loretta Railing
3618 Reflection Drive
Anchorage AK 99504

Ernest Prax

From: Raymond Pastorino <pastorino@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:12 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

Thank you if you oppose HJR1, supporting public funds to be used to support private and religious schools. If you don't, however, already oppose the bill, I urge you to please reconsider. In a time when our schools are facing crippling cuts, where will our funding come from if this bill passes? It will just be too costly to absorb these additional costs, and unthinkable that funds will be diverted from our neighborhood schools to fund public schools. Much more research regarding private school admissions and performance must be taken into consideration. Private schools can be selective—can admit or not admit students at their discretion; and they do not have the accommodations special needs students require. They, therefore, may discriminate against special needs and low-socioeconomic students. Research states clearly that students from private schools do no better on standardized tests than students from public schools. So, instead of supporting ideas that cripple the quality our current educational system, please support ideas such as increasing and inflation proofing the Base Student Allocation (BSA) now and for the future. This would allow for proactive planning rather than the current process of cuts and crisis management that our public schools currently endure year after year. Thank you for your commitment to working on the hard issues. This is a big one.

Alexis Pastorino

4935 Wren Drive

Juneau, AK 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rebecca Bernard <rbernard.ak@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 10:48 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Testimony Opposing HJR 1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to HJR 1. Our Alaska Constitution obligates the State to “establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State.” Ak Const. art. VII § 1. According to the Alaska Supreme Court, the minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention reflect the founders’ intent “to support and protect a strong system of public schools.” *Sheldon Jackson College v. State*, 599 P.2d 127 (1979). Our constitutional commitment to public education is reflected in the generally high quality of our public schools.

As a parent, I have been very impressed by the array of choices available to families within the public school system here in Anchorage – language immersion programs, Montessori, alternative programs, academically accelerated programs. My son attends a public charter school, and my family has been very happy with that choice. In short, we have school choice here, and the rallying cry of “school choice” by those who advocate for the proposed constitutional amendment seems wholly inapt.

As an attorney, I have been underwhelmed by the arguments I have heard in favor of HJR 1 and SJR 9. I hear that each child’s “share of public funds” should be allowed to follow that child to whichever school – whether public or private – the parents feel is best for the child. That argument is a plain misreading of the State’s constitutional obligation with respect to education. The constitution requires the State to maintain a system of public schools to which all children of the State may have access – not to distribute public education funds that follow individual children anywhere. In other words, each child is guaranteed access to the system of public schools, not an individual share of public education dollars.

I have heard proponents of the constitutional amendment argue that thousands of private school students are discriminated against because the State does not give them money for their education. This argument is specious. Again, the State’s constitutional obligation is to provide a system of public schools that are open to all children (including those that choose instead to attend private schools) – and the State does that.

I hear that the sentence targeted by the constitutional amendment (“No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.”) should be removed because its history is anti-Catholic. As others have pointed out, that history is clearly not part of the sentence’s history in Alaska and the argument therefore does not carry weight here. Rather, the drafters of the Alaska Constitution included this sentence as part of their commitment “to support and protect a strong system of public schools.”

This last point bears repeating, because if this Legislature passes HJR 1 and SJR 9 and the Constitution is amended, public funds will flow to private and religious schools and further diminish the resources available to maintain and support a strong system of public schools. School districts across Alaska are experiencing terrible budget crises and laying off hundreds of teachers due to several years of flat (or, in real dollars, declining) funding for public schools. Diverting to private schools a stream of these shrinking dollars will only exacerbate the crises, and will make it ever more difficult for the State “to support and protect a strong system of public schools” as the drafters of our Alaska Constitution envisioned. Siphoning off public funds for private schools will also make it ever more difficult for school districts to maintain the rich array of school choices that are available now within our public school system – thus diminishing rather than increasing school choice.

Alaska has strong, high-quality public schools with a wide variety of educational programs available to all children. Let us keep our schools strong by giving them adequate funds, rather than undermine them through the proposed constitutional amendment. Please vote no on HJR 1.

Thank you for considering my views.

Rebecca Bernard

1210 N St.

Anchorage, AK 99501

907-244-3988

rbernard.ak@gmail.com

Ernest Prax

From: red <red@savoietek.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2014 5:51 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Educational Reform

You may find this article interesting as it addresses many of the concerns voiced recently.

<http://www.gainesville.com/article/20130407/OPINION03/130409700?p=1&tc=pg>

I oppose public funding for private education. I believe most of this has been generated by religious based schools who are confronting the same problems as the university - an infrastructure based on a 1980 model for a certain annual population that can no longer be supported. In other words - there are fewer students to support their investments.

It is not our responsibility to prop up private educational schools. If we move in that direction, then we should also mandate the same restrictions - no prayer, teacher certification and proficiency test to gauge performance.

Of course, if this moves forward and passes I will be opening Alaska's first Islamic/Hindu/Buddhist/Satanic school to partake of the free funding for ideologies held by other Alaskans.

إعصاراً لاقيت فقد ربحاً كنت إن

red bradley
907.830.5862

Ernest Prax

From: Rena Witter <Jane_witter@lksd.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 8:27 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HRJ1

Dear Mr. Keller,

I am a teacher in a small village in southwestern Alaska. The teachers out here are strongly against HRJ1. Having the money follow the student would hurt our school when students decide to move from village to village.

Also, no private enterprise is going to open a school out on the tundra. There's no economic base here for a business to invest in. And the few who have invested, like Donlin Gold and the Red Devil Mine have financial agendas that will do nothing to help the local people, and will take more money away from Alaska, rather than contributing to our future financial health and development.

Please don't vote for this bill. Let the people decide. Hear your constituents, instead of trying to power through the governor's agenda.

Thank you.

Rena Jane Witter
Secondary Social Studies & Lang. Arts Teacher Anna Tobeluk Memorial School P. O. Box 150 Nunapitchuk, AK 99641
907-527-2242

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Lynn Gattis
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:06 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Fwd: Let Alaska parents decide

Representative Lynn Gattis
Rep.Lynn.Gattis@akleg.gov

<http://www.facebook.com/RepresentativeLynnGattis>

Begin forwarded message:

From: <pastor.rogers@gmail.com>
Date: February 17, 2014 at 10:41:57 PM AKST
To: <Rep.Lynn.Gattis@akleg.gov>
Subject: Let Alaska parents decide

Brad Rogers
PO Box 298671
Wasilla, AK 99629

February 18, 2014

The Honorable Lynn Gattis
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Gattis,

I'm writing to urge you to vote for HJR 1, the referendum which gives us Alaskans the right to vote to fix our Constitution. We need to get rid of the flawed Blaine Amendment, which prevents Alaska from implementing parental choice and educational freedom if we so choose.

Studies on School Choice prove that competition leads to improved public schools, millions in taxpayer savings, and more freedom for parents to put their children in the school which is best suited to their child's needs.

But, regardless of how you might feel about Parental Choice, I'm asking you to vote FOR HJR1. Joint Resolution 1 merely gives me and my fellow Alaskans our right to vote to get rid of the flawed Blaine Amendment. Please don't deny us our right to vote on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Brad Rogers

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:20 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruth G. Benson [<mailto:ruthb@alaska.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 2:17 PM

To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg

Subject: HJR1

To the House Judiciary Committee:

I am strongly opposed to HJR1. The concept of separation of Church and State has stood strongly throughout the history of the Republic and of the State of Alaska, and I believe HJR is a threat to the whole principle of that concept. I oppose any such threat that might be considered a step toward a State Church and a theocracy. Please do not approve this resolution.

Thank you for your attention to my views.

Sincerely,

Ruth Benson
945 McGown St #3F
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:18 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Vouchers - Legacy

-----Original Message-----

From: Doug Weimann [<mailto:kasuun@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 4:44 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Vouchers - Legacy

"Protecting our public schools against privatization and saving them for the future generations of American children is the civil rights issue of our time."

