

Modification of vocational education bill

WASHINGTON — The chairman of a Senate subcommittee on education has agreed to modify a vocational education bill that presented a potential quagmire for Alaska's vocational education program.

As originally introduced by Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., the chairman of the Subcommittee on Education of the Senate's Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, the bill, S.2657, would have required establishment of state boards and State Advisory Councils on Vocational Education.

Educators in the state feared that mandating such organizations, by establishing requirements for federal funds, would have seriously complicated the educational decision-making process.

Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, in a letter to Pell, requested that Pell take those factors into consideration before voting the bill out of committee. Gravel suggested that Pell consider including in the bill a provision that would recognize states that already have a "workable and productive planning agency already in operation for vocational education."

Pell responded by offering a compromise that would provide for a comprehensive planning commission made up of state agencies and public members.

The planning commission would help to plan state programs, but would operate under the State Board of Education, which would retain full administrative responsibility.

The bill, with the compromise, is scheduled for full committee consideration.