



BERTA'S BRIEFINGS

Representative Berta Gardner

Serving Geneva Woods, College Village, Green Acres, Tudor, Taku
and Campbell Park

Write Me: State Capitol Bldg., Room 424
Juneau, AK 99801

Call Me: 1-800-331-4930

E-Mail Me: Rep_Berta_Gardner@legis.state.ak.us

My Website: <http://gardner.akdemocrats.org>

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Finally, Some Real Help for Alaskan Students

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

When I first heard about the proposal to provide merit scholarships for Alaskan students to attend college or career/vocational schools I was a bit skeptical. Through numerous hearings and discussions, I've come to be an enthusiastic supporter of the Governor's Performance Scholarship (GPS). I now understand the GPS is really about reforming K-12 education in this state.

Education Commissioner LeDoux has described the GPS as **"an invitation to excellence which focuses on what students can do."** We

want to use the GPS to encourage students to think about the future, to have a plan and to choose to take a rigorous course load to better prepare themselves for post-secondary education. **We want to see a culture of students seeing opportunity and valuing academic effort in an initiative available to K-12 students across the state.**



Representative Gardner speaking about HB 15, banning minors using their cell phones while driving, during a press conference earlier this month.

The goals of the GPS are to increase:

- High school graduation rates
- Academic performance of students
- Preparedness for post secondary education
- Quality of education offered by high schools
- Student scores on college entrance exams
- Job training opportunities for students

- Post secondary achievement and graduation rates
- Number of high school graduates who pursue higher education in-state

The criteria for students to qualify for the GPS will be:

- Rigorous courses including 4 years of Math, Science, and English and 3 years of Social Studies
- High GPA
- Benchmark achievement on ACT or SAT tests

The GPS scholarship will be granted in three tiers depending on GPA and Achievement test scores. Students will be eligible for 100%, 75% or 50% scholarship for 8 semesters over six years. Career/Vocational track students will be eligible for tuition assistance for two years.

What will this cost and how will we pay for it? I remember the adage that if you think education is expensive, ignorance is worse. There is no doubt that the GPS is a very expensive program. This year we anticipate a **surplus of about two billion** and we have a **savings account of ten billion**, not counting the Permanent Fund. With enough political will, we can create an education fund of \$400 million, which can generate 5%/year to be used for GPS scholarships. **Where else can we spend \$20 million and create a sea change of opportunity for Alaska's students? A wise investment.**

I'm Berta and I'm Still Listening...

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Berta". The letter "B" is large and stylized, with a loop at the top. The rest of the name is written in a cursive, flowing style.