- Diane Ravitch, former U.S. assistant secretary of education under President H.W. Bush and reappointed by President Bill Clinton.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:14 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

Categories: Green Category

-----Original Message-----

From: Melody Mann [<mailto:melmann@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 7:37 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Representative Keller,

I am a 23 year veteran teacher with 21 years in the Mat Su Valley. I am Inupiat and also an alumni of Palmer High. I am proud of my heritage and my education. I know I have benefited from the Constitutional mandate to educate Alaska's children and am proud to now educate Alaska's children. Coming from a background of poverty and a heritage of no formal education - I have come a long way! It is because of my family and my teachers that I grew to love learning and now spend my career teaching OUR children to love learning. I also take my civic responsibilities seriously and am proud to be a super voter.

The prospect of diverting resources from public schools is heart breaking to me. I think that those that need education the most will now be relegated to second class schools because families with the means and resources to put their very able children into private schools will do so. Parents have that option now and do not need state support to chose private schools. No one trusts that public funds will not be diverted from already strapped school districts (I know ours runs as lean as it has to) which will weaken public schools that are overburdened and under supported already.

The main problem I have with that goes right to the heart of the beauty of public education - Inclusion. We take everyone and do our best to help them develop the skills and knowledge to pursue their dreams. Students from every background learn to get along and work with all kinds of other learners. We help students develop civility and empathy for people who are not like themselves.

I heard families speak at the town hall meeting last weekend who worried about having to pay for other curriculum because it was not supported by the public correspondence program. We too opted to supplement our own children's education. We paid for private piano lessons and gymnastics. We volunteered to teach Sunday school classes in our church and to coach youth basketball teams. We chose not buy karate lessons. Those choices are always available to parents.

If you haven't seen the public school choices here in the Mat Su school district, I invite you to check out all the awesome choices right here in our public schools. We offer choices to our families!

The public schools are for the common good. Let's keep it that way.

Thank you for your time. Please, remember all Alaska's children are counting on you!

Respectfully,

Melody Mann
1850 E Village Lp
Wasilla, AK 99654

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:14 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Opposition HJR1

-----Original Message-----

From: jennifer dunn hoeger [<mailto:jennvdunn@gci.net>]

Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 7:46 PM

To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt

Subject: Opposition HJR1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in opposition to HJR1. I oppose a constitutional amendment that would allow public funds to go to private and religious schools. The Lower 48 has already attempted this and data shows that vouchers have put a drain on public resources while doing no better than public schools.

Respectfully,
Jenny Hoeger
Palmer

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:14 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 OPPOSED

From: Ted Angstadt [<mailto:teda@gci.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 8:27 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 OPPOSED

Mr. Keller, We all know that you are super pro voucher and in favor of tax and state money going to your church schools. But, your refusal to allow the public to speak out about HJR1 is an outrage to democracy. I will write letters to the editor, and tell everyone that I can about this undemocratic behavior. Shame on you for not allowing the public to speak against, or in a few cases for, HJR1. Remember, this is supposed to be a democratic government, not a dictatorship. You seem to have forgotten that.

Ted Angstadt
Anchorage

Ted Angstadt
teda@gci.net

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:13 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

-----Original Message-----

From: Tim Walters [<mailto:twalters@mtaonline.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 9:34 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Keller,

Please let people continue to give testimony on HJR 1 and please, encourage the House to fully investigate the ramifications of publicly funding private and religious schools.

1. How much will it cost? What will happen when current students in private and religious schools start receiving public funding? Will the State increase its education budget?
2. How will equity be assured? Will private and religious schools have to take everyone that applies? Will they be able to deny children an education based on religious or personal viewpoints?
3. What legal protections will students and families have in publicly funded private and religious schools? Will students and families have due process rights?
4. How will private and religious schools be accountable to the public if they receive public funding? Will they have to take the same tests?

How will they fit in with the new teacher evaluation procedures? Will private and religious schools have to follow the new teacher evaluation procedures? Will private and religious schools have to abide by State standards?

Please, before you make the biggest change to education in Alaska's history, at least examine how these questions will be answered.

Thank you,
Tim Walters

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:13 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Testimony Opposing HJR 1

From: Rebecca Bernard [<mailto:rbernard.ak@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 10:48 PM

To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg

Subject: Testimony Opposing HJR 1

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to HJR 1. Our Alaska Constitution obligates the State to “establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State.” Ak Const. art. VII § 1. According to the Alaska Supreme Court, the minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention reflect the founders’ intent “to support and protect a strong system of public schools.” *Sheldon Jackson College v. State*, 599 P.2d 127 (1979). Our constitutional commitment to public education is reflected in the generally high quality of our public schools.

As a parent, I have been very impressed by the array of choices available to families within the public school system here in Anchorage – language immersion programs, Montessori, alternative programs, academically accelerated programs. My son attends a public charter school, and my family has been very happy with that choice. In short, we have school choice here, and the rallying cry of “school choice” by those who advocate for the proposed constitutional amendment seems wholly inapt.

As an attorney, I have been underwhelmed by the arguments I have heard in favor of HJR 1 and SJR 9. I hear that each child’s “share of public funds” should be allowed to follow that child to whichever school – whether public or private – the parents feel is best for the child. That argument is a plain misreading of the State’s constitutional obligation with respect to education. The constitution requires the State to maintain a system of public schools to which all children of the State may have access – not to distribute public education funds that follow individual children anywhere. In other words, each child is guaranteed access to the system of public schools, not an individual share of public education dollars.

I have heard proponents of the constitutional amendment argue that thousands of private school students are discriminated against because the State does not give them money for their education. This argument is specious. Again, the State’s constitutional obligation is to provide a system of public schools that are open to all children (including those that choose instead to attend private schools) – and the State does that.

I hear that the sentence targeted by the constitutional amendment (“No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.”) should be removed because its history is anti-Catholic. As others have pointed out, that history is clearly not part of the sentence’s history in Alaska and the argument therefore does not carry weight here. Rather, the drafters of the Alaska Constitution included this sentence as part of their commitment “to support and protect a strong system of public schools.”

This last point bears repeating, because if this Legislature passes HJR 1 and SJR 9 and the Constitution is amended, public funds will flow to private and religious schools and further diminish the resources available to maintain and support a strong system of public schools. School districts across Alaska are experiencing terrible budget crises and laying off hundreds of teachers due to several years of flat (or, in real dollars, declining) funding for public schools. Diverting to private schools a stream of these shrinking dollars will only exacerbate the crises, and will make it ever more difficult for the State “to support and protect a strong system of public schools” as the drafters of our Alaska Constitution envisioned. Siphoning off public funds for private schools will also make it ever more difficult for school districts to maintain the rich array of school choices that are available now within our public school system – thus diminishing rather than increasing school choice.

Alaska has strong, high-quality public schools with a wide variety of educational programs available to all children. Let us keep our schools strong by giving them adequate funds, rather than undermine them through the proposed constitutional amendment. Please vote no on HJR 1.

Thank you for considering my views.

Rebecca Bernard

1210 N St.

Anchorage, AK 99501

907-244-3988

rbernard.ak@gmail.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 7:12 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: allowing public funds be used for private schools

From: Karen M [<mailto:miernyk@gmail.com>]

Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 9:23 PM

To: Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Dennis Egan; Sen. Berta Gardner; Sen. Pete Kelly; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. John Coghill; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Lesil McGuire; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Mike Dunleavy; Sen. Anna Fairclough; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Kevin Meyer; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Fred Dyson; Sen. Hollis French; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Peter Micciche; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Doug Isaacson; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Mark Neuman; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Steve Thompson; Rep. Mike Chenault; Rep. Eric Feige; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Pete Higgins; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Kurt Olson; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Mia Costello; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Bill Stoltze; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Mike Hawker; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Benjamin Nageak; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Geran Tarr; Rep. Tammie Wilson

Subject: allowing public funds be used for private schools

Dear Alaska Legislators:

I would ask that you vote not to allow public money to be used for private schools. I know many of you would argue that this increases school choice for families. However, I would argue just the opposite. Families with single parents often can not commute to a school to pick up and drop off children. They don't have the private school choice. Families without reliable transportation can not commute daily to pick up and drop off children. They don't have the private school choice. Adults with jobs that do not have flexible hours often can not pick up and drop off children. They don't have the private school choice. Families that live in Tooksook Bay, Alakanuk, Point Hope, or other rural communities don't even have private school options so they most certainly don't have private school choice.

