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SENATE DISTRICT G

SB 192 SPONSOR STATEMENT

“An Act relating to reimbursement of municipal bonds for school construction; and providing for an effective date.”

SB 192 seeks to extend until July 1, 2006 the statutory date for municipalities to authorize school construction and renovation bonds and apply for reimbursement from the state.

The Matanuska-Susitna School District is growing by nearly 500 students each year, which is roughly equivalent to the population of an elementary school. This growth places significant strain on existing school facilities. Currently, there is no available classroom space in any of the district's core-area elementary schools. The district placed 52 portable classrooms throughout the district to alleviate overcrowding in the most impacted schools. The district estimates needing 23 more portables to meet FY06 enrollment growth (at a cost of \$70,000 per portable).

In fall, 2007, the district will open a new Wasilla-area elementary school. By that time, the district's core area elementary schools will have well exceeded their actual capacity by approximately 2000 students, enough to fill four additional elementary schools.

Bonding for new schools is a major piece of the solution for addressing this rapid growth. Debt-reimbursement has been successfully used in the past to construct new facilities.

As of January 1, 2005 the school bond debt reimbursement program ended. I urge your support of SB 192 to extend the program to allow school districts to address their construction and renovation needs.