



ALEC 2007 Press Releases

December 17, 2007

Economic Ranking of All 50 States Released

Washington, D.C.—The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has released its first economic ranking of all 50 states, *RICH STATES, POOR STATES: ALEC—Laffer State Economic Competitiveness Index*, by renowned economist Dr. Arthur Laffer and *Wall Street Journal* economics writer, Stephen Moore.

The authors identify 16 policy variables with a proven impact on the migration of human and investment capital in and out of states. According to their findings, a record eight million Americans moved from one state to another in 2006, revealing which states have the most dynamic and desirable economies, and which are "has-been" states. The winners in this contest are generally the states with the lowest tax, spending and regulatory burdens. The biggest losers are California, the Northeast, and the Midwest.

"States are in direct competition with each other for human capital and business investment. State governments that think they can attract jobs and people, and grow their economies, by taxing their citizens at a higher rate than their neighbors are sadly mistaken. Legislators should take a close look at where their state ranks in this book and use it as a tool to help them improve," said Arkansas State Senator Steve Faris, ALEC's 2008 National Chairman.

Dr. Arthur Laffer is the founder and chairman of Laffer Associates. He is a renowned economist, father of the famed "Laffer Curve" and former member of President Reagan's Economic Policy Advisory Board. Stephen Moore is a member of the editorial board and a senior economics writer for the *Wall Street Journal*. Moore was also the founder and president of the anti-tax Club for Growth.

"The historical evidence is clear: States that keep spending and taxes low exhibit the best economic results, while states that follow the tax-and-spend path lag far behind. Today, many states stand at a crossroads, and it will soon become apparent if lawmakers choose to use history as a guide for their actions. No state has ever taxed its way into prosperity. This is not about Republican versus Democrat, or left versus right. It is simply a choice between economic vitality and economic malaise," said Jonathan P. Williams, Director of ALEC's Tax and Fiscal Policy Task Force.

The complete book is available online at www.alec.org; each state can be downloaded individually. Also available is a link to the C-SPAN video presentation by the authors.

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October 24, 2007

ALEC Launches The Atlantic Bridge Project:
The triumph of noble ideals. Sacrifices rewarded.
Friendships forged and not forgotten.

Washington, DC—The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is pleased to announce the launch of The Atlantic Bridge Project as the latest component of its International Relations Program. The project aims to foster positive relationships between conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic, so that they may further the ideals exemplified by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

ALEC is proud to launch this project in conjunction with the Atlantic Bridge Group, a non-profit organization chaired by the British Conservative Shadow Minister for Defense, Liam Fox MP. The organization is supported by Lady Thatcher and ALEC Alumni Congressman John Campbell who serves on the Atlantic Bridge Advisory Board.

There will be a series of events aimed at conservative leaders from the field of politics, the media, business and academia – exposing them to innovative conservative thinking from the U.S. and Great Britain and helping them to forge new transatlantic relationships.

Catherine Bray has joined ALEC to run The Atlantic Bridge Project. As the new Director of International Relations Catherine Bray brings to ALEC seven year's experience as Chief of Staff to Mr. Richard Ashworth, a leading British Conservative Member of the European Parliament, event coordinator for the Atlantic Bridge Group in London and former local government candidate.

The ALEC Atlantic Bridge Project will facilitate the exchange of ideas between state legislators and their counterparts in the U.K local government system. ALEC has 27 European legislative members and expects to increase that number substantially through the project.

October 18, 2007

ALEC Creates GPS-Tracking Bill for Criminals

The members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) have enacted model legislation to enhance the safety of our communities by using Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) to track pretrial defendants and convicted criminals. ALEC's bill contains provisions to ensure state and local officials use the latest GPS technology available. The bill also includes strict rules to ensure compliance by criminal participants.

ALEC's model legislation calls for a criminal offender to wear a waterproof, tamperproof, non-removable ankle bracelet which will give authorities his or her location. With this technology, authorities can detect if the offender is in compliance. GPS tracking allows police officers to know if a pedophile is at a school or play ground or if a criminal is near the home of a former victim.

The model legislation also gives law enforcement the tools needed to enforce compliance with the GPS program. Offenders that break any of these rules can be sent back to jail.

