

**DRAFT TESTIMONY OF HOUSE BILL 192:
NOTIFICATION OF TEACHERS OF LAYOFF OR NON-RETENTION**

By JOHN ALCANTRA, February 13, 2008

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Education Committee. For the record, my name is John Alcantra and I serve as Government Relations Director for the 13,000 public school employee members of NEA-Alaska.

I'm certain it will come as no surprise to this committee that NEA-Alaska opposes House Bill 192. This legislation is very similar to the legislation introduced by Senator Ben Stevens (SB 156) three years ago. This idea is just as bad now as it was three years ago.

Currently tenured teachers must be notified by March 16th if they are to be laid off. This is an important benefit earned by teachers when they begin their fourth year of teaching with the same district. When tenured teachers are notified by March 16th they have appropriate time to attend job fairs (held most often in April) and time to search for new employment.

Furthermore, many schools lock in their staff by having them sign individual contracts, months prior to the end of school. Significant penalties (thousands of dollars) are attached to those contracts if the teachers break them anywhere close to the end of the year.

What this bill does is put all the hardship on the teachers by requiring them early on to notify their district of their intent to return, but allowing the districts the option of laying off teachers on the last day of school. By this time major recruiting drives have already been completed.

Alaska should be doing everything in its power to recruit and retain quality teachers to Alaska. A report published in 2006 by the institute of Social and Economic Research verifies that about 70% of teachers are hired from out side Alaska. Studies also show that 50% of the teaching force leaves the profession after five years. Alaska should not be in the business of making things more difficult for teachers. Although I'm certain the sponsors heart is in the right place by trying to end the annual pink-slip kabuki dance, this legislation would be a step backward.

Part of what seems to drive this type of legislation is that school districts never know what their funding level will be by March 16th. NEA-Alaska supports efforts to forward fund education and to get as much financial information to districts as soon as possible. It would seem a more appropriate response to districts who claim they don't know what their funding levels will allow, would be to support the forward funding of education. The important work done by the Education Funding Task Force this past summer and the drive to fund education by March 1 this year seems to make this legislation superfluous at best.

I appreciate your time and allowing me to testify in opposition to House Bill 192. Please allow the process of early K-12 funding to work without the burden of this legislation moving through the process. Thank You!