I would argue instead that allowing public money to be used for private schools does nothing more than give to middle and high income families at the expense of lower income families. I say at the expense of lower income families because I can not see any way that this measure does not take away from neighborhood schools that are used by most families in Alaska and likely ALL lower income families. Those are the families we should concentrate on helping.

I would ask that instead of allowing public money be used for private schools we take that money and use it instead to beef up neighborhood schools, especially those in lower income areas. I'm not an educator, so I'm not going to be so bold as to suggest exactly what needs to be done to accomplish this. But I can say with a lot of certainty that funding private schools is definitely not the answer!

Thank you for your time. I assure you that if this goes to a public vote, mine will be an emphatic NO.

Karen

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 1:44 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: No State money for private schools

From: Carolyn [<mailto:cml@mtaonline.net>]
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2014 9:11 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: No State money for private schools

MTA Wireless Smart Phone

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 1:35 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: SJR 9 HJR 1

From: Grant Hunter [<mailto:hunterpp@gci.net>]
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2014 11:54 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: SJR 9 HJR 1

Grant W. Hunter JD MLS MBA

645 G Street Ste 100 PMB 653

Anchorage, AK 99501

Tel: 907.258.6735 Cell: 907.444.7295

Email: hunterpp@gci.net Cell Email: granthunter56@gmail.com

Ipad Email: gwhunter56@icloud.com

02.23.2014

I respectfully request that you support SJR 9 (**TITLE:** Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to state aid for education.), HJR 1 (**TITLE:** Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to state aid for education.) and any other similar measure to give the parents of this state the financial capability to send their children to schools that will infuse the values of the Koran, the Gospels, the Epistles, Revelation the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings into the aforesaid children.

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 1:29 PM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: I oppose HJR1

From: Dawn Brashear [<mailto:dawn.brashear@k12northstar.org>]
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 9:20 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: I oppose HJR1

Dear Elected Officials:

I oppose HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

1. Public education is the backbone that supports a strong middle class and therefore a strong democracy.
2. A strength for our country is the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

Dawn E. Brashear Dawn E. Brashear, M.Ed, NCC
Mom of Katie and Evan School Counselor
The Watershed School Woodriver Elementary School
FNSBSD FNSBSD

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:43 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1 Testimony

Categories: Green Category

From: James K. Johnson [<mailto:freetochoosealaska@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:41 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 Testimony

Greetings Rep. Keller:

You may use my testimony at the hearings for HJR1:

I support HJR1 because it will remove the Blaine admendment from our State Constitution. Alaskans need the opportunity

to vote on whether public funds can be used to benefit students that attend private or religious schools. The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention reveal that the delegates voted two to one to uphold this type of funding. Real competition amongst Alaska schools will benefit Alaskan families, our state, and ultimately our nation. The NEA opposes real school choice because competition will mean they will have to compete for the educational dollars; they believe their personal lives are much more secure when they enjoy a virtual monopoly on K-12 education in America. Unfortunately, our educational and behavioral standards in our nation have taken a steep decline because of the lack of accountability in our public schools.

Please support HJR1 so many Alaskans can have a real choice in their children's education.

James K. Johnson, Owner
Alaska's Kenai Jim's Lodge
& Guide Service
P.O. Box 3675
Soldotna, Alaska 99669
www.FishAlaskaNow.com

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 11:43 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: NO on HJR1

From: SueAnn [<mailto:porcupinewoman@hotmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:51 AM

To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg

Subject: NO on HJR1

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

I am a Mother of four adult children who attended Juneau School District public schools and excelled in their studies. They went out of state to attend to their university studies but returned to Alaska to raise their families. A major factor in their return was the GREAT public education they had received.

I now have eight grandchildren, five of them attend elementary school through high school- all of whom are excelling in public schools.

The best education for anyone is one which provides diversity coupled with opportunity. Public schools are excellent venues for learning. A public school education encourages and provides students the perfect opportunity to look, think and question . . . and recognize that THEY are the masters of their dreams.

Public education has the potential to enable the potential in *all* students.

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

SueAnn Randall
11346 North Douglas Highway
Juneau Alaska, 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:35 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: please vote against vouchers

-----Original Message-----

From: Sally Kieper [<mailto:sally.kieper@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:40 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Subject: please vote against vouchers

Dear Legislators,
I oppose HJR1 and urge you to do the same. I want my tax dollars to go for PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sally Kieper
1055 Chickadee Loop
Fairbanks, AK 99712

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:34 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Testimony in favor of HJR1

From: EDWARD BURNS [mailto:bpburns@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:45 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Testimony in favor of HJR1

Dear Representative Keller and Judiciary Committee Members:<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

I'd like to offer this testimony in support of HJR1 and ask that you vote in favor of this bill. As the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Juneau, it is my moral obligation to raise with you the grave concern about having language in our Alaska Constitution that is based on bigotry of years past. Allow me to present to you what I wrote in my article in the Juneau Empire on February 2, 2014 (which can be found here: <http://juneauempire.com/opinion/2014-02-02/moving-forward-education>):

The Blaine amendment, which was unfortunately included in the Alaska Constitution, is rooted in 19th century anti-Catholic bigotry and discrimination. Initially proposed in 1875 by Speaker of the House James Blaine as an amendment to the United States Constitution, it was intended, under the rhetoric of “separation of church and state”, to block any public funding of “sectarian” (meaning Catholic) schools, even when this would have been permitted under the First Amendment. Tellingly, Blaine and his supporters had no objection to prayer, Bible reading or religious instruction in the public schools, as long as it was non-denominational and Protestant.

The Blaine amendment and other national and state laws ostensibly intended to separate church and state grew out of a pervasive prejudice that many Americans held regarding Roman Catholicism, which they believed was incompatible with democracy and freedom. Many 19th century native-born Americans were openly suspicious of the loyalty and patriotism of the millions of Catholic immigrants (mostly Irish) entering the country, fearing that their first and most important allegiance was to the Pope, who they considered an authoritarian and anti-democratic foreign ruler.

Although this attempt to amend the national constitution narrowly failed in the Senate, Congress did require that all states admitted to the Union after 1876 must include a version of the Blaine amendment prohibiting the use of public funds to wholly or in part support religious schools. This is how it came to be included, almost 100 years later, in the Alaska Constitution.

Repeal of the Blaine amendment would, for the first time since territorial days, allow public per pupil funds to be used by parents to send their children to the school of their choice, including religious and other private schools. Such funding would still have to satisfy the stringent requirements of the First Amendment and the corresponding provision of the Alaskan Constitution.

As a citizen and as a Catholic leader, I believe that in the 21st century, the Blaine amendment should be removed from our State's Constitution. I welcome legislation that would allow the citizens of this State to repeal its provisions.

Why? Not only because this amendment, motivated by sectarian prejudice, has no place in our State Constitution, but because I believe that parents should have the freedom and the resources necessary to send their children to the school which best meets their needs. They should be able to do so using their child's share of public education funding through programs of parental choice such as tuition tax credits, educational savings accounts, scholarship tax credits or opportunity scholarships.

Growing up as I did in Pittsburgh, I am grateful that my parents were able to choose the schools that I attended as a child and as a teenager. In my early childhood I attended two Catholic schools where I was taught by dedicated and committed religious sisters. For high school I attended Lincoln High School, a public institution. In choosing these schools, religious and public, my mother and father exercised their right and responsibility to choose the school best suited for their children. I am grateful to them for the education I received, an education reflecting the value they placed on academic faith formation, excellence, high moral and ethical standards and religious instruction.

However, in our State and across our Nation there are many families, especially those in poverty, who do not have the financial resources to choose the best school for their children. All of our families in Alaska should have access to the resources needed in order to attend the school of their choice, including traditional public schools, public charter schools, secular and religious private schools and homeschooling.

In addressing parental choice, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has said, "For nearly 150 years, the Church has unequivocally taught that parents have the right and responsibility to serve as the primary educators of their children. To assist them in this sacred duty, the Church has articulated clearly that children have the universal right to an education in faith, and the state has the fundamental obligation to enable such a right. In both written word and lived witness, the Church has advanced parental choice as a fundamental part of its mission to protect the equality of educational opportunity that is the birthright of all children."