Rep. Paul Ray (UT), the Chairman of Alec's Criminal Justice & Homeland Security Task Force said, "This GPS offender monitoring legislation is what all states should be looking at. It ensures states use the most up-to-date technology that truly protects the public. Now we will know where an offender is located at all times, and using this historical location information law enforcement will even be able to perform crime scene correlation. Any legislator who is serious about stopping predators should consider this legislation."

Rep. Scott Suder (WI), a member of ALEC's Sexual Predator subcommittee said, "The ALEC-endorsed legislation is just what the public needs to ensure that the best GPS offender tracking technology is selected by each state. This critical public safety bill also gives law enforcement the tools needed to enforce the necessary requirements for running an electronic monitoring program."

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October 10, 2007

Sea Treaty Threatens States' and Nation's Sovereignty

WASHINGTON, D.C.—On Thursday October 4, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on the Law of the Sea Treaty (L.O.S.T). The treaty, which was originally rejected by President Ronald Reagan in 1982, has been revived with the support of the Bush Administration. The treaty threatens our nation's sovereignty by allowing the United Nations (UN) to regulate sea and land pollution and enact global taxes.

Environmental protection provisions in L.O.S.T will impact all states. Unbelievably, the treaty allows the UN to regulate pollution from "land-based sources." This will have a direct impact on all states. According to Tennessee Representative Susan Lynn, Chair of ALEC's Commerce, Insurance, and Economic Development Task Force, "The people of my state expect lawmakers, not unelected bureaucrats at the UN to make environmental and tax policy."

Aside from regulating our environmental polices, L.O.S.T empowers the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to impose taxes on American companies. Natural gas and oil companies, which export minerals more than 200 miles off shore, will be forced to pay seven percent of their profits to the I.S.A. Lynn added that "This treaty a terrible idea that would give the United Nations control over 7/10ths of the earth's surface. We must cautious about giving away such sovereignty because he who rules the sea will one day rule the land."

Furthermore, the UN body that will administer L.O.S.T only gives the U.S. one vote and no veto authority. This will, in effect, allow an international body to impose environmental regulations and tax policy on our citizens without even the support of our representative at the UN-let alone voters.

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September 17, 2007

State Legislators Urge Congress To Oppose Tax On Internet Access

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) are urging Congress to enact new legislation supporting a permanent tax ban on Internet access.

The resolution, passed at ALEC's Annual Meeting in July, asks Congress to act before the current tax moratorium on Internet access expires November 1, 2007. ALEC's members passed the resolution contending that taxing Internet access would slow broadband deployment, particularly in rural and low-density areas, decrease telework opportunities, and widen the digital divide.

"Congress should not allow states to put up barriers to internet access, the internet is too important of a tool for our republic to have a tax as a barrier," said Rep. Jamie Van Fossen of Iowa who also serves as ALEC's Public Sector Chair of the Tax and Fiscal Policy Task Force.

According to ALEC, the Internet tax could also hinder educational opportunities to lower-income Americans, as only 11 percent of households with incomes below \$30,000 have broadband service compared to 61 percent of households with incomes above \$100,000.

"When you tax something, you get less of it," said Jonathan Williams, ALEC's Tax and Fiscal Policy Task Force Director. "Taxing the very technology that has fueled much of our economy's productivity growth will not be an economic or a political winner. The Internet is one of the last frontiers the tax man has been unable to conquer. Let's hope our representatives in Washington keep it that way."

The ALEC resolution supporting a permanent ban on direct and hidden taxes on Internet access could prove influential as ALEC currently has 86 former members serving in the United States Congress.

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September 17, 2007

State Legislators Call For Searchable Web Site To Track State Spending

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) say taxpayers should be able to easily access and track how their state is spending their tax dollars through the creation of a public Web site.

Passed by ALEC members at their Annual Meeting in July, the “Taxpayers Transparency Act,” an ALEC “model bill,” requires each state’s budget office to create and maintain a searchable-database Web site. The site would detail state government spending and performance results. The Web site would be open to the public at no cost.

"Government should have the same ease of understanding it's budget as we expect from private sector business," said Rep. Jamie Van Fossen of Iowa, who also serves as ALEC’s Public Sector Chair of the Tax and Fiscal Policy Task Force.

All government department budgets would be searchable, including board commissions and institutions of higher education. This includes individual state agencies, government programs, as well as elective offices in the executive branch and the legislature.

“The Jeffersonian principle of limited government is integral to our mission at ALEC,” said Jonathan Williams, ALEC’s Tax and Fiscal Policy Task Force Director. “Our new budget transparency model language will give lawmakers a great tool to protect taxpayers by holding government accountable for wasteful spending.”

