

Alaska State Legislature



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Committee to Consider Teacher Shortage **Will Visit Urban, Rural Districts; Hold Statewide Teleconference**

(JUNEAU) – Responding to a continuing shortage of qualified teachers in Alaska, the House Special Committee on Education has scheduled statewide hearings on the issue next week.

"Our children depend on an excellent education to prepare them for their future," Rep. Con Bunde (R-Anchorage), chair of the committee, said today. "Again and again, research has shown that the most important ingredient for a quality education is a quality teacher in the classroom. Alaska has many excellent teachers. We need to retain them and recruit some more."

While Alaska has traditionally been an attractive market for professional educators, Bunde said, labor economists and educational experts report that recent economic trends in Alaska and Outside have made it harder for Alaska schools to attract and keep educators.

Created by the legislature last session to address critical issues in Alaska's educational system, the Special Committee on Education will visit four diverse communities to talk with educators, administrators, and parents about Alaska's problems recruiting and retaining quality teachers. The committee will travel to meet with education professionals and community members in the Kodiak School District on Oct. 22, in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Anchorage school districts on Oct. 23, and in the Northwest Arctic Borough School District in Kotzebue on Oct. 24.

Other Alaskans interested in the issue are invited to participate in a statewide teleconference on Tuesday, Oct. 23 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., where committee members will learn more about the barriers to teacher recruitment and retention in Alaska, and hear suggestions on how to break down those barriers from teachers, administrators and community members across the state. Those interested in participating may contact their local Legislative Information Offices for instructions on how to testify by teleconference.

"Every state in the nation is trying to solve its teacher shortage in creative ways," Bunde said. "Alaska must remain competitive in this very important market. We need to identify the diverse problems that exist for school districts across the state, identify creative solutions and implement them quickly for the good of our children. I look forward to meeting with these four communities, and I hope we will hear from many people across the state on Tuesday night."

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