

Alaska State Legislature



Representative Peggy Wilson
District 2

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 12, 2001

CONTACT: Rep. Peggy Wilson (907) 465-3824

House Passes Wilson's School Cost Bill **HB 203 Aimed at More Accurate Education Funding Formula**

(JUNEAU) – A bill aimed at helping determine whether the state's foundation formula fairly compensates Alaska school districts for the varying costs of operating in remote areas passed the House unanimously today.

House Bill 203, sponsored by Rep. Peggy Wilson (R-Wrangell), calls for the Legislative Council to contract for a study of the actual costs of doing business to educate a child in each of the state's 53 districts, including the costs of food, utilities, transportation and health care. The study must be presented to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2002.

“The foundation formula hasn't been updated since 1986, and there have been a lot of social, cultural and economic changes since then that are not reflected in the way we pay for education,” Wilson said. “This bill calls for a study to look at these factors to see what it actually costs to educate a child in each of these communities, so we can have a formula that is equitable and fair to all.”

The state Constitution requires the state to provide free and appropriate public education to all Alaska children, regardless of where they live. But while the state education formula provides for some differences that school districts incur, they are based on a flawed premise, she said.

Under current education support calculations, the state allows for what districts have spent in the past, not on its current needs. The system is unfair because if districts do without some necessary but expensive goods or services, the formula cannot compensate for those foregone expenses, Wilson said.

House Bill 203 moves next to the Senate for consideration.

###

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