

Sponsor Statement for HB 342

Education Funding

An Act relating to appropriations for operating expenses for primary and secondary public education; and providing for an effective date.

Released: January 18, 2002

Contact: Representative Gary Stevens's office at (907) 465-4925

HB 342 would let school districts know the amount of state aide they will be receiving for the succeeding school year by April 1st of each calendar year.

By state statute, school districts are required to submit funding requests to their municipal governments by May 1st of each year. In many instances, the legislature and the governor have not passed the operating budget until well after the first of May. This situation makes it difficult for school districts to prepare an actual financial plan and puts an added burden on local government officials developing their budgets. Over the years, the uncertainty has also caused school districts to layoff educators only to attempt to hire them again once the final budget has been approved.

HB 342 solves this dilemma in two ways. Section one of the bill requires the governor to submit a separate appropriation bill to the legislature for public elementary and secondary schools before the fourth day of each regular session. It also requires the legislature to pass and transmit to the governor a bill to fund education for the succeeding fiscal year. Section two amends a provision in the Executive Budget Act to reflect that a separate appropriation bill to fund education must be submitted by the governor as part of the budget package.

School districts throughout Alaska are dealing with many issues including recruiting and retaining teachers, meeting new pupil performance standards and inflationary costs. The legislature can assist school districts by giving them early notice of their state funding. Please join me in supporting this bill.