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Senator Lisa Murkowski on Education

Summary

One of the keys to a healthy economy and healthy community is a well-educated population and workforce. In a world that is growing increasingly interconnected, it doesn't matter if you live in Hooper Bay or New York City. Access to a quality education along with the willingness to work hard will provide Alaskan children every opportunity to succeed in life. After all, there is no monopoly on brains, and a good education is the ultimate stimulus package.

Bright, Shining Future for our Children

Lisa Murkowski is the mother of two sons. **She wants what every mother wants—a bright, shining future for our children.** She knows that the key to their future, and to a healthy economy and community in which young people can succeed, is a good education that prepares them to take their places in the world.

While some in Washington, D.C. are fighting for more federal control of Alaska's schools, standards, and curriculum, Lisa Murkowski is right there fighting for us. Lisa Murkowski holds a spot on the **Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee where our national education policy is being made**, fighting for the flexibility and solutions that work for Alaska – not requirements to implement policies developed for California or Florida.

Fighting for Alternatives FOR Alaska

Lisa Murkowski has told Education Secretary Arne Duncan “no” to his Chicago-style plan to have the U.S. Department of Education decide who leads and teaches in our schools. She has used her position on the HELP Committee to fight **the Department of Education takeover of Alaska's education standards.** She is fighting against the philosophy that Washington, D.C. bureaucrats know best how to deliver education services in Alaska—a philosophy that Scott McAdams will be required to support.

While Joe Miller has announced a fairy tale plan to eliminate the Department of Education and all the federal funding that helps our schools meet our children's needs, **Lisa is fighting for alternatives that work in Alaska while maintaining critical funding.**



Introduced School Accountability Legislation

Her bill, the School Accountability Improvements Act, would **fix the No Child Left Behind Act so it's a positive partner in Alaska's education reform** plans to meet our responsibility to our children. It would allow states to give schools credit for improving student achievement rather than punishing them for not hitting arbitrary targets. It would ensure our children's teachers know the subject matter while providing common sense solutions for teachers who teach multiple subjects. It would help our rural schools that are working to preserve treasured indigenous languages through Native language immersion programs. And it would make sure our schools can provide effective interventions to struggling students rather than waste it on D.C. mandated ideas that don't work.

Lisa "gets it" on education because she **listens to Alaska's teachers, principals, superintendents, parents, and students** and fights for the Alaskan solutions that will give all of our children a bright and shining future.

Lisa Murkowski Delivers on Education

- Awarded the National Parent Teacher Association's first ever *Congressional Voice for Children Award*.
- Participated, as the lead Republican, in negotiations leading to passage of the Kids in Disasters Well-being, Safety, and Health Act and appointed an Alaskan to the Commission.

Head Start:

As a member of Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee, Lisa Murkowski successfully negotiated for the priorities of Alaska's Head Start programs to ensure that our youngest children have access to high quality early childhood education that helps to set their feet on the right path to academic success including:

- Increased funding for teacher credentialing and provided flexibility to assist Alaska in recruiting and retaining qualified personnel;
- Ensured that Alaskan education grantees may travel to training conferences;
- Required the federal Office of Head Start to consult with Indian Head Start grantees.
- Ensured that tribal government officials can serve as members of Head Start governing boards.
- Improved and strengthened the Head Start funding formula to ensure additional and more stable funding for Head Start and Indian Head Start grantees.
- Succeeded in expanding eligibility for Head Start services to more families.
- Supported maintaining local control of Head Start curriculum, while strengthening cooperation and communication between Head Start and public K-12 schools.

Since the passage of the Head Start Readiness for School Act, Lisa has:

- Blocked the federal Office of Head Start from closing rural Head Start Centers run by Chugachmuit, Kawerak, Tanana Chiefs Conference, and Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association;
- Pushed the Office of Head Start to schedule full tribal consultation meetings and provide timely notice; and
- Requested funding to build a much-needed Head Start Center in Toksook Bay.