Thank you for your time and for your consideration on this important matter. Blessings to you for all you do in service to the people of Alaska.

Respectfully yours,

Bishop Edward J. Burns

Diocese of Juneau, Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:34 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Susan T. Heinrichs [<mailto:susan.heinrichs@k12northstar.org>]

Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:44 AM

To: Rep. Wes Keller

Subject: HJR1

I oppose HJR1. Our public schools are desperately underfunded.

Here in Fairbanks, Denali Elementary School has 30 children in each first grade classroom. Small class sizes are imperative to decent education.

Public education is a right. Private and religious schools are a luxury. Please represent our children by supporting their right to great public education.

Thank you.

Susan Heinrichs

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Mark Runkle [<mailto:mrunkle@ancbt.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:49 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

As a parent of a school age child, please give us the opportunity to vote on the proposed changes regarding school choice. Our children deserve the very best educational opportunities that we can give them. It sounds like we the people of AK will have the chance to vote on legalizing marijuana usage. Shouldn't our children's education get at least the equal time on the ballot?
Thanks for your time and consideration.

Mark Runkle
Assistant Pastor/Executive Assistant
Anchorage Baptist Temple
6401 East Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99504
(907)333-6535
mrunkle@ancbt.org

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:33 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

From: llolmb [<mailto:lindablefgen@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Greetings,

I am very concerned about and opposed to HJR1 funding private and religious schools.

I understand the desire to move this forward without a fiscal note, however, the implications are irresponsible to the needs of public education and the separation of church and state.

Per a Juneau Empire news article:

"Meyer said he did not see moving forward this session with companion legislation that would spell out how the change could be implemented. The proposed constitutional change would be the first step, he said."

We do not buy homes without a long term financial plan. Why would we even consider passing this resolution without knowing the financial impact on our public school system?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Linda M. Blefgen

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR1

From: Bill Leight [<mailto:bleight@ancbt.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:08 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Good Morning:

I am sending this email to encourage you to vote YES on HJR1. Thank you for listening and serving our great State of Alaska.

William Leight

2400 Scarborough Drive

Anchorage, Alaska 99504

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Letter and Attachment regarding HJR 1
Attachments: OppositiontoSchoolVoucherlegislation02-19-14.pdf;
2-19-14SelectedPublicSchoolDistrictSponsoredAlternatives.docx

-----Original Message-----

From: hommek [<mailto:kimberlyhomme@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:13 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn
Cc: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Letter and Attachment regarding HJR 1

Dear Representatives Keller and Lynn,
I understand that HJR 1 will be heard in the House Judiciary Committee today. I am submitting testimony and an attachment in opposition to HJR 1. Please do not pass this resolution from your committee because of the negative effect of reduced funding for public schools, already at the bare-bones minimum. Regards, Kimberly Homme

Examples of Public Education Program Alternatives

The "Big Five" Alaska School Districts' School Alternatives

Anchorage School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 48,492

Elementary Alternatives

Anchorage Basic Curriculum (ABC):

- Birchwood ABC
- Northern Lights ABC
- Northwood ABC

Montessori:

- Denali Montessori

Open Optional:

- Bowman Elementary
- Chinook Elementary
- Chugach Optional
- Eagle River Elementary
- Polaris K-12
- Susitna Elementary

At-risk teens:

Note: These programs are for students who have fallen behind in credit and are more likely than others to drop out of high school and not attain a high school diploma.

- AVAIL, Ages 16-19
- Benny Benson/SEARCH, 7-12
- SAVE, 11-12

International Baccalaureate:

- Romig Middle School, 7-8
- West High School, 9-12

Online:

- ASD iSchool, 9-12

Open Optional:

- Polaris K-12
- Steller Secondary

School-within-a-school:

- East High School, 9-12
- School through the Arts
- West High School, 9-12

Continued

Page Two of Four

Anchorage Public Charter School/Choice Programs, grade group served (continued):

Seminar:

- Service High School, 9-12

Science focus:

- Central Middle School of Science, 7-8

World Discovery Seminar:

- Chugiak High School, 9-12

Charter schools:

Cultural & language charters:

- Alaska Native Cultural Charter School
- Rilke Schule Charter School

Homeschool charters:

Note: these charter schools provide resources and support to families interested in home schooling their children:

- Home-school
- Family Partnership Charter School
- Frontier Charter School

Open optional charter:

- Aquarian Charter School

Structured charter:

- Eagle Academy Charter School

Technology-focused charter:

- Highland Tech Charter School

Waldorf-inspired charter:

- Winterberry Charter School

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student population: 14,273

Charter Schools:

Chinook Charter, K-8

Effie Kokrine Early College Charter, 7-12

Watershed Charter, K-8

Star of the North Secondary Charter School: Career Education Center (grades 11-12) & North Pole Campus (grades 7-12)

Continued

Page Three of Four

Other Fairbanks Schools of Choice:

Barnette Magnet, K-8

Fairbanks B.E.S.T., K-12 (correspondence: home school or online classes)

Hutchison High School 9-12

At-risk/Other Alternative Schools or Programs:

SMART/DW PASS (district's program for suspended/expelled students)

BRIDGE (special education - formerly known as the HIRE Program, helps students learn skills to help them transition from school to adult living.

OPTIONS (program located at Hutchison - pregnant/parenting students)

Juneau School District charter school and other schools of choice

Student Population: 4,957

Public Charter School/Choice Program(s), grade group served:

School Programs:

Tlingit Culture, Language and Literacy, K-5

Montessori Borealis 1-8

Charter School:

Juneau Community Charter School, K-8

Online School Program:

HomeBRIDGE, K-12

At-risk Teens:

Yaakoosge Daakahidi Alternative High School, 9-12

C.A.R.E.S., a credit recovery program, 9-12

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 8,892

Charter Schools

Aurora Borealis, K-8

Fireweed Academy, K-6

Soldotna Montessori, K-6

Kaleidoscope School of Arts and Sciences, K-6

Continued

Page Four of Four

Other Kenai schools of choice:

River City Academy, 7-12

Connections, K-12 (home school program)

Distance education program, 9-12 online (also, as needed, video-conferenced classes from Kenai Central HS to smaller schools)

Homer Flex, 9-12

Kenai Alternative High, 9-12 & PK

Mat-Su Borough School District charter schools and other schools of choice

Student Population: 17,247

Public Charter School/Choice Program(s), grade group served

Charter Schools

Academy Charter, K-8

American Charter Academy, K-12

Birchtree Charter, K-8

Fronteras Spanish Immersion, K-8

Midnight Sun Charter, K-8

Twindly Bridge Charter, K-12

Schools with a Specific Mission

Beryozova (Russian-speaking school), K-12

Mat-Su Central School (homeschool), K-12

Mat-Su Day School (students experiencing behavioral issues), 6-12

Mat-Su Career & Technical High School, 9-12

Burchell High School (opportunity for credit recovery), 9-12

Valley Pathways (opportunity for credit recovery), 9-12

District Choice Programs/Alternatives

Alaska Middle College School, 11-12

Palmer High School's International Baccalaureate (IB) program, 11-12

Note: urban Alaskan school districts also have policies that allow students to attend schools outside of their attendance area if there is space at the receiving school and the parents provide transportation.

February 19, 2014

Representatives Wes Keller and Representative Bob Lynn, Chairs
House Judiciary Committee, Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Keller and Representative Lynn:

I hope the session is going well for you in Juneau. I am writing to express opposition to House Joint Resolution 1 under consideration by the House Judiciary Committee. As you know, HJR 1 seeks to change the constitution to allow public funds be used for private, for-profit religious and secular schools. I think that the most important responsibility of the members of the Alaska State Legislature is to accept responsibility for providing for an educated and strong Alaskan community, and provide adequate funding to support that ideal by sufficiently managing our plentiful resources. The voucher legislation is in direct conflict with that goal. It will deplete limited resources and provide more resources to students whose families have demonstrated that they are able to afford the religious alternatives in which they have enrolled their children.

