



25th ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
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Fact Sheet for : Senate Bill 219
Sponsor: Senator Gary Wilken

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Short Title: Governor's Panel on School District Cost Factors.

Summary:

- Establishes a Select Panel within the Office of the Governor for the purpose of developing a durable model to measure actual geographic cost difference in providing public K-12 education.
- Affords the public an opportunity to comment on the panel's proposed cost difference model and enables the panel to modify the model based on that public comment and review.
- Requires the panel to provide a final report to the Legislature and the Governor no later than September 1, 2010. That report will include the recalculated school district cost factors based on the panel's best and final model.
- Repeals the current district cost factors in 2011, thus allowing the legislature time to adopt the Select Panel's recommendation.

Benefits:

- Provides a sixty-day public review and comment period and ensures an open process that ensures a statewide perspective.
- Removes the development of a new district cost factor model from parochial legislative advocacy by placing the Select Panel within the Office of the Governor.

Background:

- Alaska's school funding formula includes a component that recognizes that the actual cost of providing education is different for each district depending on its location. This component used in the state's K-12 education funding formula, called the "district cost factors," was last adopted by the legislature ten years ago.

In an effort to update the district cost factors, the legislature has funded two separate district cost factor studies leading to disparate results. Uncertainty about the validity of those studies and controversy over their underlying assumptions and economic analysis has inspired debate and contention among educators, the public, and legislators. Acknowledging the controversy surrounding these reports, the recent Education Task Force recommend phasing in the district cost factors propose by one of these studies. This phased approach affords the state time to develop a model that will accurately measure the relative cost differences between school districts.

SB 219 creates a Select Panel that will take a fresh look at the cost differences between districts with the goal of providing the state with a fair, objective, accurate, and durable district cost model that educators and the public can support.