



# Senate Majority News

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## **Cowdery Always Strong Supporter of University Funding** **Anchorage News Station Did Not Allow Facts to Get in the Way of a Story**

(JUNEAU) – With nearly a decade of elected service to the State of Alaska Sen. John Cowdery (R-Anchorage) has never voted against a University funding request – and even now, in times of fiscal constraint and the need to reduce State spending, Sen. Cowdery still vocally supports our University system.

Unfortunately an Anchorage television station has decided to misconstrue a statement made by Cowdery and run with a story before obtaining the facts.

“Sen. Cowdery made no threats, veiled or otherwise, concerning the University’s funding at the April 1 State Affairs Committee meeting,” said committee chair Sen. Gary Stevens (R-Kodiak). “When the witness brought up the petition, Sen. Cowdery asked for that list and inquired as to whether any of the faculty on the list were in Juneau lobbying for University funding so he might have an opportunity to correspond with them.”

Cowdery, who strongly supports our President and the important role that coalition forces are undertaking to liberate the people of Iraq, felt it was his duty to correspond with those faculty members from UAF that disagreed with him.

“The witness asked the committee chair if she could provide the names of those people who signed the petition,” said Cowdery. “Time did not permit her reading the names, so I asked her to fax me the list. I mentioned that there were faculty members lobbying for funding in the capitol that day and I wanted to meet with them and hear their views.”

There was no mention from the witness or anyone else in the hearing that they felt university funding was threatened by Cowdery’s statement, but one Anchorage television station decided that would be the story.

According to the Senate Majority Press Office, the Anchorage reporter only made one attempt to contact Sen. Cowdery prior to the report airing on April 3. That contact was made directly to the Senator’s office less than three hours before the story aired while Sen. Cowdery sat in a committee meeting. No contact was made by anyone from the station to the press office, which is the standard protocol when reporters cannot reach a particular Legislator.

“More than 48 hours had passed from the time of the hearing and the story airing on April 3. Had the station truly wanted to secure the Senator’s point of view they could have,” said Senate Majority Press Secretary Ron Irwin. “In my nearly two years as press secretary I can not recall one time when Sen. Cowdery has flatly refused to speak with the press - either through interview or printed statement.”

This same reporter aired that she was unable to locate any UAA students to support Cowdery. According to Casey Reynolds, Government Relations Director for the Union of Students at the University of Alaska Anchorage, that statement was simply untrue.

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Reynolds says that the Union of Students will be voting and believes will pass a resolution of support for Sen. Cowdery today.

“After reviewing the statement and speaking with Sen. Cowdery personally, we are highly satisfied the Senator’s comments were in no way intended to be a threat of any kind toward the university,” said Reynolds whose Union of Students represents a constituency of over 13,000 students. “We count Sen. Cowdery as a long time friend of university students and look forward to working with his office for years to come.”

Reynolds says Cowdery has always supported students’ rights to free speech and support student activism even when those issue differ from his beliefs. He said he believes that Cowdery was simply looking to exercise his right to free speech and engage those faculty members and students that signed the petition in vigorous debate on the issue.”

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