Providing an adequate education within the public education system for children of our Great State is of utmost importance. When you travel throughout the regions of our state, you will find schools that have failed to provide an adequate, minimal level of education for a lot of complicated reasons. As policy makers, there needs to be great attention to what must be done to support those schools in crisis and help their students make adequate academic growth. Instead of providing more resources to the families that have demonstrated they can afford options, we need to find ways of better supporting those school districts with the lowest student achievement performance. The effect of HJR 1 is to divert potentially over \$100 million for a purpose that does not benefit the ideal goal of government providing basic needs.

Another important point is that when families want to exercise their right to choose, they have many choices. Families can choose to have options within our public education system or they can choose private education. Private education is often subsidized by the primarily religious organizations which provide the private education system. Private education, more often than not, experiences low taxes as non-profit organizations or are tax-free. Private education choices can be provided at a low cost to the consumers. When I was growing up, my parents enrolled my two sisters and me in a religious school in Anchorage. There was only one wage earner in the family. There was a lot of financial support opportunities for those who wanted the assistance.

The fact of the matter is that within public education, there are choices. It is not a one size fits all type of education program. School districts have encouraged options within public education by providing choices, outside of the typical charter school model.

I've worked as a professional educator for over 20 years in three school districts, which include the Juneau School District, the Anchorage School District, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. I own property in each of those school district boundaries and continue to have connection to those communities. During my years of public service, I've witnessed a number of education options become more available to parents. Parents have wanted options and districts have provided many options, as long as they could be options provided to the all. Please find the enclosure an overview of options available within the largest five school districts in the state. The information is from the school districts' webpages.

Best wishes,

Kimberly Homme

Attachment: The Big Five Alaska School Districts' School Alternatives

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:32 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: Vote No on HJR1

From: Nancy Courtney [<mailto:cabowabo1@qci.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:18 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz
Subject: Vote No on HJR1

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am a lifelong resident of Juneau. I was well educated in our Juneau public schools and have two daughters who have also been well educated in our public schools. I respectfully urge you to vote No on HJR1.

Public school education is the foundation for ALL Alaskans to get a good education, no matter their race, religion, or financial class. Private and religious schools, many of which also provide Alaskans a good education, are not required to follow the same rules as far as accepting all students, no matter their race, religion, or financial class. Also, some are for-profit institutions. I do not believe Alaska's public funds should be put into educational systems that do not include ALL Alaskans, no questions asked.

By voting against HJR1, you are not limiting school choice, you are confirming to every Alaskan child that he or she has the right to receive a good public education and that their State government and legislative representative supports public education.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Courtney
5001 Pond Vista Drive
Juneau, AK 99801
907-321-2285
cabowabo1@qci.net

Ernest Prax

From: Rep. Wes Keller
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:31 AM
To: Ernest Prax
Subject: FW: HJR 1

From: Donna Matthews [mailto:dwmattthews@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:31 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR 1

Dear Representative Keller,
I realize that as the primary sponsor of HJR 1, you are not likely to consider rejecting it in your committee hearing today. But I wanted you to know that there are opposing views.

You are a steward of our constitution. You vowed to “support and defend the Constitution of the State of Alaska.” The authors wrote a constitution that would not invite or require the frequent tampering that has made monsters of many state constitutions. You should not recommend changing it without **dire need** or **grave injustice needing remedy**. Constitutional matters are of a fundamental importance.

Does the issue of funding private schools meet either of those standards?

Is the need dire?

Public schools are doing amazing work in Alaska. Schools of choice exist wherever the population permits. Mat Su Superintendent Dr Deena Paramo testified to the Senate Finance Committee on Feb 3 about the extensive options available in her district. Other districts also give choices that that meet diverse student needs.

Is there a grave injustice that needs remedy through constitutional change?

Are public schools perfect? Do they have all the tools they need to educate our Alaska children? No! *A major path to good education is appropriate funding. If this were not true, then why would supporters of SJR 9 and HJR 1 want a funding route for private education?*

And I ask you to consider what is popularly known as the “law of unintended consequences.” If the constitution is amended as proposed:

- Will all that follows this amendment be to the benefit of the education of the children of Alaska?
- How will you know giving public money to a private school has improved an Alaska child’s education?
- Will you establish and fund standards the schools must meet with oversight of operations?
- How will you guarantee that public funds do not also become support for private school construction and transportation?
- Will changing the constitution lead to abuses or scandals as other states have experienced when profit-making private education companies divert public funds to themselves or their stock-holders?

Is our State Constitution now inadequate for the task of supporting education?

Consider the minutes of its founders.

The minutes of the Alaska Constitutional Convention show that an unsuccessful motion was made to delete entirely the direct benefit prohibition of article VII, section 1. By rejecting this proposal the convention *made it clear that it wished the constitution to support and protect a strong system of public schools*. Other authorities have also suggested that a constitutional provision barring aid to all private schools serves to enforce the separation of church and state without requiring executive or judicial inquiry into the sectarian affiliation of particular schools, and furthermore disengages the state from the undesirable task of withholding benefits solely on the basis of religious affiliation.

Delegate John B Coghill, supporter of article VII, Section 1, specifically expressed the thought that the amount of tax dollars available for the support of public schools might be lessened if public funds were used to support private schools.

Please reject HJR 1 and SJR 9. The need for this drastic change does not exist except in the hyperbole of its sponsors. The reasons to make this drastic change lack substance and assurances. Please support public education.

Sincerely,
Donna Matthews
Anchorage and Halibut Cove

Ernest Prax

From: Rhonda Bolling <rbolling.photos@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:50 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Please support HJR1. True school choice should be made possible. We would appreciate our tax dollars reasonably following us for the education of our choice for our children.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Bolling
5878 South Tongass Hwy
Ketchikan, AK 99901
907-617-3588

Ernest Prax

From: Richard Steele <steeler@me.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 7:37 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Regarding HJR1

Dear Representative Keller,

I am upset and dismayed by HJR1. I am opposed to using public money for private and parochial schools. My children graduated from public schools and are now in the University of Alaska. Last year I visited Egypt and saw the difficulties that occur when government mixes with religion. No matter what you say, this is what is being put forth for fast tracking. I do not want to see public schools hurt even further than the legislature's years of flat funding have created.

Richard A. Steele
1507 2nd St.
Douglas, Alaska 99824

Ernest Prax

From: Richard Steele <steeler@me.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 7:37 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Regarding HJR1

Categories: Green Category

Dear Representative Keller,

I am upset and dismayed by HJR1. I am opposed to using public money for private and parochial schools. My children graduated from public schools and are now in the University of Alaska. Last year I visited Egypt and saw the difficulties that occur when government mixes with religion. No matter what you say, this is what is being put forth for fast tracking. I do not want to see public schools hurt even further than the legislature's years of flat funding have created.

Richard A. Steele
1507 2nd St.
Douglas, Alaska 99824

Ernest Prax

From: highflytim@gmail.com on behalf of Robert Timmins <highflytimm@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 3:46 PM
Subject: Please vote YES on HJR1

Dear Representative,

As a parent of 4 ASD school students we are DESPERATE for choice outside of the only public school district we have. PLEASE allow us to vote and let us take control of our destiny and the opportunities for our students! We once had this choice, but due to the BLAINE amendment and judicial activism, choice was eliminated to the detriment of all concerned.

As **originally written** and ratified by Alaska voters, our state constitution allows the Legislature to use public funds to benefit students even when this indirectly benefits private or religious schools. The minutes of the Constitutional Convention show that the delegates voted to uphold this type of funding by an almost two to one margin. Yet the Alaska Supreme Court has consistently ruled that our constitution forbids this kind of indirect funding. SJR9/HJR1 would remove an unnecessary clause in our constitution that has been misinterpreted by the courts. Please pass SJR9/HJR1 so that the **people can vote** to uphold the original intent of our constitution.

There are many exciting possibilities for **innovation in education**. The founders of our state recognized that future generations needed the flexibility to respond to these possibilities in a way that **would benefit all students**. Our Alaska Supreme Court has taken away this flexibility. **SJR9/ HJR1 would restore it**. Please **let the people vote** on this amendment.

Thank you for doing the right thing for our kids and families!!

