

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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Senator Gary Stevens

SPONSOR STATEMENT-HB 20

HB 20, "An Act relating to reemployment of and benefits for retired teachers and principals who participated in retirement incentive programs and to the employment as teachers of members of the public employees' retirement system who participated in a retirement incentive program; and providing for an effective date."

Alaska, like the rest of the nation, is experiencing a severe shortage of qualified teachers and principals. Research has shown that a qualified teacher in the classroom is the single most important school-based factor in a student's success. It is incumbent upon the Legislature to provide additional tools to Alaskan school districts to ameliorate the current teacher shortage and thus continue to assist school districts in their efforts to improve student learning.

HB 20 would allow schools experiencing a shortage of education professionals to reemploy teachers and principals who had retired under a Retirement Incentive Program (RIP). This bill would not require any school district to reemploy any particular retired individual; it would only give them the option to do so.

School districts would be required to certify that they are experiencing a shortage in order to reemploy a RIP-retired teacher or principal. Those reemployed under this provision would not be required to pay back their retirement incentive and could elect to either continue receiving their retirement benefits or to accrue new Teacher Retirement System (TRS) credited service during the re-hire period. The Department of Education would also be able to hire RIP-retired teachers and principals for Alyeska Central School, Mt. Edgecumbe, the Alaska State School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Alaska Vocational Technical Center.

Statute allowing school districts to hire any retired personnel without penalty sunsets on July 1, 2005; school districts would not be able to reemploy any additional retirees after that date.

Hb-20 would provide one more tool to school districts suffering from the shortage of education professionals, and I hope that you will give it your support.