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NEWS RELEASE



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Murkowski Signs Education Funding Bills

Record K-12 support, unprecedented school maintenance funding

(Anchorage) – Governor Frank H. Murkowski signed bills at a ceremony at Anchorage East High School today that provides for a third consecutive year of increased funding for education and makes possible more than \$190 million in school construction projects.

House Bill 1 increases per student school funding from \$4,576 to \$4,919 for the 2005-2006 school year. During the three years of this administration, education spending has increased by 22.6 percent. This is the largest dollar increase for schools during any governor's term in state or territorial history.

"We are placing higher standards and expectations on our students and schools, so it makes sense to give schools the resources to meet those standards and expectations," Murkowski said. "We've lived up to our commitment to give each and every child a quality education in a quality school."

Following years of flat funding to the base student allocation, the state's school funding program now totals \$832 million statewide. From 1999 to 2001 the foundation formula rose only 1.8 percent, or a \$60 per student increase. During this administration's tenure, the increase has been \$909 per student.

At the same time, the Department of Education and Early Development has been implementing a system of student assessment and school accountability measures to demonstrate to Alaskans how effectively their children are being taught. Programs such as standards-based teacher certification, teacher and principal mentoring and standards-based instructional materials have all worked in concert with No Child Left Behind to improve Alaska's schools.

"The initiatives that our administration has initiated and the level of funding that Governor Murkowski has secured are going to improve Alaska's schools and provide a bright future for every child," said Education Commissioner Roger Sampson.

Also signed into law was Senate Bill 73, which provides almost \$192 million to 14 of the state's largest school districts for new school construction projects. Local voters will need to approve school construction bonds in order for the districts to access the funds. The state will reimburse local communities up to 70 percent of bonds approved under SB 73.

SB 73 comes on top of an additional \$96.7 million for school construction and major maintenance projects the governor approved when he signed SB 46 in June. The signing of SB 46 and SB 73 marks the first time that every project on the state's school major maintenance list has been funded.

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