



Mary spoke in March to a University forum on women's history. She shared Yupik values and spoke of the challenges facing youth today.

# NEWS FROM MARY

## Representative Mary Sattler Kapsner

Representing the Lower Kuskokwim and Upper Bristol Bay

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## Children and Schools and the Legislature

While a major focus of the legislative session was on school construction and major maintenance, the legislature did address several other issues that relating to education and children. The Governor had recommended reinvesting \$19 million in savings in the school foundation formula that resulted from decreased enrollments and additional federal money. He would have used \$7.5 million of the savings to help districts with the challenges of meeting student standards. The legislative majority allowed for only a portion of that request, \$6.2 million, which will be distributed on a per pupil basis statewide. The balance was used to reduce general fund spending.

The University did receive an increase of \$13 million. This falls short of the \$16.9 requested, but will go a long way toward meeting some of the University's goals. Our rural campuses will be see benefits as a result of this increase.

The Governor had requested \$2 million increment for Head Start, funded out of the \$19 million savings, to serve 400 additional children. The legislature did not fund the increase.

This past session I was visited by school boards, superintendents, teachers, univeristy regents, and a host of municipal and business leaders from across the state. What was striking to me was the consistency of the message Alaskans were bringing to my office: We need a state financial plan that includes a reasonable revenue stream; a plan that simply cuts the budget (that is, that simply cuts state services) is hurting us socially and economically. For me, it comes down to a basic question:

*What type of Alaska are we building for our children?*



Barbara Angaiak from Bethel came to talk about education issues and priorities for teachers in the district.



Janie Hoffman, student rep on the State Board of Education, came to visit during a break in the State Board Meeting.

## Bills that Passed the Legislature

**SB 103 by Sen. Lincoln** spotlights the need for **Native Language Education** in districts where the majority of students are Alaska Natives. It requires a Native language curriculum advisory board and asks for recommendations on teaching of the Native language. It is not a mandate, but the bill makes an important statement concerning the attention and respect that should be given Native lanauge throughout the state.

**HB 253 by Rep. Dyson** dealt with school discipline. It puts regulations into statute, requiring districts to adopt a written school disciplinary and safety program.

**HB 445 by the House Finance Committee** creates a pilot program for new rural school construction, aimed at limiting who can contract for projects. The Governor vetoed this bill because its intended result of saving the state money would actually result in costing more for districts with construction plans in place.

**HB 180 by Rep. Cowdery** establishes a crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor if illegal activity related to controlled substances is knowingly committed in the presence of children under 18.

**SB 7 by Sen. Taylor** grants up to 260,000 acres of state land to the University for the purpose of generating revenues for the University.

## Mary's Inhalant Legislation

**HB 253 related to the use of inhalants.** As I indicated earlier, I did not intend to push this bill through the legislature this year. The issues of inhalant abuse by young people are complex, and I feel very good about the visibility we were able to give the problem in the legislature. I'm extremely proud of the work that is being done in Western Alaska on these very issues, and look forward to continuing to work with the outstanding human resources, both youth and adult, that are committed to inhalant prevention and treatment options.