

Alaska State Legislature



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 1, 2001

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Senate Passes School Conflict Resolution Bill **McGuire's HB 99 Encourages Non-Violence in Schools**

(JUNEAU) – The Senate's unanimous passage of House Bill 99 today will help provide Alaska high school students with the tools to resolve their personal conflicts peaceably, said Rep. Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage), sponsor of the bill.

HB 99 changes state law to require public school safety and discipline plans to include policies to teach students non-violent conflict resolution and mediation practices, McGuire said. It seeks to recognize and reinforce civilized behavioral standards by preparing students with strategies other than violence for resolving differences.

"Young people learn many lessons in school, and one of them should be that it is possible to disagree without coming to blows," McGuire said. "HB 99 makes sure that policies in our school reflect the fact that non-violent conflict resolution strategies are available and can help reinforce positive social behaviors even in our younger citizens."

McGuire said she introduced HB 99 to respond to the alarming number of violent episodes in Alaska's schools, which have ranged from a videotaped fistfight between students in Anchorage to the fatal shooting of a principal and student in Bethel a few years ago.

Passage of HB 99 into law is an important achievement in McGuire's larger efforts to find ways to prevent school violence. She is working to secure reappropriation of previously authorized but unspent state funds toward pilot programs in Anchorage schools to implement complete dispute resolution programs.

High schools in McGuire's South Anchorage district have been the site of notable violent incidents, including a fight between two students that was videotaped and widely publicized, and another fight in which a blow from a baseball bat put a student in a coma.

"We all recognize the problem of school violence is becoming an epidemic, and anything we can do as a Legislature to send a message that we encourage nonviolent resolution of conflicts can not only keep our students safer in school today, but should keep our entire society safer in the future," McGuire said.

HB 99 moves next to the governor.

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