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September, 12 2007

**ALEC Resolution Supports the Electoral College:
Opposes National Popular Vote Legislation**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — ALEC's National Board Members gave final approval to a resolution, passed by its members, in support of the current Electoral College system used to elect the President of the United States.

ALEC's First Vice Chairman, State Sen. Steve Faris (AR), introduced the resolution after his state came close to passing a bill that would have awarded the state's Electoral College votes to the winner of the national popular vote instead of the winner of the state's popular vote.

"The proposal in Arkansas would have made it possible for a presidential candidate to win our state by an overwhelming majority, only to see the state's Electoral College votes go to his or her opponent who won the national vote," said Faris.

Under the current system, states are granted one Electoral College vote for every member of Congress from the state. There are a total of 538 Electoral College votes, and a candidate must win at least 270 in order to become president.

The founding fathers created the Electoral College system to ensure that a balance is maintained between large and small states and among different interest groups in the country. Under the National Popular Vote system, a candidate could emerge victorious, from a multi-candidate race for president, having won only a majority of votes in one region of the country.

Across the nation, some groups are pushing legislation to have states award their Electoral College votes to the presidential candidate who wins the national popular vote. The proposed multi-state compact goes into effect after enough states, to represent a majority of the Electoral College, have passed the legislation. Currently, only Maryland has enacted the legislation into law.

"I am proud ALEC has endorsed this resolution and is committed to oppose all national popular vote legislation," Faris said. "It is imperative the work of our forefathers on this issue be respected and protected."

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July 9, 2007

Health Care Reform Expert to Testify Before Idaho Legislature Health Care Task Force

(Washington, DC)—Christie Raniszewski Herrera, Director of the Health and Human Services Task Force at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) will testify before the Idaho Legislature's Health Care Task Force in Boise on Wednesday, July 11 at 9 am in the Joe R. Williams Building, Basement Conference Room. Ms. Herrera will provide legislators with an overview of efforts and initiatives from other states to address the problem of rising health insurance costs.

Testimony Schedule for Christie Raniszewski Herrera*
Director, Health and Human Services Task Force, ALEC
Wednesday, July 11, 2007
HEALTH CARE TASK FORCE
Joe R. Williams Building, Basement Conference Room
700 W. State Street, Boise, Idaho

*Copies of all testimony to be available after 3:00 p.m. July 9.

To speak with Ms. Herrera or to receive a copy of her testimony, please contact Jorge Amselle at (202) 742-8536, or by e-mail at jamselle@alec.org.

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March 21, 2007

Maryland to Consider Scholarship Program for Children in Foster Care

Annapolis, MD—Maryland legislators are holding hearings today to consider a bill (HB 1002) that would provide educational choice to students in foster care. Responding to the pervasive problem of underachievement and educational disruption among these students, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is testifying in favor of scholarships for Maryland foster care students to attend the school of their choice.

“Not only are foster care kids less likely to perform as well as others academically, they are also more likely to be either underserved or over served with special education programs,” said Matt Warner, ALEC Education Task Force Director, speaking before the House Ways and Means Committee of the Maryland General Assembly. “We can’t eliminate all of the challenges in the lives of foster care kids, but if we can take away one major element of disruption and chaos—school reassignment—we will see many positive effects,” Warner added.

This bill, based on ALEC model legislation, would allow foster care kids and parents to find the right environment for their needs, provide a stable educational and social environment and give faculty and administrators more time with foster care students to develop better assessments of their needs.

Similar legislation was adopted in Arizona in 2006, offering students in foster care scholarships to attend the K-12 school of their choice, and several other states are considering this legislation as well including Florida, Oregon, Tennessee and Texas.

ALEC believes that if more foster kids are given the chance to remain in a consistent school environment, fewer will experience grade-level challenges, social development will improve and more foster care kids will be college-bound and therefore less likely to experience joblessness and homelessness. Maryland’s proposed HB 1002 seeks to minimize school reassignment for its students in foster care and thereby give them a better chance to succeed in school and in life.

Matt Warner is available for comment and interviews on this issue and can be reached at (202) 742-8542 or at mwarner@alec.org.

