

# Alaska State Legislature



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## Representative Lesil McGuire District 17

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## **House Passes School Conflict Resolution Bill** **HB 99 Seeks Non-Violent Coping Strategies in Schools**

(JUNEAU) – Alaska high schools would adopt non-violent conflict resolution strategies under House Bill 99, which passed the House today.

Rep. Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage), sponsor of the bill, said she introduced it in response to an alarming number of violent episodes in Alaska's schools, ranging from videotaped fistfight between students in Anchorage to the fatal shooting of a principal and student in Bethel a few years ago.

"Schools are responsible for teaching our young people many lessons, with one of the most important ones being how to get along with one another and resolve our inevitable conflicts peaceably," said McGuire. "This bill will ensure that schools have policies in place to implement non violent conflict-resolution strategies."

HB 99 changes state law to require that public school safety and discipline plans include policies to teach students non-violent conflict resolution and mediation practices. It seeks to recognize and reinforce civilized behavioral standards by preparing students with strategies other than violence for resolving differences.

McGuire said passage of HB 99 is one element of her larger efforts to find ways to prevent school violence, and that she is working to secure state funding for pilot programs to implement complete dispute resolution programs in Anchorage schools.

High schools in McGuire's South Anchorage district have been the site of notable violent incidents, including a fight between two students that was videotaped and widely publicized, and another fight in which a blow from a baseball bat put a student in a coma.

"We all recognize the problem of school violence is becoming an epidemic, and anything we can do as a Legislature to send a message that we encourage nonviolent resolution of conflicts can not only keep our students safer in school today, but should keep our entire society safer in the future," McGuire said.

HB 99 moves next to the Senate for consideration.

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**Broadcasters note:** Comments are available on the Majority Actuality Line 1-800-478-6540