



Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

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KAPSNER LEGISLATION MAKES ALASKA HISTORY A REQUIREMENT

Legislation Aims to Help Students Honor Alaska's Diversity

JUNEAU – Representative Mary Kapsner introduced legislation today that requires high school students to take a class in Alaska history before they graduate. Kapsner sponsored the legislation in an effort to foster better understanding and communication between Alaska's diverse communities.

"I think that knowing where people come from is the first step in addressing personal prejudices and developing a sense of empathy," Kapsner said. "And, I think those things are essential components of any education."

Kapsner's legislation was also spurred by growing community concern about the lack of such education in public schools. Last September, Commonwealth North conducted a study that focused on the issue of the urban/rural divide in Alaska. The study found that little has been done to address issues that divide Alaskans, and because of this, the state may continue to grow fragmented, retarding economic prosperity and leading to more cultural clashes.

Two years in a row, the Alaska Federation of Natives passed resolutions asking for Alaska History education. This year the Alaska Municipal League issued a policy statement in support of civics education for Alaska's students. Kapsner worked with the Department of Education as well as the Association of School Boards to draft the bill.

"Understanding who we are and where we came from helps to heal the urban/rural divide," Kapsner said. "As a Bush Legislator, I take the responsibility for sharing information about my region very seriously, and I continue to believe that we can make progress one person at a time."

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