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June 19, 2007

**Gov. Perry (TX) Supports Competition in Teacher Certification:
Alternative Teacher Certification Gains traction in the States**

Texas Governor Rick Perry vetoed legislation recently which would have provided financial incentives to teachers certified through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) because it excluded other teacher certification groups.

According to Governor Perry's veto message to the Texas legislature, "By allowing stipends only for NBPTS certification, House Bill No. 2646 essentially is a vendor-specific bill that would put NBPTS at a distinct advantage over competing certification programs, including the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence.... There is no reason to preference NBPTS certification over other worthwhile programs that recognize teachers who consistently improve student performance."

Full statement is available here:

http://www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/press/bills/veto_statements/message-hb2646

The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, an ALEC member, currently has a pilot program in Florida and Ohio to certify Master Teachers based on student achievement, live observation of teachers in the classroom, mastery of subject matter and principal recommendation.

According to David Saba, President of ABCTE, "Our program certifies teachers based on results, and evaluations of their skills and knowledge. Many state legislators have expressed a desire for pay for performance plans like the Master Teacher program based on their concerns in having just one recognition program which relies on portfolios, videos of classroom performance, and individual reflection." ABCTE expects to launch the Master Teacher program next year to provide states another options for recognizing great teachers in the classroom.

More states are also seeking ways to improve their teacher certification options. South Carolina passed legislation last week to become the seventh state, joining Florida, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Idaho and Utah, to recognize ABCTE's Passport to Teaching program, as a route to state teacher certification. The Passport to Teaching program is unique and designed specifically for career changers.

At the start of the 2006 school year South Carolina was short 680 teachers and needed to hire 8,101 new teachers to fill vacancies. Passport to Teaching certification will help to meet the critical need for new teachers in South Carolina by offering another alternative program that will attract professionals into teaching.

For more information about ABCTE, please visit <http://www.abcte.org>.

ALEC's Model Alternate Certification Act is [here](#).

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June 18, 2007

Court Upholds Workers' Rights on the Use of Union Dues for Political Purposes

Washington, D.C.—The U.S. Supreme Court last week ruled that states can require that unions get permission from non-member workers before spending their fees on political activities they may not support, overturning a ruling by the Washington State Supreme Court.

In *Davenport v. Washington Education Association*, the state of Washington argued in support of its campaign finance law that restricts unions' ability to use non-member fees to support political or lobbying activity. The Washington State Supreme Court ruled that the law was unconstitutional, that requiring unions to get permission from workers was "too heavy an administrative burden," and that unions are free to spend the fees as they please once they receive them.

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) joined with several other organizations and filed an *amicus curiae* with the U.S. Supreme Court supporting the state legislature's position. "It's important that teachers are free to work without worrying about losing their hard-earned money to political activities they do not support," said Matt Warner, ALEC's Education Task Force Director.

In the past, teachers who did not want their money funding political activity contrary to their views or beliefs were forced to appeal to the union to stop doing so. According to the law ruled constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court last week, the union must secure the consent of all non-member workers before spending their money on lobbying and other forms of political activism.

ALEC continues to offer model legislation designed to protect workers' First Amendment rights, similar to the law upheld last week. Matt Warner, Education Task Force Director for ALEC, is available for media interview or commentary. Please contact ALEC's Public Affairs Department at (202) 466-3800.

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June 13, 2007

Congressmen Threaten State Road Projects

Washington, D.C.— The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) strongly opposes the efforts of Congressmen James Oberstar (D-MN) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR) to dissuade states from using Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) agreements for new road projects.

Rep. Oberstar, who serves as the Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and Rep. DeFazio, who serves as the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, wrote to governors, “We write to strongly discourage you from entering into public-private partnership agreements...” They also threatened such projects by adding, “The Committee will work to undo any state PPP agreements that do not fully protect the public interest and the integrity of the national system.”

ALEC believes that under the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, states reserve the right to fund road construction projects as they see fit. It would be almost totally unprecedented and a violation of the principle of federalism for Congress to begin micro-managing the construction and funding of state highways.

“Congress should not threaten to undo legally binding contracts that state governments have entered into with private companies,” said Delegate Bill Howell, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates. “The elected state officials who entered into these contracts are in the best position to know what is best for their states and Congress should not interfere,” he added. In fact, Virginia Transportation Secretary Pierce Homer has called tolling and PPP agreements two of the most powerful tools to achieve mobility and economic growth in America.

