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August 14, 2007

Education Task Force Comments

I am proud of the work this task force has done and the compromises members have made in order to forward recommendations that will help give all of Alaska's children the opportunity for a quality education. However, I would like to comment on two items in particular and hope that my concerns can be included in some manner in the final report.

1. **Intensive Needs:** I would like to see the phase-in of intensive needs reflect the same time frame that we recommend for phasing in the 50% of the ISER cost differential. This could be 9x BSA in 2009 and increase by 1x until a multiplier of 13 is reached in 2013, the same year as the last 1/4th of the cost differential. My rationale for mirroring the cost differential phase-in schedule is so that for the next four years all districts will see an increase in their funding and have reason to support the proposal. Another method would be to shorten the phase-in of ISER to 1/3 in 2009, 1/3 in 2010 and the final 1/3 in 2011 so it is parallel to the proposed phase-in for intensive needs.
2. **Required Local Effort:** I propose that the department calculate the required local effort for each district and then apply the lowest calculated mil rate to all districts. This will address the problem of potentially failing a federal disparity test in only three years under the current system. It would also alleviate the concern some districts have that establishing a new floor for the tax mil rate could result in the future loss of a subsidy. An additional benefit to this approach is that as we reach the point in the future when we may need to address the amount of the subsidy, all districts will be coming to the table in an equal position. I have requested the department calculate a schedule reflecting the potential future cost to the State based on this scenario.

I am looking forward to an Education committee in the House that can address these issues and more in all the detail they deserve.