Sincerely,

Robert Timmins

District 14 Chairman ARP, Eagle River, AK

--

"Our *Constitution* was made only for a *moral and religious people*. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." - *John Adams*

"[I hope] to see the time when **education**, and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise and industry, shall become **much more general** than at present." A. Lincoln

"So that the record of history is absolutely crystal clear that there is no alternative way, so far discovered, of **improving the lot of the ordinary people** that can hold a candle to the productive activities that are unleashed by a **free enterprise system**." Milton Friedman

Ernest Prax

From: Robin Wittrock <wittrock@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 7:12 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Cc: Sen. Cathy Giessel; Rep. Mike Hawker
Subject: Vote no on HJR1

Dear Rep. Keller,

We write to urge you to vote no on HJR1.

As an attorney and an engineer, and products of private and public schools, we ask you to vote no on HJR1.

Our Constitution was very well written, based on thorough investigations of all the issues, and has served our state well for almost 60 years!!! There is no need to alter any of our Constitution's language in regard to educational funding. The State must fund public schools ONLY. And it must do so in a morally responsible way.

Do not vote for HJR1.

Pat and Robin Wittrock, Anchorage

Ernest Prax

From: ron martinson <rmmartinson@acsalaska.net>
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2014 3:34 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Letter

3220 Briarcliff Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508
February 14, 2014

Dear Representative Keller:

We are writing concerning the school-choice amendment to the Alaska State Constitution. Some legislators say that passing this amendment has nothing to do with education. As far as we have heard and from what we can understand this amendment has everything to do with education. Those who would disguise it as not being relevant to the education of Alaska students seem to be making that claim in order to pass the amendment without a discussion of what the implications of the amendment would be on public education and the funding of such education.

We are opposed to this amendment. It is our opinion that public education is of ultimate concern to a state/community and that our country was founded on the idea that the state/community sees to it that good public education is provided for every child. We certainly believe that parents are free to send their children to a private school or home school them, but the state/community responsibility is to public education and community/state money should be spent only on public schools.

There are many reasons why we believe vouchers would weaken the system. Private schools do not have the regulations that public schools have regarding teacher certification, on-going training and oversight. Private schools do not have to take special education students and can refuse to teach children that may be difficult to work with. Religious private schools supplement children's education with the religious teachings of the church or denomination. That training is best done in the home and church, not in the public domain that affirms separation of church and state.

Our schools are the perhaps the most important legacy that our state and communities can give to our children. They need to be strong, well funded, cared for, and staffed by the best teachers possible. We believe that can best happen in Alaska when the public school system is strongly financed and supported by the state and the local communities.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Ronald D. and Marilyn L. Martinson

Ernest Prax

From: Roy N Syren Jr <rjr@pmcmalaska.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:29 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: SJR9/HJR1

Rep. Wes Keller,

I'm writing in support of SJR9/HJR1. The state constitution, as originally written, allows the legislature to use public funds to benefit students even when this indirectly benefits private or religious schools. SJR9/HJR1 puts the legislature back in control of lawmaking on the issue of education and removes the State Supreme courts overriding of the legislature. Please let the people vote on SJR9/HJR1.

Sincerely Yours

Roy N. Syren Jr.

*****Notice: Roy Jr. has changed his email address. Please use rjr@pmcmalaska.com. Delete other email addresses.**

Roy Syren Jr.



8507 LaViento Drive, Anchorage, Alaska, 99515
Phone:(907) 349-2107 Fax: (907) 349-2787
website: www.pmcmalaska.com

Ernest Prax

From: Ruth G. Benson <ruthb@alaska.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 2:17 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1

To the House Judiciary Committee:

I am strongly opposed to HJR1. The concept of separation of Church and State has stood strongly throughout the history of the Republic and of the State of Alaska, and I believe HJR is a threat to the whole principle of that concept. I oppose any such threat that might be considered a step toward a State Church and a theocracy. Please do not approve this resolution.

Thank you for your attention to my views.

Sincerely,

Ruth Benson
945 McGown St #3F
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Ernest Prax

From: Sarah and Steve Masterman <ssmasterman@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 9:00 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Click.bishop@akleg.gov
Subject: HJR1

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to express my opposition to public funding for private and parochial schools. I believe that diverting public money toward these schools will do our state and our students a great disservice. These schools are not required to provide the same services and protections that public schools provide. Very few of these schools provide services to students with disabilities. They can pick and choose the students they serve, or can make students who don't fit their agenda feel unwelcome or unwanted. Using public funding to allow students to attend these schools would lead to a fracturing our our school population and thus of our community.

In addition to my practical concerns about the unintended consequences of HJR1, I also have ethical concerns. I believe that all parents should have the right to educate their children about their own religion and to educate their children in the way that they desire. I don't believe that the state government should be funding or subsidizing religious education. There are reasons why our constitution advocates a separation of the functions of the state and of religion. Using public funds for religious schools jeopardize that separation.

Please join my in opposing HJR1.

Sincerely,

Sarah Swift Masterman
PO Box 296
Ester, AK 99725

Ernest Prax

From: Scott Kluever <sjkluever@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2014 12:05 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Good afternoon Representative Keller,

I'm contacting you today with a few questions regarding HJR1. At this time I personally do not agree with the bill. I see it a direct threat to public education in our state. But I would like to hear more from you about your thinking.

For example, why was the bill introduced? What research has your office done regarding the impact this bill would have on Alaska public education? Have you polled teachers and administrators from across our state regarding their view of the bill and if you have what were the results? What are the chances of this passing and if not, what might prevent its passing?

The founders of the Alaska Constitution brought together the best ideas from lower 48 state constitutions to create probably the finest state constitution in the U.S. I ask that you rethink your stance on this bill and look forward to hearing from you or your staff.

Sincerely,

Scott Kluever
Eagle River, Alaska

Ernest Prax

From: SHERI PANKION <pqslp@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 4:57 PM
Subject: School Choice HJR1

By the time school begins this fall, I will be the parent of four children ages 5 - 11. I would like to ask you to support the movement of the school choice concept to the voters so that we have the opportunity to speak on this issue. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to public policy and legislation in our state.

Sheri Pankion, District 25

Ernest Prax

From: shocky <shocky@alaska.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 1:03 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Charisse Millett
Subject: Testimony opposing HJR1

Dear Representative Millett

Deborah Greenberg
Anchorage, Alaska 99515

For inclusion in the record at the House Judiciary Committee February 19, 2014 re: HJR 1.

Chairman and Members of the Committee

For the record, my name is Deborah Greenberg of Anchorage, Alaska 99515. I live in South Anchorage and have had two boys in public schools for nine years. I have also volunteered within the school to help many children academically, especially with math. Accordingly, I have seen what our system does for a spectrum of children besides my own, including those with special needs, those with different learning styles, and those who are above excellence. I have helped children from at least 2 dozen different ethnicities, and a variety of language backgrounds. Their home lives have all been greatly varied, as are their learning styles and the values and support they experience at home for learning.

What is amazing about our public school system, is the capacity to serve an incredibly diverse group of individuals and a full spectrum of learners. Each of the different school programs there are to choose from in the greater Anchorage School District - as well as the opportunities available within each school - can accommodate and be flexible to meet the needs of any child who needs to take a different approach to learning. To undercut a good existing system and deflect money to a voucher program that has no sure promise of success demonstrates poor fiscal policy and undercuts those aspects of public education that are working. I oppose school vouchers, and suggest instead that you help fully fund our schools instead of undercutting them.

Ernest Prax

From: sonjohna@addthis.com on behalf of sonjohna@yahoo.com
Sent: Saturday, February 15, 2014 3:56 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: [Office Contact] via housemajority.org from sonjohna@yahoo.com

Rep. Keller, Being a product of Christian education and also attending public university, the contrast is distinct. If I could get my children into private school I would, to challenge them. Please support HJR1.

Sent from page: <http://www.housemajority.org/2013/03/01/sponsor-statement-hjr-1/#.UwAMvMQL2Hw.email>

--- This message was sent by sonjohna@yahoo.com via <http://addthis.com>. Please note that AddThis does not verify email addresses.