At a time when our state governments are facing increasing demands for new roads, Congress should not dictate to them how they fund the construction of these roads. Many states use PPP agreements and believe they are the best way to relieve traffic congestion and save taxpayers money.

Michael Hough, Commerce, Insurance, and Economic Development Task Force Director for ALEC, is available for media interview or commentary. Please contact ALEC’s Public Affairs Department at (202) 466-3800.

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May 22, 2007

Georgia Governor Signs School Choice Bill

Washington, D.C.—Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue recently signed into law the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship, which allows the parents of children with special needs to become eligible for scholarship funds in order to better and more directly address their child's educational needs.

“If parents have no choice, there is zero incentive for public schools to improve their quality or remain accountable to the parents and the taxpayers of the community. We want to ensure that every disabled child, regardless of wealth or circumstances, has the opportunity to receive the very best education available,” Said the bill's sponsor Sen. Eric Johnson.

Over the last several months, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has hosted two major briefings with its members in Georgia's legislature outlining the many important benefits such a scholarship program would offer students and parents.

The result of similar legislation which passed in Florida was that parents of students using that state's McKay Scholarships reported 93 percent satisfaction with their schools, compared to only 33 percent satisfaction with public schools. Only 30 percent of Florida parents said their special needs students were receiving all required services, while 86 percent said their McKay schools were providing all promised services.

The special needs student population is growing in almost every state. In Georgia, the number of students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in public schools has experienced an 88 percent increase since 1990, one of the highest rates of increase in the country.

ALEC continues to offer special needs scholarship model legislation to state legislators throughout the country. Matt Warner, Education Task Force Director for ALEC, is available for media interview or commentary. Please contact ALEC's Public Affairs Department at (202) 466-3800.

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May 9, 2007

Telecom Expert to Testify Against Harmful Internet Regulation Before Maine Joint Committee

(Washington, DC)—Matthew Hussey, Director of the Telecommunications and Information Technology Task Force for the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) will testify on Thursday, May 10, at 1 p.m. before the Maine Legislature's Utilities and Energy Committee on LD 1675, *Act to Protect Network Neutrality*.

"We have serious concerns about this legislation because it would apply undue regulation on broadband providers and ultimately erode consumer choice by deterring critical investment in broadband infrastructure," said Hussey. "In addition, no widespread problem currently exists to warrant this legislation and if problems do arise they should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis at the federal level not the state."

The fact is that Maine internet service consumers are already being very well served in broadband service with a 41 percent increase in broadband penetration in the past year with 27 companies providing this service—nearly a 100 percent increase over the past two years. According to the FCC, 70 percent of zip codes in Maine have four or more high speed internet providers. The current system has produced higher bandwidth speeds as well as a 17 percent drop in DSL prices and cable broadband at under \$40 per month.

Mr. Hussey will testify that internet regulation is, and should remain, a federal matter as it inherently crosses state and national boundaries. If each state were to issue its own set of regulations for net usage, the resulting patchwork of conflicting, confusing, and contradictory laws as well as litigation costs would choke the life out of this increasingly important technology. It would curtail much needed broadband investment—limiting consumer choice by effectively eliminating incentives for network operators to create new business models.

Only Maryland and New York have considered network neutrality legislation and, to date, none has enacted it. ALEC believes that government should refrain from unnecessarily regulating the internet service market and should instead allow the marketplace to develop naturally.

To speak with Mr. Hussey or to receive a copy of his testimony, please contact him at (202) 742-8518, or by e-mail at mhussey@alec.org.

###

April 24, 2007

**New Report Finds School Choice is Constitutional in Nearly Every State
First-Ever Nationwide Survey Dispels Myths From School Choice Opponents**

Arlington, Va.—Is school choice constitutional? For the first time ever, legislators and advocates have a single authoritative and comprehensive resource for answering that question in every state in the union. And that report finds that for nearly every state, the answer is yes, if the legislation is crafted properly.

“School Choice and State Constitutions: A Guide to Designing School Choice Programs,” published today by the Institute for Justice and the American Legislative Exchange Council, documents the relevant state constitutional provisions and case law in each state and makes specific recommendations for designing programs most likely to withstand legal challenges from school choice opponents.

“A well-designed school choice program should pass constitutional muster nearly everywhere,” said Clark Neily, an IJ senior attorney who co-authored the report with IJ Senior Litigation Attorney Richard D. Komer. “Opponents have become increasingly creative in their use of state constitutions to try to thwart equal educational opportunity, but this report debunks their bogus constitutional claims.”

