

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Mike Dunleavy
Senator

Sponsor Statement for Senate Bill 80

SB 80 establishes an active role in public education for the legislature by requiring the legislature to give final approval of statewide educational standards and standardized assessments. Public education is a primary governmental function and the legislature is the ultimate authority in Alaska for public education. This authority is outlined in the Alaska Constitution and has been emphasized in recent court cases. Article 7 of the Alaska Constitution, titled Health, Education, and Welfare requires in part that, "The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State...." In the recent Moore vs. State of Alaska case, it was stated "...this Court returns once again to the language of the Alaska Constitution, which places the responsibility 'to maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the state' squarely upon the legislature –not upon the Department of Education and Early Development and not upon local school districts."

In light of growing concerns surrounding the adoption of a new set of standards and assessments, and with more accountability being demanded by the public, it is crucial that the adopted standards and assessments our state mandates be selected through a process that directly involves the public and the legislature.

SB 80 requires state adopted standards and assessments to be:

- reviewed at least once every five years by a committee composed of no less than 50% of parents with school age children
- reviewed starting in 2015 with a report and request for approval during the 2016 legislative session
- approved by the legislature

SB 80 also prevents the Department of Education and Early Development from accepting grants which have associated standards and mandates (such as assessments), unless approved by the legislature.

The legislature needs to step up its responsibility for public education. I request your support for SB 80.