



# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## REPRESENTATIVE WOODIE SALMON

### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### **HB 233: Preventing Harassment in Schools**

Alaskan parents expect that their children will be safe from emotional and physical harassment by their classmates. Unfortunately, research shows that this harassment, commonly known as bullying, is in fact quite common. This bill asks school districts to adopt policies on bullying and to develop tools to punish the bullies.

According to a nationwide survey of 1,000 students by the Families and Work Institute conducted in 2002, 32 percent of the students surveyed said they'd been bullied at least once in the month prior to the survey, and 12 percent had been bullied five times or more in the same time period. A similar survey, in 1998, showed that 30 percent of the 15,700 students surveyed had been bullied or had bullied another.

The Alaska Association of School Boards' (AASB's) policy on bullying recognizes that bullying disrupts a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. Many Alaskan school districts already have policies on bullying or are in the process of developing such policies. The Alaska State Legislature should act to ensure that all of Alaska's children are safe in our schools.

I respectfully urge your support for HB 233.



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### SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

#### **HB 233: Preventing Harassment in Schools**

**Section One** includes legislative findings emphasizing the importance of safety in schools.

**Section Two** adds harassment and bullying to the list of issues school districts' disciplinary and safety policies must address.

**Section Three** inserts a new section outlining the recommended content of anti-bullying policies. It includes a definition of "harassment, intimidation, or bullying", requires that district policies include reporting and enforcement mechanisms, and recommends that district personnel receive training in the new policy.

**Section Four** amends the statute exempting teachers and other school employees from liability for any civil damage resulting from the enforcement of the new bullying policy.

**Section Five** requires that the Department of Education and Early Development adopt a model policy to assist school districts in development of their own policies.

**Section Six** requires that school districts' bullying policies be in place by September 1, 2006.

**Section Seven** sets the effective date.