“School Choice and State Constitutions” addresses Blaine Amendments (the controversial provisions found in 37 state constitutions), Compelled Support Clauses (found in 29 states), education provisions and other relevant clauses in state constitutions. For years, school choice opponents have tried to claim that the mere existence of such provisions means that school choice plans are unconstitutional. This first-ever nationwide review of state constitutional provisions and state case law related to school choice exposes that claim as a myth.

“In almost every state, the question is not whether there can be school choice, but how best to achieve it,” said Komer. “Each state has a distinct legal environment, and the best way to withstand legal challenges from school choice opponents is to carefully tailor legislation accordingly.”

Since the U.S. Supreme Court vindicated school choice under the federal Constitution in 2002, school choice has gained momentum nationwide, with 20 programs in 11 states and the District of Columbia. School choice has become an important part of education reform debates in state capitols across the nation.

“With the information available in this guide, state legislators will be more prepared than ever before to champion educational opportunities in their states,” said Matt Warner, ALEC Education Task Force Director. “And they will have the assurance that their programs are well-positioned to withstand opponents’ legal attacks.”

“School Choice and State Constitutions” is available at www.IJ.org and www.ALEC.org.

The Institute for Justice has successfully defended school choice in courtrooms nationwide, including before the U.S. Supreme Court. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is the nation’s largest nonpartisan, individual membership organization of state legislators, with over 2,400 legislator members from all fifty states, and 88 alumni members serving in the U.S. Congress.

###

April 19, 2007

Georgia Legislators to Vote on School Choice

Washington, D.C.—Georgia's House of Representatives is set to vote on a special needs scholarship bill tomorrow, April 20. The bill, known as Senate Bill 10 (SB 10) will allow the parents of children with special needs to become eligible for scholarship funds in order to better and more directly address their child's educational needs. Providing assistance to this population of students through private facilities will also alleviate the pressure on public schools struggling to meet the needs of this growing and dynamic student population.

"If parents have no choice, there is zero incentive for public schools to improve their quality or remain accountable to the parents and the taxpayers of the community. We want to ensure that every disabled child, regardless of wealth or circumstances, has the opportunity to receive the very best education available," Said the bill's sponsor Sen. Eric Johnson.

ALEC's Education Task Force has in fact adopted model legislation supporting Special Needs Scholarships based on the success of existing programs as well as the principles of liberty and parent involvement these programs represent.

The result of similar legislation which passed in Florida was that parents of students using that state's McKay Scholarships reported 93 percent satisfaction with their schools, compared to only 33 percent satisfaction with public schools. Only 30 percent of Florida parents said their special needs students were receiving all required services, while 86 percent said their McKay schools were providing all promised services.

The special needs student population is growing in almost every state. In Georgia, the number of students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in public schools has experienced an 88 percent increase since 1990, one of the highest rates of increase in the country.

"I applaud Georgia's leadership in seeking new and proven ways to improve educational standards in the state. I hope that the success of similar programs throughout the country provides persuasive evidence that SB 10 is the right step for Georgia and a win for parents and students," said Matt Warner, Education Task Force Director for the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which promotes model legislation similar to Georgia's SB 10.

Mr. Warner is available for media interview or commentary. Please contact ALEC's Public Affairs Department at (202) 466-3800.

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April 18, 2007

Utah State Senate Leader, Senator Curtis Bramble, Testifies Before Congressional Committee on Energy Policy

(Washington, DC)— Utah Senate Majority Leader, Senator Curtis Bramble (R - District 16), testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources yesterday on Capitol Hill. Senator Bramble, who is also the State Chairman for the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), was invited by the committee to discuss Utah's approach to energy and economic development, and specifically the importance of oil shale.

“Oil shale deposits in Utah and neighboring states could provide for all of America's energy needs and free us from our current dependency on crude oil, most of which comes from the Middle East and Venezuela,” said Bramble. “Utah can provide the federal government with a model for developing new sources of economically viable and environmentally responsible energy,” he added.

ALEC's Federal Affairs office helped coordinate Senator Bramble's testimony with the committee and recognizes the value that state legislatures serve as policy laboratories and the lessons they can provide for federal lawmakers.

