

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

News from the Senate and House Majorities

web site: <http://www.akrepublicans.org>

State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dan Saddler (907) 269-0167
Ron Irwin (907) 269-0257
Actuality line (800) 478-6540

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 19, 2001

CONTACT: Sen. Rick Halford (907) 694-4958
Rep. Brian Porter (907) 269-0155

Alaska School Board Honors Legislature Support for Education Earns Thanks from Statewide Panel

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska State Legislature’s strong support for education has earned the formal thanks of the Alaska State Board of Education, which has passed a resolution expressing appreciation to lawmakers for increasing school funding, building new schools and helping recruit new teachers.

“The Republican commitment to education remains one of our highest legislative priorities, and we have matched the public demand for high academic standards with the money and tools schools need to meet these standards,” House Speaker Brian Porter (R-Anchorage) said today. “I’m pleased to see the state’s highest educational authorities recognize the success of our efforts.”

“Of all the issues tackled by the Legislature, I believe few are more challenging, more rewarding, or have a bigger impact on the future of Alaska than the decisions made concerning our children’s education,” said Senate President Rick Halford (R-Chugiak). “To have our work recognized by this board of educators is truly an honor, because it shows our efforts are making a positive difference in shaping tomorrow’s leaders.”

The Board of Education is the executive board of the state Department of Education and Early Development, responsible for developing state educational policy, writing regulations and representing public views on education to state government.

In its Nov. 28 resolution, the Board said, “The 2001 Alaska Legislature demonstrated its commitment to education by appropriating increased resources to schools, funding new school construction and major maintenance, changing the effective date of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam as a graduation requirement, introducing legislation to address Alaska’s teacher shortage, and concentrating effort to address federal and state requirements for the education of disabled children.”

The Legislature’s educational accomplishments last year include:

- Doubling high school competency test preparation grants to \$12.4 million
- Dedicating \$76 million to build or renovate 32 schools in Rural Alaska
- Revising the competency test effective date to give students a better opportunity to pass
- Adding \$4.6 million in federal funds to reduce class sizes and recruit public school teachers
- Adding \$14 million to the school funding formula, raising the base allocation to \$4,010 per child
- Boosting charter schools with \$2 million in grants, and revising laws to ease future funding increases
- Fully paying school district pupil transportation costs
- Passing laws to improve teacher recruitment and retention

“The Legislature will continue to emphasize education as one of the most important elements of a prosperous, vigorous and healthy state, and we look forward to continued cooperation and support in this effort from the state board, school districts, teachers and parents,” Porter said.

###