

# Bill asks board expansion

From Our Juneau Bureau

JUNEAU — Commissioner of Education Marshall Lind said last week that he believes that there will be no opposition to Senate Bill 124 and House Bill 183. Both bills introduced in the legislature will increase membership on the State Board of Education from seven to nine and increases rural education attendance area (REAA) representation from one to three members.

Lind says the only problem that may arise is the wording of the bill specifically increasing participation from the rural school areas. Lind said, "As far as the membership and action of the board, more attention is being directed to the rural areas than the urban areas by the board already."

He doesn't think that "spelling out three members from the REAA'S will do any good." Lind said having three REAA members on the board would be "disproportionate," since one third of the board will be REAA'S and only eleven percent of the student population come from rural schools. Lind did say that increasing the size of the board would give the department broader views and "every time we can add more we get a more detailed perspective."

He said he hopes that before the legislature acts on the bills they will listen to testimony from the Board of Education meeting in Juneau March 10 and 11. Lind said he felt the increase could be justified even with the current concern in state government regarding boards and commissions keeping costs down. After all, he said, the Board of Education covers everything from education to skill centers to libraries and more.

Sponsor for House Bill 183, Leo Schaeffer, D-Kotzebue, says the bill was drawn up following concern expressed by constituents feeling they were not sharing an equal voice with urban schools on the board. The state, since the decentralization of the State Operated School System, has been divided into 21 Rural Education Attendance Areas, each with its own superintendent and satellite schools.