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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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State Board of Education & Early Development approves waivers for school districts

JUNEAU -- The State Board of Education & Early Development, meeting by teleconference on October 27, 2008, approved waivers for 28 school districts from a state requirement that districts budget at least 70 percent of their operating funds for instruction.

Districts that cannot comply with the law are allowed to seek waivers from the State Board. Waivers are allowed at two stages: in the fall, when districts submit budgets for the upcoming school year, and in the spring, after districts have submitted audits of actual spending for the previous school year.

The following districts requested and received waivers: Alaska Gateway, Aleutian Region, Aleutians East, Bering Strait, Bristol Bay, Chatham, Copper River, Cordova, Hoonah, Hydaburg, Iditarod, Kake, Klawock, Kuspuk, Lake and Peninsula, Lower Yukon, Nome, North Slope, Northwest Arctic, Pelican, Pribilof, Saint Mary's, Southeast Island, Southwest, Tanana, Wrangell, Yukon Flats, and Yukon-Koyukuk.

Historically, districts that request waivers either have operating budgets of \$3 million or less and therefore do not enjoy economies of scale, or they spend 20 percent or more of their budgets operating and maintaining their school buildings, often in remote rural locations. Districts in those circumstances are strongly affected by reductions in enrollment and attendant reductions in state funds and by increases in energy costs.

If a district cannot meet the 70 percent threshold and does not receive a waiver, the state would be required to withhold the district's state funding, essentially closing the district.

The State Board also approved the appointments of Linda Thibodeau as State Librarian and Director of the Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums; Erik McCormick as Director of Assessment, Accountability and Information Management; and Marcy Herman as Special Assistant to the Commissioner. A separate news release on the appointments will be issued.

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The board packet is online at:

http://www.eed.state.ak.us/State_Board/pdf/08October_Packet.pdf.

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