K-12:

- Works closely with Alaskan educators, parents, and community organizations to achieve changes to the federal No Child Left Behind Act.
- Persuaded the U.S. Department of Education to allow Alaskan schools to measure success by the growth of student academic achievement instead of a one-shot score on state tests.
- Secured the only waiver in the nation from the NCLB provision that would have required remote, rural schools to transport students to schools in other communities.
- Increased senior federal government decision makers' understanding of the challenges faced by educators in Alaska by taking them on tours of rural schools and arranging meetings with Alaska's school superintendents, principals, and other education leaders.
- Defended and sustained Medicaid reimbursements to schools for the services they provide to Medicaid-eligible students with disabilities.
- Improve the Teacher Quality section of the Higher Education Act to fund and improve teacher and principal training, residency, and mentoring.
- Extended funding for the Secure Rural Schools program for timber-dependent communities with a new formula that is more advantageous to Alaska.
- Saved the Alaska Native Educational Equity program during both the Bush and Obama Administrations.
- Provided \$500,000 for Skills Alaska, a statewide student success program, through the Avant-Garde Learning Foundation.

College Students and Faculty:

- Successfully enacted legislation to make Iisagvik College in Barrow eligible Federal Land Grant School funding (2008).
- Consistently supports funding for Iisagvik College through the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities grant program.
- Consistently supports funding for certain rural campuses of the University of Alaska through the Strengthening Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions program.
- Sponsored, fought vigorously for, and won a provision to make it easier for lower rank/lower income members of the military, their spouses, and their children to qualify for federal Pell Grants (2007).
- Sponsored and won authorization for the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program at the University of Alaska (2008).

- Inspired the creation of and directly negotiated the details of the new College Access Challenge Grant Program (2007) to help more at-risk students prepare for and attend college.

Negotiated provisions in the College Cost Reduction and Access Act and the Higher Education Opportunity Act to:

- Ensure that students with disabilities receive a quality higher education
- Allow Ilisagvik College in Barrow to access funding to improve and expand coursework for tribal governance and tribal public policy.
- Improve campus safety.
- Ensure home school students have access to federal financial aid for college and job training.
- Create a new loan deferment program for National Guard and Reserve who are called to active duty.
- Increase the maximum Pell Grant.
- Create a new Public Service Loan Forgiveness program for those who devote 10 years to local, state, federal or non-profit public service employment.
- Cut student loan interest rates.
- Make the cost of college and the availability of federal student aid more transparent for students and parents.
- Make it easier for low-income students to qualify for zero Estimated Family Contribution in calculating federal student aid.
- Lower the cost of textbooks, including requiring publishers to sell textbooks and other materials separately and to require colleges to take steps to reduce the cost of textbooks and other materials.
- Simplify the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form.
- Require the U.S. Department of Education to provide a one-stop financial aid website, to create a webpage to provide information about financial aid for military service members and veterans, and to post public and private financial aid opportunities for individuals pursuing a career in science, technology, engineering, and math fields.
- Improve accountability for federal student aid funds used by U.S. students at foreign medical and nursing schools.
- Enable orphans, foster and homeless youth to access affordable federal student aid.
- Allow full-time firefighters, Tribal College and University faculty, librarians, and speech-language pathologists to be eligible for loan forgiveness under the Perkins Student Loan program.
- Authorize the Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) program, which has proven successful in helping at-risk students to succeed in college in Kenai and other locations nationwide.
- Improve and continue the federal TRIO programs, such as Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and GEAR UP, that assist at-risk youth to succeed in college.

Job Training:

- Increased funding to the Southwest Alaska Vocational and Education Center – King Salmon.
- Increased funding to the Alaska Native Aviation Training Center and for Yuut Elitnaurviat (The People’s Learning Center) – Bethel.
- Increased funding to the Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center – Nome.
- Provided \$308,000 to expand vocational training including distance learning through the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.