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Ernest Prax

From: Staci Cox <cox.staci@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 9:00 PM
To: Sen. Fred Dyson; Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Dennis Egan; Sen. Berta Gardner; Sen. Pete Kelly; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. John Coghill; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Lesil McGuire; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Mike Dunleavy; Sen. Anna Fairclough; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Kevin Meyer; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Hollis French; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Peter Micciche; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Doug Isaacson; Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Mark Neuman; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Steve Thompson; Rep. Mike Chenault; Rep. Eric Feige; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Pete Higgins; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Kurt Olson; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Mia Costello; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Lindsey Holmes; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Bill Stoltze; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Mike Hawker; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Benjamin Nageak; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Geran Tarr; Rep. Tammie Wilson
Cc: sean.parnell@alaska.gov
Subject: NO on SJR9 / YES on BSA increase

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I was pleased to hear Gov. Parnell declare this the "Education Session" during his State of the State address last month, since education is the most important issue for me as a parent of two young children.

I am absolutely opposed to the use of public funding for private schools, and will not vote for any representative who promotes such legislation. I was disturbed to hear that SJR9 moved another step forward today, and urge you not to pass this bill.

Furthermore, I believe the BSA for public education must be increased immediately. Please do not hold today's children hostage to factors outside of their control: the unfunded retirement liability, spiraling health care costs, and increasing energy costs to name a few.

I hope you support Senator Gardner's proposed legislation that would increase the BSA substantially more than Gov. Parnell's proposal. Senator Gardner's proposal takes into account the losses and cuts that have been felt by Alaskan school districts since 2011. As I am sure you are aware, the Anchorage school district requires a BSA increase of \$251 to avoid this year's cuts alone, and \$400 to make up for the past three years of flat funding. I believe inflation proofing the BSA is another essential component of future legislation.

Please don't let education become a partisan issue; our children are worth too much!

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Most sincerely,

Staci Cox

House District 27/Senate District N

Ernest Prax

From: SueAnn <porcupinewoman@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 10:51 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: NO on HJR1

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

I am a Mother of four adult children who attended Juneau School District public schools and excelled in their studies. They went out of state to attend to their university studies but returned to Alaska to raise their families. A major factor in their return was the GREAT public education they had received.

I now have eight grandchildren, five of them attend elementary school through high school- all of whom are excelling in public schools.

The best education for anyone is one which provides diversity coupled with opportunity. Public schools are excellent venues for learning. A public school education encourages and provides students the perfect opportunity to look, think and question . . . and recognize that THEY are the masters of their dreams.

Public education has the potential to enable the potential in *all* students.

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

SueAnn Randall
11346 North Douglas Highway
Juneau Alaska, 99801

Ernest Prax

From: Suzanne Smerjac <suzanne.smerjac@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:12 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: I oppose HJR1

Dear House Judiciary Members,

I understand that the House Judiciary committee is meeting today to discuss House Joint Resolution 1 which proposes to amend our state Constitution to allow public funding for private schools. I do not support the use of public money to fund unaccountable for-profit private and religious schools and want to go on record that **I oppose HJR 1** and urge you to do the same.

I am an Anchorage resident and parent of two young children, one of whom is school aged and is enrolled in a public school. This proposal to allow public funds to get funneled into private education under the guise of school choice does not address where we as a state are failing our children and future workforce, namely funding current public schools and addressing childhood poverty which is a much greater predictor of a child's success than the specific school that they attend. In Anchorage there are numerous options for school choice - world languages, various educational philosophies, and public charters. If we really want to increase school choice, we should be funding the public schools and giving them adequate resources to expand the current optional programs that are working to provide choice to ALL children, most of which have wait lists. More importantly, let's give neighborhood schools the funds to continue the great work they are doing with our kids. This would best be accomplished by raising and inflation-proofing the BSA. According to a recent survey, 90% of ASD parents would recommend their child's school. This is not a broken system that we should be pulling money away from.

Suzanne Smerjac
3850 Knik Ave
Anchorage, AK 99517

Ernest Prax

From: Ted Kuehn <kuehn@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 9:37 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; representative.neil.foster@akleg.gov; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: HJR1 Vote

Good Morning:

My name is Karl Kuehn and I have Grandchildren in the school system.

I live in Anchorage and my Representative is Representative Pruitt.

I'm sending this e-mail to share my opinion regarding HJR1 and why I believe you should vote for it to be put on the Nov. ballot.

HJR1 has become such an important topic in the media as well as personal opinion, that it appears people need to voice their choice

(yes/no) on school choice at the ballot box.

If oil taxes and pot were important enough to be put on the ballot, it would seem to me children's education should be of a higher importance and the voting public should be allowed to make that decision.

Somewhere I heard that three polls have been taken over the last three years and each were in favor of school choice. If this is the case it would seem to be a "No Brainer" Let the people decide this issue.

I believe if the parents have the right to choose which school they want their kids to attend, they would be more involved in their education and more apt to make sure their kids are up on time and get to school.

Thank you and please make the right decision and vote for HJR1 to be put on the ballot in Nov.

Best Regards

Karl Kuehn

Ernest Prax

From: thetaylors <thetaylors@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 3:41 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1

Representative Keller,

I am a concerned parent who lives in Representative Le Doux's district. I support this resolution because I believe we need to eliminate the "Blaine" language in our constitution. Please vote in favor of HJR1 and give Alaskans the opportunity to vote on this issue.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Taylor
1001 Bentree Circle
Anchorage, AK 99504
907-333-1297



This email is free from viruses and malware because [avast! Antivirus](#) protection is active.

Ernest Prax

From: Tim and Jenn Struna-Meyer <strunameyer@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2014 10:28 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Subject: Oppose HJR1

Dear Representatives

I opposed HJR1 and urge you to do the same.

This would open the door to public funds being used to support private and religious schools and further the disparities between the rich and poor. Alaska has a vibrant diverse population. What a shame to see it become a place where rich and white prevails over poor and brown.

These disparities need to be countered not encouraged. As a nation founded on equality and justice for all it seems to be the best way to use public funds is for public schools. Private schools have other resources such as foundations, grants and donors.

Thanks

Jennifer Meyer Anchorage Muldoon Resident, Nurse and Educator

Ernest Prax

From: Tom Smith <thsphoto@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 4:48 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: constitutional amendment

Dear Representative Keller

I am writing to urge you to oppose the amendment that would change the constitution article that currently prevents public funding of private schools. Sorry, I do not know the bill number.

I feel quite strongly that taxes should NOT be used to fund non-public education. Private schools, primarily religious, have existed for decades without tax support---they will continue to do so. I have had limited experience in the Southern US with public education and can assure you that the quality is very often quite poor. As you know, it is in the South that private education is most common (originally as anti-integration); this bigotry has resulted in a two tier education system that has had devastating effect on public education and has limited success in private education. Would you want your children educated in Alabama or Mississippi or ?????? I certainly would not. I would assume there are some quite good primary and secondary schools in the South, but these are the exception, not the rule.

Please vigorously oppose this move.

Thank you for your attention.

Thos. H. Smith "Tom"

2527 N. Leah Circle
Wasilla, AK 99654
thsphoto@gmail.com

(the father of your friend)

Ernest Prax

From: Tony <boomer599b@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:35 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: School Choice

I am encouraging you to vote yes on HJR 1.

Thanks
Anthony Smith
Anchorage

Sent from my iPhone

Ernest Prax

From: Tony Lewkowski <tlewkowski@gci.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 8:09 AM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: HJR1 Testimony

Dear Representative Keller,

I and my family enthusiastically support allowing the people to vote on this important issue.

Powerful forces always stand in the way of reform; why be afraid of debate on this issue?

