

# BETHEL PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER

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## TOPIC: IMPACT OF GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET

**CURRENT SITUATION:** The Governor's proposed 2015-17 state budget exacerbates the problem of the state not fully funding K-12 salaries.

## THE IMPACT ON THE BETHEL SCHOOL DISTRICT:

### 1. **Statewide COLA.**

The Governor proposed a statewide COLA of 3.0% in FY 15-16 and 1.8% in FY 16-17. This fails to address the concern of the State Supreme Court that there is too much reliance on local levies to fund basic education. The combined effect of the proposed COLA and retirement rate increases on Bethel School District is an additional \$2.8 million required from local levies in FY 15-16 and \$0.7 million more required in FY 16-17. Local levies have been used for decades to shore up the lack of state funding K-12 salaries. This proposal does not address the underlying problem – it exacerbates it.

### 2. **Reduction of K-3 class size to 17.**

The Governor proposes reducing class size to 17 in grades K-3 in FY 2016-17. If school districts do not staff at that level they will receive reduced funding. The state funding would partially fund 81 teachers but the Bethel School District would have to hire a total of 94 teachers to meet the class size of 17. This proposal would require an additional \$3.0 million of local levy funds to cover the difference between what the state funds and the District's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) requires (TRI, etc.). Further, the District would need the equivalent of 4 additional elementary schools (this will cost approximately \$35 million per building for a total of \$140 million) to house the increased number of classrooms.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Legislature needs to address the issue of locally funded staff compensation first, with the state taking responsibility to fully fund teachers pay, prior to imposing smaller class sizes or cost of living increases.

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