

**Anchorage School Board  
Legislative Candidate Survey**

Name:     Macon Roberts    

District:     Senate District P    

Please limit written responses to 50 words or less.

**1. PERS/TRS cost Increases for Employers:**

The state's actuary consultant has indicated the statewide unfunded liability for the PERS and TRS retirement systems is \$6.9 billion as of June 30, 2005. The Alaska Retirement Management Board recently established employer contribution rates for the Anchorage School District for FY 2008 to be 40.89% for PERS and 54.03% for TRS. This equates to approximately \$80 million increase in retirement costs for all funds in the Anchorage School District compared to the current year.

- A. Will you support full state funding of the state-mandated employer cost increased to PERS/TRS within the first 60 days of the legislative session so districts are not forced either to reduce core services or to give layoff notices to tenured staff while waiting for a solution?

**Yes and no. No, because there is an alternative to funding and paying for the current inflated rate.**

- B. What is your solution for meeting the long-term funding demands of PERS & TRS?

**Ask the new governor to ask the ARM (Alaska Retirement Management Board) to reverse the 2005 decision to raise the rate of the retirement system and place it at its current national level. Vote to repeal SB141.**

- C. What ideas do you have to help districts recruit and retain highly qualified teachers given the new defined contribution retirement program?

**Partner with the Municipality of Anchorage and financial institutions for low rate mortgages and reduced property tax rates for the first 10 years. For Alaskans remaining or returning, home student loan forgiveness.**

## 2. State Funding for K-12 Education:

Education is a core, essential function of the state as established by the Alaska constitution. However, each year school districts must implore the Alaska Legislature for funds adequate to meet rising costs and increased mandates from the state and federal governments. The need to mount this yearly effort is disruptive, time-consuming, and wasteful, while leaving districts unable to do meaningful long-term planning due to uncertain funding.

- A. What are you willing to do as a legislator to ensure that K-12 education receives adequate state funding this coming year in order to meet both federal and state mandates?

**Vote for forward funding and adequate funding. Introduce a bill to establish an educational inflation proofing endowment which will be added to each year's budget at the current inflation rate.**

- B. Aside from the PERS/TRS issue, what is your solution for meeting the long-term funding needs of K-12 education, providing for both adequacy and reliability?

**I plan to introduce a bill to guard against educational inflation. I would like to establish an endowment solely for "inflation proofing" the forward funded schools budget.**

- C. What would be your solution for helping districts meet the additional cost burden when intensive needs special education students enroll after the count date for funding?

**Apply for additional grants for IDEA.**

## 3. School Debt Reimbursement:

Funding of the state's school debt reimbursement obligation is subject to annual appropriation by the legislature. In addition, a program created by the legislature to reimburse 60% to 70% of debt service applies only to bond-funded school construction and maintenance projects approved by voters before November 30, 2008 and then expires.

- A. Will you support full funding of the state's existing school debt reimbursement commitments?

**Yes. I would support including state debt reimbursement obligation.**

- B. What is your solution for meeting the long-term school construction and maintenance needs of school districts across the state?

**Remove the very costly and high anxiety bond process and have the district apply directly to the legislators for funding.**

- C. Do you support extending the current state school debt reimbursement program to cover projects voters approve in the future?

**Yes, absolutely.**

**4. Changing Economy and Increased Academic Expectations:**

The economy of our country and our state is changing. Even as state and federal standards require districts to bring all students to greater proficiency, employer requirements of graduates continue both to increase and to change in content.

- A. How do you think our schools/district should change to meet the needs of a changing economy and increased academic expectations?

**Help the public realize the advantage of small class size to increasing academic achievement.**

- B. What, if any, is the role of the legislature in facilitating or implementing these changes?

**Help to increase the needed funding.**

- C. What ideas do you have to help districts prepare Alaska's students to meet the current and growing demand for a trained and technically skilled workforce?

**I would like to see a doubling in size of the workforce and technology facilities and class to get more students.**

**5. Increasing Technology Needs related to Student Learning and Parent Access to Information:**

Like a foundation not highly visible but critical to the success of the whole education program, technology in our school system must receive the attention due to such an essential base.

- A. What role do you see technology playing in education of today's students for jobs of the future?

**A very crucial role. Technological education will be needed for almost any kind of work.**

- B. What is your plan for providing adequate funding to meet the growing and ever-changing need for technology in our schools to keep our students competitive in the global market?

**This will come out of the overall increased funding package I will be voting for.**

- C. How will you help districts update antiquated student information systems to, among other needs, allow educators and parents access to assessment and achievement information to make the best decisions for students' academic programs?

**Provide additional soft and hardware and provide funding to bring in trainers.**