

FACT SHEET FOR SB 237

"An Act relating to the Alaska Railroad Workforce development scholarship program."

1. [SB 237](#) establishes a \$1.2 million scholarship program through the Alaska Railroad.
2. The scholarship program will be for Alaskan students to attend Alaska colleges, technical schools or training programs.
3. The scholarship program will be managed and funded by the Alaska Railroad.

Potentially, the program could offer Alaskan students as many as 200 \$5,000 scholarships to complete their education or training in fields as varied as accounting to welding.

A number of major construction projects are increasingly likely to begin, such as the Knik Arm Crossing or the natural gas pipeline. Historically, Alaska cannot meet the demand for skilled workers in a heated economy. The scholarship program will insure the Alaska Railroad has a strong field of Alaskan candidates for existing or new positions – particularly considering the Alaska Railroad is looking at major construction projects of its own, such as track realignments in the MatSu Valley and Fairbanks, and a possible extension to Fort Greely.

The Alaska Railroad's Alaska-hire rate has dropped from 95 percent in 1999 to 87 percent in 2003, when manpower needs required 15 non-Alaskan hires. While the railroad's 5-year Alaska hire rate is a laudable 93 percent, it is clear the scholarship program will allow the railroad to draw from a better-prepared field of Alaskan candidates.