

Quick update on the 2015 Session

Government Relations Director Tom Begich

April 15, 2015

While the Session is still underway, and in many ways education has taken a hit in this Legislature, there are a number of bright spots with our CEAAC priorities.

- 1) Kivalina School – the last school named in the *Kasayulie* settlement was originally introduced in the Governor’s budget at \$4.6 million as a good faith effort to meet the consent decree conditions and begin the planning for this school. The Governor also included \$2.5 million for the access road for Kivalina. The Capital Budget that passed the Senate has increased the school amount to \$43 million and, while the road funding is not included in that budget, it could be included in the House version of the budget. We are pleased that the Legislature has so far acknowledged its obligation to fulfill the *Kasayulie* settlement.
- 2) The Major Maintenance components included by the Governor in his budget included the \$10 million increment for the Demoski School (the 2nd project on the Major Maintenance list). This project was passed by the Senate at the full amount and we will be working to see that it is retained in the House version of the Capital budget.
- 3) Pre –K was eliminated from the budget as were a number of other Operating Priorities for CEAAC as part of the Legislature’s overall budget reduction. However we are working diligently through the process and believe that we will be able to restore some Pre-K and Parents as Teachers Funding, at least some portion of the \$47 million cut from the BSA and a number of other areas critical to our long-term efforts to mentor teachers and improve education outcomes.

We have successfully pushed our Legislative priorities. We are not stopping there. This is a unique Legislature that will require a final package that will necessarily need to tap the Constitutional Budget Reserve, giving those who are fighting for education unusual leverage in this Legislative Session. Our team is providing them advice through this process and this has helped ensure that our priorities are given consideration as the Legislature reaches its final stage of deliberation. Where possible, members should weigh in with your support for a strong education system for Alaska and strong support for Alaska’s Children and Alaska’s Future. Your efforts from your hometowns coupled with our efforts in Juneau will help shape the end of this legislative session.

I look forward to providing an even more favorable report at the end of the session, but there is much work yet to complete.

For more information, please contact Tom Begich at (907)350-1635