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Schools Face Cuts Under Murkowski Budget
Reports lists six districts in trouble; others report shortfalls, too

JUNEAU -- Many of Alaska's school districts will have to cut teachers and staff under Gov. Frank Murkowski's proposed education budget, according to a new report by the Alaska Legislative Research Service.

The report assesses the impact of the governor's proposed education budget on 11 school districts. It finds that most won't get enough money under this year's proposal for school funding.

"Our job is to enhance educational opportunity, not let it lag or stagnate," said Rep. Les Gara, D-Anchorage. "We need to work across party lines to build a proposal that reduces class sizes."

The research report estimates that the governor's proposal won't balance the budgets of the Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Petersburg and North Slope Borough school districts, among others.

In addition to those named in the report, other districts, such as Valdez City Schools, Unalaska City Schools and the Copper River School District, have sent letters to the legislature saying they are worried about not having enough money.

At the same time, schools around the state face increasing demands imposed by federal "No Child Left Behind" standards.

"Now is the time to make a real investment in urban and rural schools - not just correct for inflation," said Rep. Woodie Salmon, D-Beaver.

"As parents, we want to see a funding level that makes a meaningful difference in the classroom," said Mary Hakala, coordinator for the parents' group Alaska Kids Count.

"Simply providing inflation funding perpetuates the inadequate funding that leaves too many of Alaska's children behind," said Bill Bjork, President of NEA Alaska.

Hearings will continue this week in the House Education Committee, where school districts will offer their views on this year's school budget.

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-  http://www.akdemocrats.org/Documents/013105_schools_face_cuts_murkowski.pdf

- **Additional information:** [Educational Funding Report Representative Les Gara Representative Woodie Salmon](#)

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