

## • Knowles unveils ambitious education incentive program

"Alaska's students must be smart, innovative and at the cutting edge of rapidly changing technology to be prepared for the increasingly competitive challenges of the international marketplace," the governor said. In today's climate of declining revenues and reduced budgets, it is vital we provide incentives to stimulate increased private contributions for our post-secondary institutions."

The fate of Knowles' education proposal in the Legislature is uncertain. A number of bills addressing education issues have been introduced this session, including revisions in the states formula for funding public schools.

Last month, Republican lawmakers put forth a package of bills they billed as a comprehensive effort to reform Alaska's schools. Their proposals would:

- require applicants for teacher certification to pass a competency exam before they can be issued an Alaska teacher certificate;

- require high school seniors to pass a competency test before receiving a diploma;

- allow school districts to start charter boarding schools;

- revise the public school foundation program on a per pupil basis.

Education Commissioner Shirley Holloway said all of the bills have potential and said she would work with legislators. She charged that the proposal to revise the foundation formula did not contain sufficient provisions to assure accountability. She also said it does not contain the \$12.5 million incentive for the Quality Schools Initiative that is a centerpiece of the Administration's foundation proposal.

Holloway expressed concern that the bill requiring a pre-graduation exam lacks a requirement for periodic assessment along a student's public school career, and a way to help students who encounter difficulties.

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