



Alaska State Legislature Senate Majority News

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Senate President Reinforces Education Commitment *Majority Leader Responds To SB 35 Floor Amendments*

(Juneau)— In the wake of doubts expressed over the intent of a Majority bill to increase education funding by \$88 million, Senate President Gene Therriault today offered reassurance that the commitment is real.

“I have personally pledged to the minority that there is no trick here, this is not a ploy to get their vote and then not pass Senate Bill 1. That’s the reason SB 1 was moved to Finance and amended,” said Sen. Therriault (R-North Pole).

On Thursday the Senate Finance Committee amended Senate Bill 1 to increase the base student allocation in the public education foundation formula by \$407, to \$4,576. The amended bill is still in that committee. During the same Thursday meeting, the Finance Committee moved Senate Bill 35, an appropriation bill, to the Senate Floor.

“We’re not trying to get their vote and then not move the student dollar bill,” Sen. Therriault said. “We just need to know what the total appropriation is going to be on Senate Bill 35. When we know the total amount available for education, we will make sure the per-student dollar is adjusted so school districts have complete access to the money, then move the bill to the floor.”

SB 35 unanimously passed the Senate today, but the effective date, which requires 14 votes, failed 12 to 4, and the Constitutional Budget Reserve draw, which requires 15 votes, failed 11 to 5.

SB 35 appropriates the governor’s recommended \$754,613,200 for public K-12 education and \$649,322,300 for the University of Alaska. If the CBR sections had passed, SB 35 would have appropriated an additional \$82 million to K-12, equating to a \$407 increase in the base student allocation, and an additional \$5.8 million to the university.

Sen. Gretchen Guess (D-Anchorage) offered an amendment on the Senate Floor today to fund the increase directly out of the CBR. However, it also deleted the other \$1.4 billion directed to K-12 and the university.

Senate Majority Leader Ben Stevens (R-Anchorage) responded, “We put \$1.5 billion on the table and their response was \$92 million. It was an easy ‘no’,” he said.

Sen. Therriault also sought to allay suspicions that any agreement reached on Senate Bill 35 would later be negated.

“There have been allegations that the administration will dictate our budget decisions to us,” Therriault said. “We are a separate branch of government, they don’t dictate to us, we don’t dictate to them. This is something we plan to work on collaboratively with the governor.”

“We have conveyed to the administration that we believe this plan is the necessary commitment to education,” Sen. Therriault said.

SB 35 was noticed for a reconsideration vote on Monday, and Therriault said he plans to work with the minority over the weekend to reach an agreement.

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