



# NEWS FROM *MARY*

## Representative Mary Sattler Kapsner

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## Education and the 2000 Legislature

### Education Bills to Note

#### HB 253 - School Discipline and Safety Program by Rep. Dyson

As a prime sponsor of legislation last year dealing with school safety issues, I was interested in HB 253. However, I found problems in the way the bill is written. HB 253 requires school discipline & safety programs based on community standards (districts already set standards that appear in students handbooks, for example). Teachers may not be terminated or disciplined for enforcement of standards. School board members could be subject to criminal sanctions. The bill passed the House on April 3 and moved to the Senate.

#### SB 290 - Changes to Pupil Transportation by Senate Finance Committee

SB 290 allows full reimbursement for pupil transportation in FY 01 but only 50% thereafter. The state has previously funded pupil transportation. Reductions would mean districts have to take money from instruction to pay the contract.

#### HB 233. Municipal Bankruptcy by House CRA Committee

This bill authorizes municipalities and REAA's to file bankruptcy. Passed House on April 4. .

#### HB 365 - Consolidation of REAA's by Rep. Rokeberg

HB 365 would create a single REAA in the unorganized borough. Existing school boards would be disbanded but advisory school boards would remain. Referred to 3 committees. No action.

Note: The legislature sits as "assembly" for the unorganized borough and REAA's, although they have not officially met in that capacity. Some majority members are talking about actually holding meeting this summer.

#### HB 327 - Retirement Incentive Program by Rep. Kertulla

Provides for a Retirement Incentive Plan at the discretion of the employer. Referred to 3 committees. No action.

#### HB 191 - Charter Schools by Rep. Dyson

This bill increases the number of authorized charter schools from 30 to 60 and authorizes contracts for 10 years. Also contains provisions related to funding for charter schools. Passed House. Currently in Senate HESS.

#### HB 277 - Reemployment of Retired Teachers by Rep. Halcro

HB 277 would allow teachers who have retired to return to teaching without forfeiting their retirement benefits. Now in House Finance.

### State Funding for Education

Both the House and Senate fully funded the existing **foundation formula** and **quality schools initiative**. Additionally, in the Senate version, a new "**learning opportunity grants**" program was approved. This program is the same type of program as the quality schools initiative--funds are supposed to go to classrooms to provide tools for students and teachers to improve results on the benchmark and exit exams.

A last minute amendment in Senate Finance has **changed the way these funds will be allocated**, however. Similar to the problems we had with SB 36 a couple of years ago, the formula would distribute the learning grants on a per pupil basis, not on the adjusted student basis. This is important for rural districts because it simply costs more to do anything in rural Alaska. It is an **issue of fairness and equity**.

The point is made best by comparing the estimates for Anchorage, which would receive \$300.0 more and a district like LKSD would receive \$108.0 less if the learning grants are not distributed on an adjusted basis. Although this is a Senate battle at the moment, I'm watching it very closely, along with all members of the Bush Caucus.

### Capital Budget - School Construction

The Senate took the lead on capital budget proposals, and so far the decisions have been in something of a "black box." The word in the capital is to expect something to come forward at any time.

### Education Funding: A Big Piece of the Pie

Funding for K-12 and University takes approximately 40% of the general funds available for funding of all state programs. This is one of the reasons education funding decisions are debated so intensely in the legislature..

HB 312/HB 313	Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 01 (begins July 1, 2000)
SB 291	Capital Bill for Fiscal Year 01 (begins July 1, 2000)
HB 322	Governor's Revenue Bond Bill for Education Construction & Maintenance
HB 281	House Finance Committee General Obligation Bond Package for schools, the university and harbors