Respectfully,

The Lewkowski Family

Anchorage

Ernest Prax

From: william luttrell <wm.lut.jr@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 1:42 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller
Subject: Re: SJR9 EDUCATION BILL

I forgot to send my name & address: William M. Luttrell , Jr. , P.O. Box 331, Willow , AK., 99688

On Wed, Feb 5, 2014 at 4:07 PM, william luttrell <wm.lut.jr@gmail.com> wrote:

I FULLY SUPPORT THIS EDUCATION BILL . IF YOU LISTENED CLOSELY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA'S PRESIDENT, HE SAID (FOR THE 3RD YEAR IN A ROW) I'M HAVING TO PROVIDE REMEDIAL TRAINING/EDUCATION TO AK. HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR'S JUST SO THEY CAN PASS THE ENTRANCE EXAM TO ATTEND COLLEGE. PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND'S SHOULD FOLLOW THE CHILD , WHEREVER THE PARENT'S CHOOSE TO SEND THEM, THEY KNOW WHAT'S BEST. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

Ernest Prax

From: wmolson@gci.net
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2014 5:03 PM
To: Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Lance Pruitt; Representative.Charisse.Millet@akleg.gov; Representative.; art.petersen@uas.alaska.edu; pberan@alaska.com; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Dennis Egan; Sen. Berta Gardner; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Les Gara; rosita.worl@sealaska.com
Subject: Re: Constitutional Amendment
Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Senators, Representatives and colleagues.

In watching the House Judiciary Committee discussion over HJR1:Constitutional Amendment on Gavel to Gavel television. It appears to me that there is a misunderstanding. or a lack of knowledge regarding the separation of Church and State in the Alaska Constitution and the issue of Alaska's educational system today.

What I heard and saw was a long explanation of the Blaine amendment about the separation of funding for public and private groups regarding education. I heard a long explanation about the way Irish immigrants, mainly Catholic influenced the legislation called the decision of the authors of the Alaska State Constitution, to have a complete separation of funding for public education and funding for private schools. As a descendant of Irish-Catholic parents, grand parents and great grand parents in the 19th century, and as a person with Master's degrees in Catholic Church history and Anthropology, and a former professor of Alaska's history and anthropology at the University of Alaska, I know that history well, but it is not the story of Alaska. **I think the discussion was not presented properly based on Alaska's history. It was much the same as the conservative political organization called the American Legislative Exchange Council promotes across the nation.**

During the Russian era, the only religious organization was the Orthodox Church. With the purchase of Alaska, it was difficult to find people who willing to come here as teachers, and so Sheldon Jackson, as the federal director of education, a well-know Presbyterian minister and official, found religious teachers-missionaries to come to be teachers in the schools in Alaska. **For many years, most of the teachers in Alaska were also missionaries.** However, there was a divide in this program. There was a meeting Protestant demoninations on the east coast of the United States and they territory of Alaska was divided up into "mission territories", but Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox missionaries were not included in the division. It was, under a Protestant director and an association of Protestant groups. Yet despite the Protestant denial of the Catholics and Orthodox, those religious organizations also had mission schools in parts of Alaska and some of them were very "successful." .

Yet like other newcomers to Alaska, the missionary-educators all were "ethnocentric" thinking

their "way of living" was the best, and that Native people were to be "assimilated", that his absorbed into the new "culture." And so, Native languages, social organization, customs, religious beliefs and practices were attacked. Speaking the Native languages or even speaking them was prohibited in the schools. For many years and generations, there was open discrimination of Natives, and a continual battle between religious groups and denominations in Alaska. This continued right up to the time of the Alaska State Constitutional Convention preparing for statehood.

When people are told that Article VII in our State Constitution is somehow linked to the "Blaine Amendment" to me it appears to be a "red herring"; a distraction from the facts. What the members at the Constitutional Convention in Alaska saw from their own experiences around the Territory, was that there was great religious differences among the people. Their obligation was to come up with some plan for public education not aligned or affiliated with any religious group. For a state with a small, genetically diverse population, where many students had been subjected to various religious teachings as part of their education, they wanted to end that division among people.

Please, as elected representatives, be aware of the real history of Alaska and the background to our Constitution Convention. They did not draft Article VII based on the "Blaine Amendment" but from the reality of Alaska as they witnessed it in their lives, realizing that for the State to get into funding private and religious schools would be wrong.

I attended a Catholic elementary school, my parents were far from being "rich" yet they never asked for any government or state aid. It was understood that if Catholics, Lutherans, Seventh Day Adventist, Mormons or any other group wanted to have a private school and accept the students they wanted, that was "their business" and they were welcome to do so - but don't expect the rest of the people to pay for it.

In Alaska if Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu or agnostic groups want to have their private schools, to me that's fine. Just don't ask me to pay for it. I will pay my taxes to support independent public education.

Respectfully

Wallace M. Olson, Professor of Anthropology (Emeritus) University of Alaska Southeast
Master's degree in Catholic Church History, St. Paul Seminary 1958
Master's degree in Anthropology, University of Alaska 1968

Testimony for HJR 1

From LaDawn Druce -Sterling

To Representative Wes Keller – Chair

Representatives Foster, LeDoux, Lynn, Gruenberg, Millett, Pruitt

Good Morning Representative Keller and members of the committee. My name is LaDawn Druce and I am writing this testimony as an individual.

It is my understanding the committee is taking testimony today on HJR 1. Given the fact that Representative Keller is the prime sponsor of this legislation, I would like to refer to some comments from his Sponsor Statement released on March 1, 2013.

The first paragraph of the statement suggests that, “Recent reports show Alaska’s students failing to graduate from secondary schools at an alarming rate.” This statement brings a few questions to mind. Is the graduation rate lower than it has been in past years? Do the lower graduation rates come primarily from rural Alaska, our larger districts, areas with higher poverty, areas with a more transient population, etc. Is the committee aware of the formula for determining “graduation rates?”

The second paragraph states the language of our current constitution “hampers a quality education for our students by preventing them to excel at a school that meets their needs.” The assumption seems to be a lack of quality in our public schools. With the exceptional variety of opportunities available to our students in our public schools it would seem virtually impossible for there not to be “a good fit” for the vast majority of our students. My question to the committee would be is the committee aware of the numerous opportunities our students in public school are afforded? Granted some parents may feel a private school; their curriculum, their particular value systems, and their educational philosophy might be the best choice for their child and that is fine, that is their choice and public tax monies should not support that decision.

Finally, I agree with Representative Keller that as, “Alaskan’s we are truly concerned that our children receive the best education opportunity available and we are willing to move forward in a positive educational decision process.” However, my question is who decided that changing our state constitution and allowing the public to vote would be the best mechanism for moving forward? In school districts and states that have instituted this type of system it has not been proven to be of educational value for their students. Where was the public outcry demanding our legislators take up this type of unprecedented action?

HJR 1 Written Testimony

My name is Joanna Hubbard and I represent myself. I am a tax payer and homeowner from Senator Giessel's District and Representative Hawker's district in South Anchorage. I pay my taxes of all sorts in part to support a quality public education system that supports the development of productive citizens and is available to all. ~~from~~ I do not support the proposed constitutional amendment because I believe it will work against Alaska's unique, integrated ~~communities~~ ^{nature} splintering us into factions rather than bonding us into communities capable of working together. I also believe that money ^{in kind} for a public endeavor has no place going for education which follows specific individual's personal value systems. Families always have the right to educate their children in whatever way they deem best, but it doesn't follow that they have a right to ask the public to fund their individual choice. Please show me that ~~we~~ in Alaska we really don't care how they do it "outside" and don't follow the national trend we would be if this bill is passed.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my ideas.

Joanna Hubbard

4721 Southpark Bluff Dr
Anchorage, AK 99516

hubbard_joanna@asdk12.org

2011 Presidential Awardee for Excellent Science Teaching
8th Grade Science teacher @ Begich Middle School

HJR 1 Written Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue.

As an elementary teacher in a Title I school located in Alaska's largest urban school district, opening Alaska's Constitution for the expressed purpose of allowing public monies for private & religious education without an expressed, defined, well thought out plan is irresponsible.

I have not seen anything that describes costs to citizens (tax payers), consequences to urban, rural & remote school districts and ultimately the trickle down affects to public school teachers and most importantly, public school children.

Our fiduciary responsibility is to all Alaskans and this works to divide and set us back to a time of segregation and social injustice. OPENING THE STATE'S CONSTITUTION WITHOUT FISCAL NOTES, causes/effects, defined outcomes is wrong.

~~Page 2~~

lisa.esperajohnson@gmail.com

Lisa Johnson
5TH GRADE TEACHER
9120 STADY BAY CIRCLE
Anchorage, AK 99507