

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE  
**JEANNETTE JAMES**  
PO Box 56622  
North Pole, Alaska 99705  
(907) 456-1546  
FAX (907) 488-4271



in Juneau  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska  
99801-1182  
(907) 465-3743  
FAX (907) 465-2381

House of Representatives  
House District 34

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 3, 2002

CONTACT: Richard F. Schmitz, (907) 465-6791

## **Correspondence School Bill Passes House** **HB 464 Preserves Autonomy of Educational Alternatives**

(JUNEAU) – Alaska’s correspondence schools will retain the authority to select privately purchased text books and set their own standards for monitoring student progress under legislation sponsored by Rep. Jeannette James (R-North Pole) and passed today by the House.

“House Bill 464 is intended to foster the continued successful operation of statewide school district correspondence study programs, with the goal of maintaining the home teacher’s freedom, individuality and innovation,” James said.

Thousands of Alaska children receive educational services through correspondence or home-school programs in Alaska, whether by necessity because they live in remote areas, or by the choice of parents seeking a more direct influence on their children’s academic or moral instruction, James said.

While the state board of education is responsible for setting standards for both the state’s main correspondence program - Alyeska Central School – and other smaller programs, the board recent proposed regulations that would have barred the use of privately purchased class materials, including material designed to convey religious or moral values. The regulations would also have denied parents or correspondence school personal the authority to monitor student progress, and instead require quarterly evaluation by a certificated public school teacher.

“These proposals fly in the face of common sense and good educational practice,” James said. “Correspondence programs have an impressive track record of student achievement, and it seemed these proposals were less an effort to help than to interfere. While I’m pleased that the board withdrew its proposal in the face of widespread protest by parents and correspondence school personnel, I believe this legislation is necessary to set clear educational policy in this matter.”

House Bill 464 takes several steps to ensure the autonomy of correspondence schools, she said, including:

- Authorizing correspondence programs to be certified for five years, unless the program was designated as “deficient” or “in crisis” according to state statute
- Allowing correspondence program administrators to set their own parameters for monitoring students by program personnel, including quarterly grade assignment by a certified teacher.
- Authorizing correspondence programs to establish procedures for approving curriculum materials, home designed courses, and evaluation of student work, in accordance with relevant state law.

[House Bill 464](#) moves next to the Senate for consideration.

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