



# Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

[www.akdemocrats.org](http://www.akdemocrats.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • December 10, 2003

CONTACT: Jordan Marshall • (907) 269-0130, Cell: 321-3682

Fax: 269-0132, [Jordan\\_Marshall@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Jordan_Marshall@legis.state.ak.us)

---

## *Senator Guess Offers Another Option for High School Exam*

ANCHORAGE – Senator Gretchen Guess (D-Anchorage) today announced plans to introduce legislation offering an alternative approach to the current high stakes testing for the High School Qualifying Exam (HSQE). The bill will continue to mandate the HSQE for students, and still require it as part of the state and federal accountability system. It will not, however, prohibit students who meet district requirements from receiving a diploma if a student does not pass one or more parts of the exams. Instead, it will require the student's exam results become part of their permanent record.

"The HSQE has refocused our educational system for the better," says Sen. Guess "the exam ensures our graduates can read, write, and compute to a set standard. Yet, the question for all of us this year is whether one test should determine if a student meets the standards, regardless of passing all district requirements."

With this approach, students are rewarded for passing their high school requirements but an employer or higher education institution can also look beyond the diploma to see individual proficiencies. Senator Guess brought the proposal to the Bartlett parent advisory board last week. Parent and local businessman Marc Marlow is in favor of the new alternative.

"I don't think you should base a diploma on one test," says Anchorage business developer Marc Marlow. "One test does not give an employer a full picture of an applicant. A person's ability, character, initiative, and work ethic are just as important and you can't put those things on a test."

The focus and intent of the HSQE will remain the same: a high school diploma should mean something to employers, higher educational institutions, and the community. Senator Guess' approach, however, will recognize the need to empower our students to gain the skills and confidence necessary to lead productive lives.

Former State Board of Education member Paula Pawlowski agrees. "Putting roadblocks in the way of getting a diploma is not acceptable," says Pawlowski. "One test should not determine a child's success in life."

###

***Putting Alaskans First • Moving Alaska Forward 2003***

Sen. Bettye Davis, Sen. Johnny Ellis, Sen. Kim Elton, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Hollis French, Sen. Gretchen Guess, Sen. Georgianna Lincoln, Sen. Donny Olson, Rep. Ethan Berkowitz, Rep. Sharon Cissna, Rep. Harry Crawford, Rep. Eric Croft, Rep. Les Gara, Rep. Max Gruenberg, Rep. David Guttenberg, Rep. Reggie Joule, Rep. Mary Kapsner, Rep. Beth Kerttula, Rep. Albert Kookesh, Rep. Carl Moses