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March 21, 2007

Cause of Global Warming Identified on Capitol Hill

Washington, D.C.—Former Vice President Al Gore, testifying today before the House Committee on Science and Technology, carelessly exhaled vast quantities of CO₂, which he has identified as a greenhouse gas and pollutant, as he laid out his plan to strangle the U.S. economy.

Largely avoiding the one-sided, misleading, exaggerated, and just plain wrong assertions that riddle his Hollywood-lauded movie, “An Inconvenient Truth”, Mr. Gore instead chose to focus on his plan to eliminate American jobs. Mr. Gore wants to immediately freeze carbon dioxide emissions, create new energy taxes, limit access to inexpensive energy, and ban the standard light bulb—in other words no new cars, no new factories, and no new power plants. This is especially ironic since Gore talked about how we “stood down communism” and yet he wants to centrally-plan the U.S. economy by limiting access to the one input in all goods and services—energy.

Also testifying, and significantly clearing the air, was Dr. Bjørn Lomborg, Adjunct Professor, Copenhagen Consensus Center, Copenhagen Business School. Lomborg brought a breath of fresh air outlining the problems in Mr. Gore’s logic and explaining proactive steps we can take to help the world’s poor and their need for energy to develop.

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) opposes to mandatory or “voluntary” carbon dioxide emission limits. Instead, ALEC supports the free market principles contained within President Bush’s Global Warming Initiative as a cost-effective and scientifically guided national program to address the climate change issue.

In fact, the United States is doing a better job than Europe at addressing CO₂ emissions. According to data from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, from 2000-2004 the U.S. greenhouse gas emissions increased by 1.3 percent while the EU increased collective emissions by 2.1 percent. The United States lowered its increase in emissions by market forces, not by Gore’s proposed government mandates and regulation. The American Legislative Exchange Council supports free markets, not plans to strangle the economy.

Dan Simmons, ALEC’s Director of the Natural Resources Task Force is available for comment and interviews on the issue of global climate change.

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March 21, 2007

**To Chew or not to Chew:
Florida Takes Up Smokeless Tobacco Taxes**

Florida legislators are considering a bill this week (HB 523), which would change the way moist smokeless tobacco (MST) is taxed from a percentage tax based on price to a much fairer weight-based system. This legislation fits squarely within the Jeffersonian principles of free-market enterprise and fair commerce without unfair tax discrimination and is based on a model resolution by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

ALEC supports the change that will eliminate an artificial tax preference for cheaper versions of the same product, and align smokeless tobacco products with all other consumer products subject to an excise tax, such as cigarettes and alcohol which are taxed on volume not price. This tax change would also simplify and ease compliance for retailers and state tax administrators and would erase unfair, tax-conferred market advantage for some products.

ALEC does not believe any state should support a tax policy, which creates a preference for one product over another of the same type, nor should the state interfere with the invisible hand of the free market by encouraging the use of one product over another. True to Thomas Jefferson's core principles, states should not be in the business of picking winners and losers, but rather let the market decide free of discriminatory government intervention.

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February 5, 2007

Medicaid Expert to Testify in Favor of Consumer-Directed Reform Before Kansas House and Senate Committees

(Washington, DC)—Christie Raniszewski Herrera, Director of the Health and Human Services Task Force at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) will testify before several House and Senate legislative committees in Topeka, KS, on Wednesday February 7. Ms. Herrera will discuss Medicaid's perverse incentives that increase costs and decrease quality of care, review and compare Kansas Medicaid spending and enrollment with other states, and advocate that Kansas should incorporate consumer-directed components in its Medicaid program.

"I am very much looking forward to hearing Ms. Herrera's testimony and I expect it will be of great value to our committee as we work to address the issues of Medicaid and providing the best quality of service to our citizens," said Kansas Rep. Jeff Colyer, a medical doctor who sits on the legislature's Health and Human Services Committee as well as the Joint Committee on Health Policy Oversight.

In 2005, Kansas Medicaid spending totaled \$1.9 billion, all spent in an outdated system which limits consumer choice, leads to increased use of emergency rooms, and encourages waste and abuse. A consumer-directed Medicaid system would provide patients with a choice of several plans tailored to meet their needs, focus on preventative care, improve quality of care and efficiency, and provide long-term financial stability.

Testimony Schedule for Christie Raniszewski Herrera*
Director, Health and Human Services Task Force, ALEC
Wednesday, February 7, 2007

*Copies of all testimony to be available after 3:00 p.m.

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