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Representative Carl Gatto Chair, Education Committee

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Education Meeting Discusses Federal Standards **“No Child Left Behind” Will Affect All Education Legislation**

(JUNEAU) – The House Special Committee on Education spent its first meeting of the 23rd Alaska Legislature examining what the federal “No Child Left Behind” Act will do to Alaska’s education system. Education Chair Representative Carl Gatto (R-Palmer) said the Act affects all of the state’s public schools.

“Briefly, it is the long fingers of the federal government reaching down into the loneliest isolated village school manned by one or two teachers and affecting how they perform and requiring these teachers to meet certain levels that may be impossible or even undesirable to meet,” Gatto said.

The Act calls for schools to improve their performance each year to continue to receive federal funding. Those that do not meet that requirement face sanctions. Gatto said some requirements could call for teachers to get additional training, which he said is unreasonably difficult and possibly unnecessary for remote rural schools.

“Many of our schools have one teacher teaching K-12,” Gatto explained. “They can’t just walk out for the year and leave the school behind.”

Gatto said the “No Child Left Behind” Act will affect the direction of state education legislation throughout the session.

“Every time we talk about an issue in education we’ll find out that NCLB will pervade whether it’s school construction or bonding, whether it’s the benchmarks, whether it’s the high school qualifying exit exam, whether it’s teacher retention, or any of the other areas where education is going to be involved” Gatto said. “The state is required to align itself with the federal requirements and there are no waivers.”

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